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Martin Engineering is expecting to make a big splash at MINExpo International 2012 by introducing its own brand of electric vibrators and newly developed EVO heavy duty products for bulk handling applications

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Neponset, Illinois is an unlikely place to find an equipment manufacturer that does the most rugged type of material handling anyone could imagine. It may be in the same state as Peoria and Chicago but it's a tiny town set amid cornfields; nevertheless, this is where in 1954 founder Ed Peterson chose to move the business he'd set up ten years earlier a few miles down the road in Kewanee. The problem he solved then was just the same as anyone faces today if they are handling materials that won't pour easily – what do you do to empty your hopper, clear your truck bed or get the cement out of a mixer? Standard practice was to lay into the container with a hammer or a two-by-four and shake the stuff free.

Peterson figured there had to be a better way and came up with a vibrator you could attach to the system so it would never block. Vibration is normally a bad thing in mechanical systems; this is one of the few instances in engineering where vibration actually promotes flow. So Martin Engineering still lives in Neponset, with the difference that it now occupies a huge industrial campus that houses its world class manufacturing, administrative and research facilities. The company remains in family hands and Edwin H Peterson, the founder's son, is its chairman. And rural Neponset is a destination for businesses from every continent with materials handling problems to solve.

Many of them operate mines. According to US managing director Mark Huhn,



Martin Transfer Point Systems upgrade belt conveyors by eliminating dust and spillage, reducing maintenance, extending component life and improving conveyor performance

most of the firm's products sell into the mining industry, and it is the largest single destination for vibration products. "Historically, we developed a significant business in North America selling to OEMs of vibratory equipment. We also sell vibration products to end users to promote flow in bins, silos and hoppers, help move product out of railcars and many other applications."

No mining or power station coal handling operation can fail to know all about Martin Engineering's belt cleaners. The bane of conveyors is 'fugitive material' that either falls off the belt or is carried back to the point of transfer or delivery and these products make sure the material stays where it is meant to be. Martin Engineering does not supply the conveyor or its most expensive component, the belt, but the engineered products that go onto it like belt cleaners, trackers to keep it centered and transfer units that make the belt last longer and work at maximum efficiency. "We enhance their equipment," says president and CEO Scott Hutter. "We can put products to reduce spillage or mitigate dust onto a brand new system or install them later. Our partners don't just want to buy a belt cleaner; they want to



The Center for Innovation (CFI) at Martin's world headquarters in Neponset, Illinois

buy a clean belt! We sell them the product and the service. We install it and maintain it under the MartinPLUS contractual agreement, and come in regularly to keep the equipment adjusted properly."

For more than 25 years Martin Engineering sold electric vibrators as the exclusive distributor in North America for a European manufacturer, but two years ago this arrangement was terminated. "It was

apparent to us that as a global company with business units in every part of the world it no longer made sense for us to be limited in our market like that," says Huhn. "We wanted to be active in the global OEM market as we had been in the States and under the existing agreement we couldn't do that."

The decision was taken to develop a new range of electric vibrators, which have applications in mining and in particular the oil & gas sector. A typical application is on shale shakers, the screens that separate cuttings from drilling mud, an expensive

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**Cost of Center for
Innovation (CFI),
opened in 2008**

commodity that needs to be effectively recycled. "A lot of our mining customers are very excited about putting our electric vibrator product in their applications and that is why we are showing it at MINExpo," says Hutter.

The new products were developed at the \$5 million Center for Innovation (CFI) opened in 2008. It was conceived largely as a product development facility but has proved to be much more complex. It was instrumental in working out the processes for manufacturing the electric vibrators and has proved to be a global facility where customers can come

**"WE ARE UNVEILING A HEAVY DUTY
LINE OF ALL OUR TRANSFER
COMPONENTS AT MINEXPO"**

for specific bulk handling solutions. Case studies from around the world are shown on the company website. “It is unique for a company our size to have an innovation center like our CFI and we can get products to market much quicker because of it,” says Hutter.

In the last decade Martin Engineering has gone global. Ten years ago, says financial director Ron Vick, 80 percent of

its sales were in the US. “We grew from being a company that just thought it was global to one with over half its turnover in other markets, and consequently with less reliance on the US market.” That has helped the company grow as the US coal industry slowed. It now has manufacturing and distribution facilities in every major mining economy around the world including South America, Germany, China, South

“AS MINING MAJORS GLOBALIZE THEY WANT TO WORK WITH SOMEONE WHO HAS REPRESENTATION AROUND THE WORLD AND WE ARE THERE WHEREVER THEY ARE”



Martin opened a new service center in Gillette, Wyoming to provide factory-direct parts, sales and service 24-7 for the mining industry in Powder River Basin area



Martin's new capabilities include sophisticated dynamometer testing that allows the company to map the shape and values of an electric motor's torque curve

Africa, Mexico, India, Turkey, UK, France and Indonesia. Australia is served under a licensing agreement going back decades, and the company is reviewing opportunities, Vick says, for future penetration into Russia, the last remaining major market in which it has no settled presence.

The electric vibrators will attract a lot of interest from overseas visitors to the show, looking for efficient ways to power screens from a manufacturer capable of being more a partner than a supplier. They make sense of the entire product portfolio. Where product development is concerned, though, visitors will want to take a close look at the new EVO range of heavy duty products specifically designed for mine duty applications whether surface or below

ground. “For some time we have been hearing from our mining customers that they need to increase the speed and capacity of their conveyors,” says Hutter. “We have responded with our mantra of haul mass which talks about moving more material faster. We are unveiling a heavy duty line of all our transfer components at MINExpo – and I think they will find we have answered their challenge!”

The company's great advantage, he believes, is that though there are competitors in every local market, Martin Engineering is the only one that is present everywhere coal is mined. “As mining majors like BHP Billiton and Vale globalize they want to work with someone who has representation around the world and we

are there wherever they are.” In addition to recently opening a new facility in Gillette, Wyoming to service the Powder River Basin region, Martin Engineering has just moved into brand new premises in China where it has had a presence for a decade. The 4,000 square meter facility is complete with manufacturing and R&D and the business there supports 100 employees and 20 fully trained Martin service technicians. Two years ago Martin decided to move into India, acquiring a company in Goa and building a standalone business unit for production of Martin products in Pune.

Future growth will come from expanding the company’s footprint in those areas where market share is lower, says Vick. “As the market base consolidates, customer loyalty helps us. We need to keep closer to the customer, and providing innovative solutions along with in-field service at the customer site are critical differentiators for our company. Some products like air cannons and cleaners are getting commoditized; many companies can make it and sell them. But it is the application knowledge that Martin people possess that provides the competitive advantage. The breadth of our product offerings is only effective if we can solve our customer’s problems. Our expertise and the service we provide will always be the lead value to our customers.” **BE**

At the upcoming MINExpo International 2012, Martin will be showcasing its new EVO® Heavy Duty product line specifically designed for mine duty applications

For more information about
Martin Engineering Company visit:
www.martin-eng.com