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# Multidiscipline Manufacturers

Central Industry Group has expertise in maritime, architecture, renewable energy, and industrial components. The company is using this manufacturing excellence to help redefine and improve the international industries in which it operates.

Images courtesy of Central Industry Group

**A**s an industrial aggregate engaged in shipbuilding, constructional design, and production of complex architectural projects and the renewable-energy industry worldwide, Central Industry Group (CIG) aims to shape the future. The company produces unrivalled quality through its engineering expertise and manufacturing innovation, using the latest technology and industry knowledge to remain competitive in an increasingly dynamic market.

CIG has developed a global reputation for its dedicated customer service. By working cooperatively with its key clients, CIG can offer tailored solutions to meet the changing requirements of customers around the world. CIG involves each of its clients throughout the design and manufacture process, extending well into the life of its products. This collaborative approach ensures satisfaction and helps stimulate further innovation and competitiveness.

Jan Koopmans, CEO of Central Industry Group, spoke with

*The CEO Magazine* about the company's international operations and what the future has in store for this diverse organisation.

***The CEO Magazine: What is your professional background leading up to and including your current position with CIG?***

**Jan:** I'm a CPA from a long time ago, up until 1993, where I worked for a big-four accounting firm. I then decided to go into international business, and worked for several shipping companies as financial director. I joined CIG in 1997 as financial director and I became president and CEO of CIG in 2003. I'm also the shareholder of the group.

***Throughout your time with the organisation, what have been the greatest challenges you've had to contend with?***

In the past 15 years there have been upsides and downsides. Everything has to do with the economic climate of the world with freight, tariffs, and shipping capacity in the market. We have changed our strategy several times. In the beginning, until the end of the 90s, we were actually a

supplier to the local shipyards in the northern part of Holland. At the end of the 90s, we widened our market from the Dutch market to international markets and shipyards. So our markets became bigger and bigger.

In the past 10 years, we also achieved a higher level in the supply chain, so not only a supplier to shipyards anymore, not only delivering steel plates, but we also became a supplier of building kits, and later on complete vessels, for shipyards and owners in western Europe. Later on, we had operations in the traditional shipbuilding markets here in Holland, and also concentrated more and more on other markets like dredging and offshore.

As well as our customers in Europe, we also have more and more customers outside of Europe. In the national league, the market is quite stable. Locally, we see big differences, but because we changed our strategy in the past 10 years—we took on challenges—we can show very stable results in the past five years, with a lot of potential in the coming years. What we see now is that the prospects are there, the enquiries >

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are there, and the group is growing in new markets.

**CIG is now expanding into Asia through a new joint venture with Shanghai SEC. What drove the decision to partner with this company and enter this new market?**

Shanghai SEC was a supplier for our container-lashing business, so we have a partnership with another company in Bremen, Germany. Shanghai SEC was the supplier for all the lashing products to be produced worldwide for this company. The biggest shipyards for container markets are in China, Korea, and Japan. They are a reliable company and eight years ago we decided to start a joint venture for the long term. First they were a supplier but then we formalised a partnership for both companies and we also have a big part of our winch production brought into China. So it's a production facility for

winches and lashings, but also fulfils our organisation now for winches locally.

**What would you say are the key values or principles that define CIG as an organisation?**

I would say it's an informal organisation—a flexible organisation, internally, but also flexible to the customer. We're concentrating on the smaller and medium-sized shipyards and their customers, so we have one-to-one relationships with them and it also means we can produce custom-made products. We manage these relationships locally, but also internationally. We have customers in Africa and we have the same concept there as we do here. So we have the same one-to-one relationships, we're producing custom-made products, and it also works in South America and southern Europe. One-to-one relationships and custom-made products work quite well internationally.

**And how do you go about sourcing these customers from other regions?**

Part of it is based on longstanding relationships we have in the shipbuilding industry. This company has existed since the early 1970s. Of course, there are the big international exhibitions. We have agents in regions like Africa and South America. So it comes down to personal relationships, networking, marketing, and lots of different approaches that we take.

**What role does environmental consciousness and sustainability play in your company's overall ethos?**

Environmental consciousness is becoming more and more important. Building a green ship—a green vessel—is very important. At this moment, for example, one of our key markets is the offshore industry. Oil companies use very strict standards, so when you want to be involved in the building of offshore supply vessels, your whole organisation should meet those standards. The organisation should meet the ISO standards, but the oil companies have their additional standards. Of course, there are the Dutch standards for how to deal with your employees and safety. All those standards are very important and becoming more and more important for doing business internationally. Especially offshore, I see the opportunity is there when you meet those standards.

**Have you found that meeting those specifications has opened doors for you in the global market?**

Certainly. We currently have a partnership with Siemens for the renewables industry. When it comes to those big multinationals, it's a necessity to have those partnerships in place. When you don't have them, you won't enter into strategic alliances with others, which is vital for doing business globally.

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**What steps or initiatives does CIG take to ensure continuous and increasing efficiency?**

The first step in ensuring consistency comes from the different strategies we've developed, so that was more externally, looking at several markets and several different products. Now we are very focused on the internal organisation, so we employed a new COO in January to realise more synergy between the companies and to realise more cost efficiency in the production companies. In June we employed a new commercial director. We have a management team now that consists of five people who are responsible for the whole CIG group. In the past it was more something that was between the CEO and the CFO; now we have a holding team and management team with their own responsibility to realise those targets that we have taken up in the business plan for the coming three years.

**What does the future hold for Central Industry Group?**

More growth. Last year we had very good and stable

performance. This performance itself was based on very difficult markets. Now we see that the market is improving. The market is going up on several level playing fields, and now we want the benefit from those increasing markets internationally, so not only in Europe, but in Africa and South America. Those markets are more based on offshore, while Europe has more maturity, not only in offshore, but also in other types of shipbuilding such as tankers and special cargo vessels. The shipyard business is improving, so I see growth opportunities in the maritime business.

In non-maritime, coming back to the architecture and renewables industry, we started those partnerships, especially in the renewables industry, with bigger companies like Siemens. In architecture, we have done business worldwide, but now we are at the beginning of new, big projects internationally. So I expect to see a lot in the architecture industry over the next three years, and I see further growth of our group and our group performance. •

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