

Industrial uptime: the core of BI's offering

MechChem Africa meets the management team of BI at its Parkhaven office in Kempton Park to find out about the company's new go-to-market strategy, which now has industrial uptime as the principle underpinning all brand and service offerings.



The BI team responsible for implementing the company's new go-to-market strategy: Charmaine Beukes, GM for Channel Sales; Christian Chipamaunga, GM for Segment Sales; James Calmeyer, MD; and Robert Sillis, GM for Product Management.

“We have changed from being a distributor of engineering products to being a provider of industrial uptime,” says James Calmeyer, the MD of the Hudaco Group company, BI.

“We believe that selling a component to a customer is of no value unless it solves this critical, but simple, problem. Industrial customers invest in plant and equipment to do a job. So when any part of their plant is not running, a critical problem arises that needs a long-lasting solution.

“That’s why we have changed our catchphrase, which is now simply, ‘in motion’. This highlights that, as a company, we are moving forwards and that our core business is keeping customers and their equipment in motion. When their processing equipment stops, profitability stops. We are here to keep industrial customers producing,” BI’s MD tells MechChem Africa.

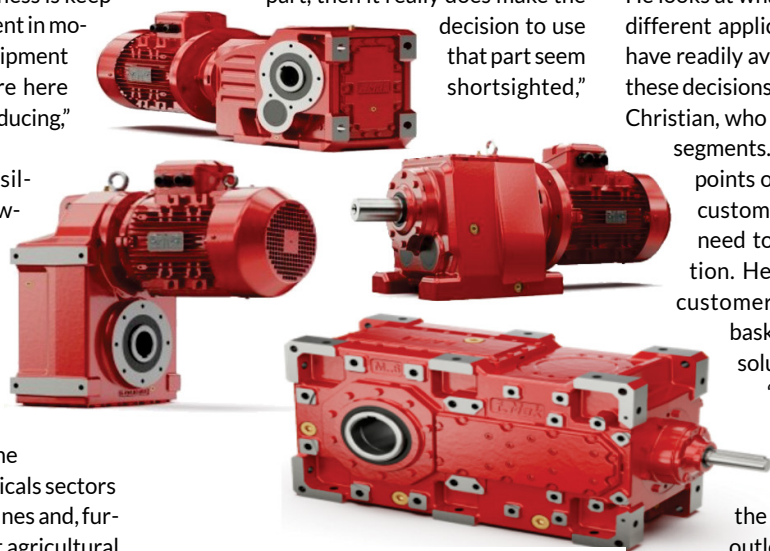
BI is targeting improved resilience in South Africa’s fast growing industrial sectors: those contributing the most to the country’s GDP – industries such as mining, manufacturing and, within that, key sectors such as sugar, pulp and paper, petrochemical plants and steel mills. “We are also supporting the growing FMCG and pharmaceuticals sectors that process our food and medicines and, further downstream, the important agricultural sector responsible for feeding the nation.

“Keeping all these industries in motion is as important now as it ever has been. Industry is important because it employs people and

enables those employees to feed their families,” he says.

Farmers, he adds, understand that there is a time for sowing and a time for reaping. But if they miss any time window because the necessary equipment is not working, then the annual harvest becomes worthless. Instead of profit, the farmer ends up in debt. “Farm equipment has to work when it is needed. So, we now look to find solutions for customers with a view to making sure that their plant and equipment can do what is needed at the time it is needed.

“If any part of that mill is standing still, production is haemorrhaging. And if that problem is being caused by one poor quality part, then it really does make the decision to use that part seem shortsighted,”



I-MAK’s wide range of gearboxes and drive solutions are designed to address the most pressing challenges faced by the gearbox market, which makes the range ideally suited to the mining industry.

Calmeyer adds. So first and foremost: BI only represents the very best brands from around the world. “We rely on high quality products and are not interested in selling inferior brands at low prices. This ‘race to the bottom’ pricing approach does not support what we are trying to do in terms of industrial uptime and keeping customers in motion,” he explains.

While BI still looks at component value in terms of price, availability and convenience, quality is the key driver, with availability following as a close second. In a sugar mill, Calmeyer argues, the cost of keeping the plant running and properly maintained using the most appropriate quality brands is absolutely negligible compared to the value gained by producing at 100% capacity. “Looking at procuring at the cheapest prices and ignoring quality or off-the-shelf availability, demonstrates a dangerously skewed focus,” he says.

