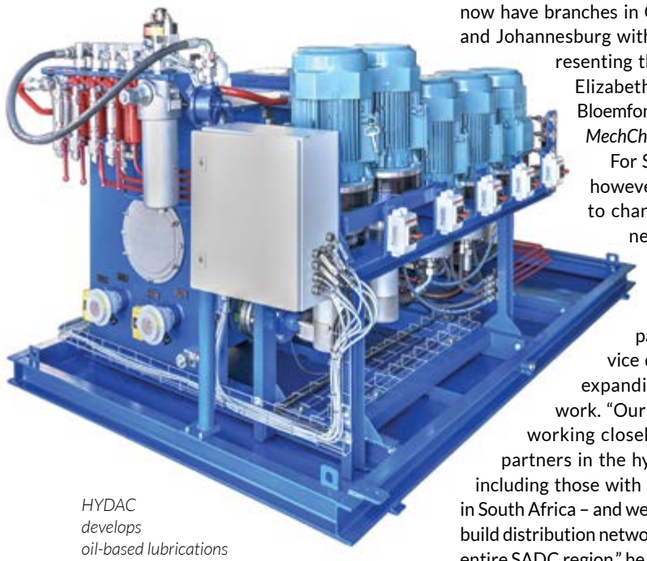
HYDAC expands its hydraulics footprint in Southern Africa

MechChem Africa talks to HYDAC South Africa's MD, Angus Beveridge (right), and the company's GM, Uven Moodley (left), about their ongoing quest to expand HYDAC's footprint and to be seen as a leading provider of hydraulic services, components and turnkey project solutions in every corner of the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

As part of the HYDAC International Group, HYDAC South Africa is responsible for Kenya and the SADC region, which includes all of the Southern African states up to the DRC and Tanzania as well as the Islands of Madagascar, Mauritius and the Seychelles off the East Coast of Africa. "Our core focus area is in this SADC region, although for certain products such as propulsion systems for barges, we also have select customers in North and East Africa that are supported from our South African offices," begins Beveridge, adding that the Northern and Western regions of Africa are supported directly by HYDAC France, Germany and India.

"We have long been known as specialists in hydraulic accumulators and filters, but we also have a comprehensive range of hydraulic equipment: from pumps, valves, sensors and coolers to everything required to put together engineered hydraulic systems for any application," he says.



HYDAC develops oil-based lubrications systems for ball mills as well as gearboxes. Shown here is a hydraulic power pack for a white metal bearing jacking and lubricating system.

Describing the strategy being put into place to meet the combined goals of expanding its footprint and establishing HYDAC as a 'go to' company for the full range of hydraulic solutions, Beveridge starts with the acquisition of Cape Town-based Basic Hydraulics. "We acquired Basic Hydraulics four years ago to give us a foothold into the marine market. With agencies such as Weka Boxcoolers, Dynaset, TSL Marine & Offshore and Hydro Armor, Basic Hydraulics specialises in the marine market with this array of deck equipment, cooling and propulsion systems.

"Basic Hydraulics operates as an independent company that supports HYDAC to deliver a full and comprehensive hydraulics service, while also creating a local centre of excellence for the marine industry," Beveridge explains.

"HYDAC has recently expanded its presence into more South African cities. We now have branches in Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg with HYDAC staff representing the company in Port Elizabeth, Richards Bay and Bloemfontein," Beveridge tells *MechChem Africa*.

For SADC-wide services, however, the core focus is to channel HYDAC's business through a distribution network where practical and possible, using partners for local service delivery rather than expanding our branch network. "Our expansion involves working closely with distribution partners in the hydraulics industry – including those with B-BBEE credentials in South Africa – and we are working hard to build distribution networks able to cover the entire SADC region," he notes.

"As a point of principle, though, we strive to support and cooperate with our distributors rather than to compete with them," he assures. In certain cases, where it makes business sense, HYDAC works directly with clients. In South Africa, for example, HYDAC won the contract for the installation of hydraulic piping, power packs and fittings for two large power stations. "The project took several years to complete and we have since done several other plant installations," says Beveridge.

"We directly support these long term clients with service and delivery, which makes us very competitive in the SADC markets," he says, while again emphasising that, going forward, HYDAC South Africa's underpinning strategy is to deliver services through locally based distribution partners.

As well as the hydraulics offering, HYDAC has several completely different solutions for other markets. Uven Moodley explains: "In many parts of Africa such as the DRC, Zambia and Mozambique, humidity is a huge problem, which makes the reliability of diesel-driven equipment fall off significantly. We offer diesel filtration systems that can significantly increase engine life, which, compared to having to routinely replace or rebuild the engines, substantially reduces equipment ownership costs.

"Where humidity causes water ingress, microbial organisms can grow in the diesel, forming diesel pest, which is detrimental to an engine. Our filters remove solid contaminants as well as water through a unique coalescing system, which is unaffected during the life of the filter element. Ensuring that clean diesel is supplied to the engine injectors increases injector and engine life," Moodley says.

