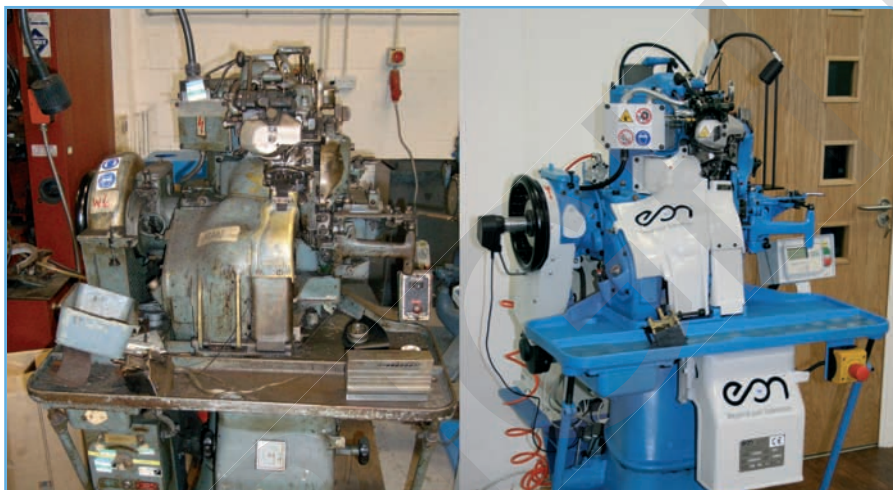


Onwards and upwards for ESM



An old BHSS 10 outsole stitching machine (left) compared with the upgraded product (right). CREDIT: ESM

The Spanish Footwear Components and Machinery Association (AEC) said at the beginning of January that 2009 had been one of the toughest years ever for the sector, largely because of the harsh global economic conditions. The association's director general, Álvaro Sánchez, said that footwear production in the country had fallen significantly and that this had affected adversely the sales of components and machines.

However, the European Shoe Machinery Company, based in the UK, appears to have had quite a different experience in 2009. In fact, on the back of a consistently solid performance in recent years, the firm recently decided to expand its existing facilities in Kettering, Northamptonshire, and has also opened a new facility on the outskirts of the town.

According to managing director, Roberto Petrozzi, the reason ESM has been able to expand while other firms connected with the footwear industry are struggling to stay open is simple. "It's all about diversification really," he claims. "ESM has expanded its service offer to include training, efficiency consulting and bespoke engineering, which includes providing components for businesses outside of the footwear industry."

The new site houses ESM's corporate services such as sales, marketing, finance, customer services and distribution. This move has enabled the firm to redevelop its original site, which includes its manufacturing base. The company has also opened a new showroom at the original site to display its latest Goodyear Welt shoemaking machinery and its new machine rebuilding facility.

Working with customers

Listening to the customer is another incredibly

important aspect of what the company does, Mr Petrozzi says. "Through ESM Performance, our consultancy division, we are listening to the issues facing our clients and this has fuelled further investment in the development of faster and more accurate Goodyear welted footwear machinery, which is also easier to operate," he explains.

One of the things that sets the company apart is that, rather than simply offering to provide brand new machinery at a very high price, it can look at the way a company is set up and help it to become more efficient. "Upgrading is seen as less expensive but it can be just a short-term fix," Mr Petrozzi claims. "When you look at the production process from the outside as we do through ESM Performance, there are efficiencies to be made. It can reduce staffing requirements which can be seen as controversial, but does have a big impact on bottom-line profits."

One important element of its work is helping companies learn how to maintain the machinery they have, which is a much longer-term solution than simply replacing or upgrading the machinery themselves. "Servicing of the older machines is fast becoming a dying art," explains Mr Petrozzi. "Our training facility is trying to help in that respect by enabling businesses to train their own staff on maintenance of the old USM [United Shoe Machinery] and BUSM [British United Shoe Machinery] machines." He adds: "Upgrading is less expensive in capital terms but in reality the best option is to have a full review and clients can see where they will make the most savings."



Despite the difficult economic climate, ESM has decided to expand its existing facilities and open another nearby.

CREDIT: ESM



ESM recently opened a new showroom to display its latest Goodyear Welt shoemaking machinery and its new machine rebuilding facility. CREDIT: ESM

Quality and expertise

ESM offers re-conditioned, upgraded and brand new Goodyear welted footwear machinery. The company currently has the capacity to rebuild more than 30 different Goodyear machines and is able to replace every load-bearing component, such as cams, gears, rollers and bearings.

One example of the new machinery available from ESM is the Goodyear welt sewing machine model Ews-4c/Hp, which is said to offer great performance and has touch screen controls. Its rebuilt machinery offering includes another Goodyear welt sewing machine, model GIS-E. During the rebuilding process, every worn component is replaced and a full test is undertaken before it is delivered to the customer.

Meanwhile, its upgrade service can deal with a range of issues, for example increasing health and

safety protection, reducing noise levels, cutting maintenance costs and improving yield. The Goodyear staple side lasting machine model USL-B is among its upgrade options. The firm's engineers can incorporate safety guards, new electrics and an emergency button as well as an electronic positioning motor. In terms of spare parts, the company says it offers most components for Goodyear Welted Footwear Machines. However, if customers need something that is not there, it will try to help.

Mr Petrozzi points out that ESM's decision to expand its facilities was not solely economics; the company also wanted to improve the quality of its current service. "We are extremely passionate about quality," he says. "Our spares for example are manufactured from the very best materials possible. We regularly test them against OEM [original equipment manufacturer] parts and competitors to

ensure we are delivering the best performance for our clients. Parts wear out, that's a fact. But if you can extend their life, that makes a big difference to performance. It also stays true to our philosophy that ESM goes beyond just tolerance for our customers. We want to be regarded as the best not the cheapest."

And ESM's expansion plans don't stop here. While it has been supplying products across the globe for some time, it is also hoping to raise its profile in other parts of the world providing all goes to plan. "As demand for our machinery, servicing, spares, consultancy and training grow we will be looking at extending into other territories around the globe," claims Mr Petrozzi. The company, he says, is optimistic about the future. 🌐



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CREDIT: ESM