“Price obviously matters, but every aspect of our range is chosen based on reliability and fitness-for-purpose in the application in which it will be applied,” adds James Calmeyer.

Restructured sales of the organisation

Summarising how BI has reorganised sales, Calmeyer introduces three new GMs: Robert Sillis, GM for Product Management; Christian Chipamaunga, GM for Segment Sales; and Charmaine Beukes, GM for Channel Sales.

“Robert focuses on what it is that we are selling and our brand and product choices. He looks at what is in each of the baskets for different applications and what we need to have readily available. But he does not make these decisions on his own. He is informed by Christian, who looks at the different market segments. His job is to focus on the pain points of each key industry and what customers in these segments really need to keep their machines in motion. He translates the voice of our customer into a right-priced quality basket of products and packaged solutions for each segment.

“Then we have a third leg of the sales organisation, which is about geography; being in the right place at the right time. We now have 46 outlets and we are constantly expanding. This is where Charmaine’s Channel Sales team comes in,” he continues. Their job is to find and talk to strategic customers in each area identified by Segment

Sales. The Channel Sales team then ensures that each local outlet has the right products on their shelves to match local industry needs in each segment. Combined, these three sales focus areas are absolutely intertwined to deliver the right products for the right type of customers, while also putting in place best possible levels of technical support from an appropriately trained local team.

“We have a very good range of global products, but these have to be translated into local applications for them to be really useful and valuable. And that is what this team does. It puts the right product in the right place at the right time,” James Calmeyer adds.

Robert Sillis continues: “BI is a highly specialised bearings, power transmission and electric motor supplier – offering everything required to transfer torque from one point to another. We use the expertise available to us in this area to achieve our core purpose, which is to provide uptime to industrial customers, in partnership with strategic global suppliers that have considerable experience garnered from all over the world,” he says.

Exemplifying his role, Christian Chipamaunga cites a recent project launched for the mining sector. “Robert and his team, in conjunction with us in Segment Sales and Charmaine in Channel Sales, identified some target customers in the mining segment. We set up a high level engagement and identified a few tailored solutions – most notably for mill and conveyor drives – to take back for further development. We then put together some tailored solutions to present to selected local clients.

After further meetings, we included some key condition monitoring technologies into the solution to keep an eye on machine health,

which is 100% compatible with keeping customers in motion. So we can now monitor and collect data from this solution that gives a warning of any harmful fault condition, which enables just-in-time predictive maintenance to be scheduled and unscheduled breakdowns to be avoided,” he explains.

Charmaine Beukes goes on to describe an associated Channel Sales launch at local level, which involved the company’s new I-MAK brand of gearmotors and industrial gear units (IGUs). “The beauty of this brand is that it is interchangeable with other leading IGUs currently in use on our mines. It was initially introduced during Covid, but we ran a region by region relaunch in November last year to coincide with Christian’s Segment Sales initiative.

“Sales teams from each regional outlet, along with the branch managers, attended an extensive training session built around the merits of the I-MAK brand. They were taken through all the technical data and maintenance requirements and afterwards had to write a test to make sure their understanding was good enough to take the I-MAK brand to local customers. They were then asked to identify some target accounts that could benefit from an engagement with Robert’s Product Management specialists,” she informs MechChem Africa.

“This shows how Product Management, Segment Sales and Channel Sales work together. My field sales teams need Robert’s Product Team and Christian’s Segment Sales team to open the doors by developing holistic solutions based on real client priorities that convince customers of our technical expertise and the quality, availability and value of the products and solutions we sell,” Charmaine

Beukes explains.

Chipamaunga adds that this approach also generates demand. “We need to understand and identify what customers need, what their pain points are and how best to use the products at our disposal to help them to develop value-based solutions,” he says.

Sillis concludes: “Not only do we have the necessary technical skills sets; our global suppliers help us to identify and implement best-practice solutions for customers. With their help, we have a great proposition aimed at increasing production uptime for customers.

“This global level of service can then be passed all the way down through our network to a local mine, plant operator, production plant, mill or farm in any community across South Africa,” he says.

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A Timken TNA bearing solution that offers bi-directional thrust and simple installation: “First and foremost, BI only represents the very best brands from around the world,” says James Calmeyer.



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