"Our range of diesel and process fluid filtration solutions is currently in high demand across Africa," adds Beveridge, "also due to the increasingly stringent fuel quality standards required by modern diesel engines. We can offer diesel filtration solutions throughout the entire diesel supply line. Globally, HYDAC has a strong presence in the diesel filtration market, which is supported with in-house expertise as well as the previous acquisition of US-based Schroeder Industries, and this gives us access to the broadest possible range of filtration solutions," he tells *MechChem Africa*.

Moodley continues: "We are also strong on oil-based lubrications systems, for lubricating the bearings on the likes of ball mills as well as large electric motors and gearboxes. We have a rental fleet of oil reconditioning units that can clean lubricating oil and remove contaminants, water and varnish, thereby increasing the life expectancy of the fluid and preventing premature failure of components. Customers can use these units on a needs basis, without having to purchase a unit for themselves," he says, adding that interest in this offering has grown significantly, opening up opportunities for HYDAC to showcase its broader hydraulics offering.

Turning attention back to the turnkey hydraulics offering, Beveridge says that business is broadly divided into product sales and project sales, with project sales being responsible for working with the customer engineering teams. "Our project teams work with OEMs, EPCMs or end-user engineering teams to develop hydraulic systems to best meet application specifications for industries such as the marine, mining, power generation, water treatment, cement, steel, fishing, agriculture and the defence industries, along with many more. "System sales is a foundation for our aftersales markets, so we strive to develop high-end, durable systems that we can put into the field to generate a preferred market for our filtration, replacement components and other service related products," Beveridge explains.

HYDAC has several engineers responsible for designing and developing these systems. "And all of our sales people are highly technical, too, because every one of our products needs to solve a customer's problem, so the technical fit must be right, even for a basic hydraulic component. We strongly believe in upskilling our team's product knowledge so we can assist our customers with solutions," he assures.

HYDAC is also "pushing hard" to expand the use of connected components that enable a system's state-of-health to be monitored continuously and remotely. "Preventative maintenance is becoming increasingly important and, for this, sensors need to be installed to monitor system performance and condition; data needs to be collected and stored; and that data then needs to be routinely analysed. We are now including these IOT-type innovations into the hydraulics and lubrication systems we develop," continues Moodley.

"By monitoring fluid cleanliness and pressure spikes, for example, we can identify useful information about remaining life expectancy of a critical component. This enables us to intervene to protect the equipment before it fails," he notes. "We focus on the technologies that enable data to be uploaded to a local server or to the cloud, from where it can be analysed and displayed on a dashboard anywhere in the world. This enables technicians to have a very accurate idea of the repairs or changes necessary to restore a system to health before travelling to a site," Moodley explains.

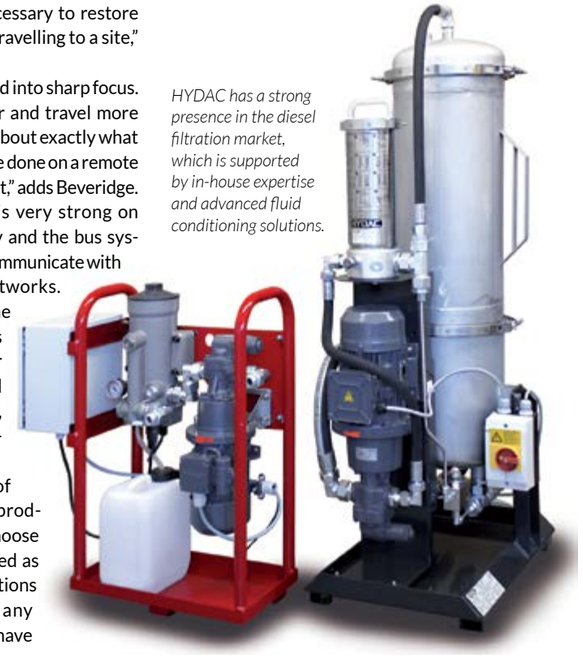
A view of HYDAC's Johannesburg workshop where engineered systems are assembled and tested before shipping to sites across Southern Africa and the SADC region.

Through Basic Hydraulics, HYDAC has created a local centre of excellence for hydraulic deck equipment, cooling and propulsion systems for the marine industry.

"COVID has put this need into sharp focus. Lead times are now longer and travel more restricted, so information about exactly what is needed and what has to be done on a remote site becomes very important," adds Beveridge.

He says that HYDAC is very strong on modern sensor technology and the bus systems that enable them to communicate with local and cloud based networks. "Systems engineering is one of our particular strengths and we have a lot to offer those needing integrated systems for sophisticated, robust and highly cost-effective applications.

"With a broad range of hydraulic and electronic products and components to choose from, we are well positioned as a provider of turnkey solutions and systems for almost any industrial application. We have the inhouse capacity to deliver on projects from small to very large and we intend to use this capacity to extend our reach in the Southern African region as far and as wide as possible," Beveridge concludes. ❑



HYDAC has a strong presence in the diesel filtration market, which is supported by in-house expertise and advanced fluid conditioning solutions.