“Our Team is Keen on Keeping Things Moving.”

Kenneth MacKenzie is president of Rotating Equipment Services in Asia-Pacific. He and his team are proud of keeping things moving—not only by ensuring that machines run smoothly in the transportation segment but also by raising Sulzer’s service network to a new level.
What role does the transportation sector play in your region?
A high percentage of our business in Asia-Pacific is electromechanical service with a strong focus on transportation. In this respect, the Asian region differs from the other regions of the world, where the level of mechanical (pump and turbo) work is higher. The transportation sector includes a range of segments—rail and marine but also machinery used in mining. We have had great success in Australia in the maintenance of rail networks. Building on this success, we opened a new service center in Kunshan, China, which targeted the local transportation sector as well as our traditional oil and gas, power, and general industry sectors. We expect that the China Railway Corporation will become one of our major customers in Kunshan.

What is responsible for your great success in the transportation sector?
For transportation, reliability is essential. When it comes to maintaining traction motors, we offer more than just repair services; we also extend the life of the equipment. Our strong background in developing repair and parts manufacturing techniques is key to providing high levels of service reliability. As an example, look at the insulation systems within the supply and repair of electric motor coils. With our special repair techniques, we provide repaired motors that have a longer life when they go back into operation. These techniques were first developed by Dowding & Mills, which we acquired in 2010. Since their development, we have successfully applied these repairs on all kinds of traction motor applications.

Traction motors are not only used in trains but in many other areas as well. Can you name some other applications?
Yes. In mining, there are two main applications of traction motors: in the draglines for carving the coal or minerals out of the mine and on the huge trucks that move the mining ore around the open cast mines. Traction motors are also used in the oil and gas sector—for example, on the drill strings and jacking legs.

And how about ships?
We regularly service motors and generators on ships. We even do repairs while the ships are traveling, “en-voyage.” Two of our Australian engineers recently joined a freight ship in Texas. They will repair the bow thruster motors on the high seas during the trip to Nova Scotia. Our field service crews are always very excited to do these challenging jobs while traveling all around the world.

Sulzer can carry out emergency repairs at sea. This includes on-board stator rewinds as well as repairs of generation and bow thruster units.
Interview

Sulzer offers repair and maintenance support to a wide range of mining equipment. And sometimes your job is not only repairing parts but also manufacturing new ones…

Yes, customers increasingly ask us to manufacture new parts. This is a strong and growing element of our business. An extraordinary example is one of our projects in Melbourne, which you can read about in this Sulzer Technical Review as well (on page 4). We are already in charge of maintaining the traction motors for the rail network. In 2014, the customer needed to improve the rail network infrastructure. Our engineers accepted this challenge and developed improved impedance bonds for the rail tracks. They have taken this project through all of the key stages: developing a prototype, performing the trials, doing a first run of production units, and putting the new parts into service. The customer was so satisfied that it awarded us a large contract to supply 140 new bonds in 2015. This is a great success—and a big step towards diversifying our business.

How will you further diversify your service offerings?

Diversification is quite a local development. In 2014, we took a major step in expanding the number of service centers in the Rotating Equipment Services division in all regions—Europe, Middle East, Africa, Americas, and Asia-Pacific. We now have one of the largest service networks in the world, which includes shops with a range of technical backgrounds (turbo, pump, and electromechanical) in India, Southeast Asia, Indonesia, Australia, and now China. In 2015, we will increase our focus on diversifying each location using the existing wide range of service and parts manufacturing capabilities in Rotating Equipment Services—local diversification.

Have you already started to move to new regions?

We already expanded our service network dramatically in 2014. We established four new locations: a new electromechanical workshop and a joint venture company in China as well as new workshops in Indonesia and India. As we discussed, we are in the process of transferring key technologies among the service centers and want to grow the local capabilities. Since we have combined the service centers for rotating equipment and for pumps into a joint network, we work very closely with other parts of Sulzer. For example, we have combined sales teams in China, Australia, and Southeast Asia who approach their customers on the basis of “one company.”

What are your plans for further growth?

The expansion into new countries like China and India was a major step and will be a big push for us. Now that we are present in such huge markets, we can really harness enormous development potential. I believe that we will grow fast in these regions, and our goal is to achieve a growth rate of two to three times trade-weighted GDP. In 2015, the next steps will be the relocation of facilities to bigger and better premises, and we plan to open an additional service location. We will also start to look at expanding our footprint in Southeast Asia.

How is the team spirit during this development phase?

The teams are very motivated, work well together, and, most importantly, are pulling in the same direction. We all want to exceed our customers’ expectations. In Australia, the team did a great job in achieving a recovery from the economic downturn that we suffered in 2013; now, they are eagerly looking forward to the next phase. We are very lucky that the colleagues who joined Rotating Equipment Services from Pumps Equipment, the people we have recruited in the new locations, and the Turbo Services team bring their own experiences and capabilities as well as diversity both culturally and technically. This depth of knowledge and experience allows us to be very responsive and to keep things moving.

Interview: Tünde Kirstein