

Living up to the role of distributor

Not only does air-conditioning Oceanair have plenty of stock, but it is also an important provider of industry training and is also working to develop new and original business areas.



Bob Cowlard has big plans for Oceanair, the air-conditioning distributor he bought about 15 months ago following seven years involved with air conditioning at Sanyo and of which he is now managing director.

That year has seen a new branch open at Bristol with a superbly equipped training centre, stock levels growing from £300 000 to £1 million by the 31st March year end and a migration into project work stimulating a 65% growth in the sales of Sanyo products.

Oceanair also distributes LG and Fujitsu air-conditioning products — but it is the Sanyo product offering that is currently the focus of major investment.

Bob Cowlard's vision of the role of a distributor drives the investment programme. He says, 'We are a great believer that stock is important to a distribution company, or you are just an order taker. Holding stock adds value, or you are just a cost to the supplier. We are about accessing product *locally*.'

There are two major Sanyo initiatives. One is the setting up of a training facility for Sanyo products, which is believed to be the largest in the UK. The other is a partnership with Calor Gas to develop the market for Sanyo's LPG-powered heat-pump 3-pipe VRF air conditioning — and which is already leading to project proposals.

The new training centre is at the Bristol branch, close to the M4 and M5 motorways, and is said to be the only training site in the UK with all types of indoor unit.

It also provides a live demonstration of the use of Reflok heat-free connections for refrigeration pipework in, unusually, a VRF system. John Shipman of Reflok explains that every fan-coil unit in a VRF system requires nine joints and that there are 13 FCUs in the Bristol training centre. Compared with hot joints, he estimates that a day and three hours was saved.

Reflok joints are made using a special tool that provides easy access to restricted areas and delivers joints that can withstand 200 bar.

Bob Cowlard believes this is the first application for VRF, and Oceanair will



Setting new standards for a distributor — Bob Cowlard

be promoting the concept to customers.

One project where Reflok has demonstrated its potential is Culvers House Primary School in Mitcham, Surrey. Three Sanyo GHP VRF systems provide a total of 140 kW of cooling. Because Reflok couplings are used rather than brazed connections, two systems could be installed during term time, taking pressure off the school-holiday period.



Oceanair's training room at Bristol includes all types of Sanyo VRF indoor units.

Another potential benefit of Reflok couplings is a drastic reduction in the risk of contamination in refrigeration pipework, which can lead to warranty problems in the first two or three months of the life of an installation. If that contamination risk is removed, extended warranties become possible.

It is expected that several hundred contractors, engineers and consultants will pass through the centre in the first year. Courses will include CPD for consultants, setting up and integrating controls, service and maintenance, commissioning, sales and application, and legislation and business responsibilities for company owners or business managers.

Other systems to be installed in the training centre are Fujitsu's J Series air conditioning and LG's multiple space system.

The first course, in March, saw more than 50 Calor Gas field engineers being trained on Sanyo's LPG-powered VRF air conditioning — which leads seamlessly on to the partnership between Calor Gas and Oceanair to develop this market in the UK.

Sanyo's LPG system uses a 2-litre Nissan engine to drive a refrigeration compressor, instead of an electric motor. The same unit can also generate electricity, and waste heat from the engine cooling and exhaust system is also available. That waste heat could be used to generate domestic hot water or to heat a swimming pool.

Bob Cowlard explains, 'The LPG-powered Sanyo system opens up a big and important new market for air conditioning. It is a major step forward in terms of both technology and market opportunity.'

Many sites outside of towns and cities have limited electricity supplies. They include country hotels, club houses on golf course, leisure centres in rural settings, military bases and temporary facilities catering for sport events or corporate entertainment.

Bob Cowlard also explains that a surprising proportion of

inner-city areas also suffer from lack of 3-phase power and inadequacies in the supply of mains gas. About 40% of all commercial buildings are believed to have a limited electricity supply. All this

means that standard air-conditioning applications such as offices, shops and restaurants are legitimate applications for a solution powered by LPG — especially because upgrading to a 3-phase electricity supply is expensive and disruptive.

Sanyo's GHP system using LPG achieves a COP of 1.6 for heating and 1.4 for cooling. A cooling COP of 1.6 for a GHP system is to be compared with 4.8 for an electric system, because of inefficiencies at the power station and transmission losses. Sanyo's GHP units comfortably qualify for Enhanced Capital Allowances, for which the COP requirement is 1.1.

A GHP system can be part of a VRF air-conditioning system or linked by a heat exchanger to a chilled-water installation.

The 2-litre gas engine runs at a maximum of only 2000 rev/min and ticks over at 700 rev/min. Service intervals are 10 000 h of running time, about every three years. Servicing includes new spark plugs, oil filter, air filter and oil.



Sanyo's LPG-driven air-conditioning concept provides a solution on sites with restricted electricity supply and no mains gas.

Not only does the Reflok joint for refrigeration pipework eliminate the need for hot work but it also enables one end of many joints to be made on the bench.

the equipment, with Calor installing the LPG tank and connecting the gas side. Finally, the equipment will be commissioned.

Early interest in the concept has come from the National Trust and Pinewood Studios. Many National Trust sites have no gas and nor does Pinewood Studios. Interest has also come from a boarding school and a multi-national hotel chain.

Bob Cowlard is very enthusiastic about the



Calor is working with Oceanair on an exclusive basis to open up new markets using its client base of over 20 000 of some of the largest companies in the country. One benefit to Calor Gas is that developing a market for LPG-driven air conditioning will augment its market for LPG for heating.

The arrangement between Calor Gas and Oceanair is that Calor will generate the lead, and Oceanair will follow through to design stage. Approved contractors will then install

prospects for this approach to air conditioning. He says, 'This is a genuine case of opening new markets for our industry and offering real solutions to real problems. Calor has the client base; we have the knowledge and product.'

With Oceanair putting so much effort into training the industry, raising standards and developing new concepts, can there be much time left for taking orders?

Enquiry Number 84 on the card or at

Carrier publishes new literature on wider range or air-conditioning equipment for rental

Carrier Rental Systems has published a comprehensive range of sales and product literature for its air-conditioning rental products.

It covers general applications and several specialised market areas in which the company has particular expertise. These include the event sector, logistics and warehouse distribution, food manufacture, pharmaceutical manufacture and the oil and gas industry.

The publication of the new literature coincides with the announcement by the company of major investments plans in the UK and Europe.

UK sales director Marc White comments, 'Comprehensive new literature will be welcomed by our customers — coming at the same time as a significant quantity of new stock is available.'

Enquiry Number 85 on the card or at www.modbs.co.uk/enquiries



Carrier Rental Systems' wide range of air-conditioning equipment for rental is covered in a set of new literature.

Johnson Controls brings VRF air conditioning to the UK

Johnson Controls has introduced its York YDS VRF air-conditioning system to the UK. YDS is in its third generation and is based on six outdoor condensing units and over 30 indoor units.

There are two single outdoor units with cooling capacities of 10 and 14 kW and four modular units with capacities from 28 to 45 kW. By connecting four outdoor units together, up to 180 kW of cooling or 188 kW of heating can be achieved. They use advanced scroll compressors and R410A.

The range of indoor units includes high-wall cassettes, ducted fan coils and convertible consoles. Up to 65 indoor units can be connected in one



Johnson Controls has entered the UK VRF air-conditioning market with the York YDS system.

refrigerant circuit. Controls can be configured individually via infra-red or wired remote control. It is also possible to control indoor units using a central controller or monitor them using a building-management system.

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