



Information

AkzoNobel
Tomorrow's Answers Today

A&AC-Oshkosh partnership is the genuine article

August 6, 2012 - To many people, Oshkosh is a brand of clothing, or a city in the American state of Wisconsin. But for A&AC, Oshkosh is a trusted partner, with a relationship that is both long-standing and mutually advantageous. "Oshkosh the partner" – Oshkosh Corporation – is a US-based multinational manufacturer of specialty vehicles and equipment. Indeed, the A&AC-Oshkosh partnership is an outstanding case study in what "Creating Together" means in practice.

"Oshkosh is huge," says Paul Flora, Commercial Vehicle Business Development Manager A&AC in North America, "and we're one of their primary coatings suppliers. Some of the Oshkosh holdings include Pierce Manufacturing, which produces fire apparatus (trucks) and Oshkosh airport rescue and communications vehicles. Also McNeilus is included, which manufactures concrete mixers and refuse compactors (trash trucks) and MedTec, which builds ambulances and emergency equipment. They also produce housings for flight simulators as well as assorted medical and communication vehicles. We provide paint and coatings for all of those activities, and with Pierce Manufacturing, we have a history dating back more than twenty years – many years before Pierce was acquired by Oshkosh."



It's not so surprising then, that when it came time to launch the Sikkens Autocoat BT LV 650 product line – A&AC's newest product line for the North American commercial vehicles market – it went to Pierce. "Pierce incorporates a one piece flow paint facility (moving paint line)" says Paul. "Every two hours the lines move". Before the introduction of Sikkens Autocoat BT LV 650 basecoat, vehicles were being finished with Sikkens

single stage paint. A key advantage of LV 650 system is the fact they are able to apply a true basecoat-clearcoat system in exactly the same amount of time previously needed for a single stage system. They can now provide a higher quality and more durable finish with no increase in cycle time. What Pierce has accomplished with the switch to the LV 650 system, notes Paul, is a better looking more durable finish with no increase in cycle time.

Paul points to plenty of other benefits of the LV 650 system. One common hardener and common reducers for the entire LV 650 product line, which includes a urethane surfacer, a urethane sealer, a single stage topcoat system, a basecoat, and a urethane clearcoat. "In a manufacturing environment, that's a great thing because we pump hardener throughout the plant and multiple hardeners are not required. And both single stage and basecoat systems are built from one set of common tints as well. Altogether, we're dramatically reducing the number of 'stock keeping units' – the number of items that need to be kept on hand and ordered."

Of course, the real test is about appearance, and Paul says Sikkens Autocoat BT LV 650 is meeting and exceeding the high standards that are typical of fire equipment customers. "We converted to the LV 650 system, and hands down, the appearance improved – the gloss was enhanced, the reflectivity was higher, and there is a premium over our previous offering." With gains in performance, efficiency and appearance, Sikkens Autocoat BT LV 650 exemplifies AkzoNobel's commitment to providing "Tomorrow's Answers Today".

What makes the partnership with Oshkosh special is the level of service that A&AC offers and the intense cooperation between supplier and customer, with A&AC tailoring very specific solutions to customer needs. “When we rolled out 650,” recalls Paul, “we provided support for their round-the-clock, three-shift production cycle. Their paint shop manager commented it was the easiest conversion they had ever done.”

Because AkzoNobel and Oshkosh are both global players, A&AC is able to provide support to products produced for the global market, or, as sometimes happens, to arrange for repairs on products that suffer cosmetic damage during shipping around the globe. That global presence is indeed one of the great advantages that A&AC offers to Oshkosh and other partners; no matter where requests for support come from, A&AC has the people, the equipment and the network to respond quickly to any customer requirement. For CV customers, that is a capability that makes a vital difference.

In A&AC’s partnership with Oshkosh, the support also extends to quarterly audits to make certain that production lines comply with the written standard operating procedures for all products and processes. “There’s an awful lot of risk if you veer off track and that can have serious consequences.”

For A&AC, many of the benefits of the partnership can be traced to the market leadership that Oshkosh enjoys in the market sectors where it is active. “Supplying Oshkosh has opened doors to a lot of other manufacturers in fire rescue and with equipment manufacturers,” says Paul. “And in view of our desire to make an impact in the fleet refinish market, it really helps that we’re providing the OEM finish on these units.” He adds that A&AC is now supplying LV 650 to a number of subcontractors that supply components for assembly on Oshkosh vehicles and equipment, and that the relationship has also opened doors for AkzoNobel Powder Coatings.

Added value is all too often a cliché, but in the business world clichés can also ring true: when it comes to the close cooperation between A&AC and Oshkosh, there’s not much doubt that we really are “creating together” and each side is gaining a great deal of value from what is a very solid and rewarding partnership.

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