

Global Perspective

With brand-new headquarters under construction in the Netherlands and an impressive growth trajectory, the Inalfa Roof Systems Group is well placed to deliver a successful string of results now and in the future.

Images by John Roeland

There is a sense of excitement in the air at the Inalfa Roof Systems Group at the moment. Last spring, the business, which is well known in the automotive industry for its design and manufacture of sunroofs and open-roof systems, announced its plans to develop its new headquarters in Venray, the Netherlands. Now well underway, the project is set to be completed by mid 2016 and will house the global and European HQ, and the Dutch operations of the company, as well as the Global Competence Center.

In the existing Global Competence Center, the concepts for international application are defined, and new roof systems are developed and tested for customers all over the world. These innovations then go into production and are moved to one

of Inalfa Roof Systems Group's eastern European or Asian factories as a pilot. Other activities which will take place in the new headquarters will also include global advanced engineering, global advanced technology, and international purchasing.

Construction of the headquarters officially started on 4 December 2014 after months of planning. The symbolic 'shovel in the ground' was carried out by a select group of eight, including the ambassador of China, the regional minister of the province of Limburg, the mayor of Venray, and management of sole shareholding company BHAP, and Inalfa Roof Systems Group. Guests watched on as the proceedings got underway.

The modern headquarters are being built at industry park De Hulst II. Building company Van

der Heijden Construction and Development has been working with architect Ibelings van Tilburg to bring the project into fruition for Inalfa Roof Systems Group. The streamlined structure of the new facility will perfectly complement the company's operations and position it for success well into the future. Inspiration for its design was drawn from the shape of a car, with close attention paid to the look of the grill, hood, and sleek lines. The Inalfa Roof Systems Group logo will be positioned front and centre of the silver-hued building.

Inalfa Roof Systems Group CEO Frank Loeschmann says the contemporary facility will increase the visibility of the business and help to promote the high-quality workmanship of its products to the public. He believes it will strengthen Inalfa >



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Roof Systems Group's market position as a reliable engineering and assembly partner.

"Because of our quite challenging growth in the last few years, we had to recognise that the way we were operating and doing things was not the way we should be doing it for the future," Frank explains. "We are a very decent-sized company in different areas all over the world and we are starting to become a global company. Being a global company means that we need to have a different organisation structure in the future. It means more guidance in terms of technologies, more guidance in terms of development, and also a little bit more guidance in terms of administration from a headquarter level. To achieve this, it meant that our headquarters had to undergo a change.

"At the moment, the original headquarters are working to meet the needs of our European business units, which are related directly to the customer, and in the future it will be still the same, but we have to add some global guidance to the headquarters so we can meet the needs of the

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whole world. That is because our lease contract in the old building is running out so this is an opportunity for us to do something new to promote the future growth of the company.

"The biggest thing we have taken into consideration with the Inalfa Roof Systems Group's new headquarters is that it is a huge part of the visibility of the company. We are in a small part of an industrial zone and we are really tight in our place. In the future, we will have more space, and what is even more important is that we will have the possibilities and opportunities for new technologies, for new laboratories, for a new validation centre, and for more things like that.

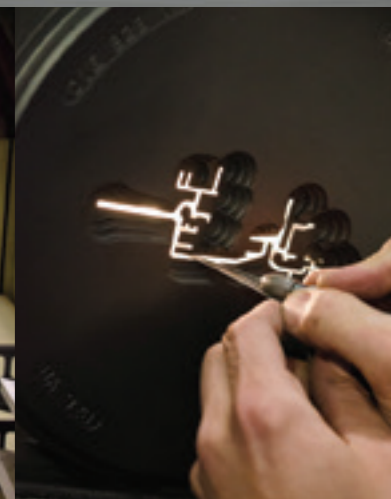
"Furthermore, what is also very important for us is our ability to improve how visible our level of quality is to everybody in the world, especially to our customers. I think it is very important to show our customers what the Inalfa Roof Systems Group's brand is all about in terms of value added, and in terms of quality. The new headquarters will help us to do that."

The history of Inalfa Roof Systems Group dates back to 1946 when it started its operations as a dynamic production and trade company in ironmongery and consumer goods in the Netherlands. In the 50s and

60s, the business was one of the most important producers of gas and oil heaters before it dramatically changed its course and entered the automotive industry in the 70s, producing metal products for cars, as well as for office machines and household items. By 1974, it had developed a new product—the car roof system—and its very first customers were Jaguar and Rover. It didn't take long for many others to follow suit and utilise the Inalfa Roof Systems Group's services.

In the 80s, Inalfa Roof Systems Group added truck hatches to its repertoire and opened production facilities in various locations around the world. Decades on, and it has developed into a strong multinational corporation, serving all major original equipment manufacturers across the globe with a large range of vehicle roof systems now available for cars and trucks. Product categories include insliders, topsliders, exterior sliders, fixed panels, sun blinds, and truck hatches.

Frank was appointed CEO of Inalfa Roof Systems Group in July 2013 and comes from a background of more than 20 years in the automotive sector. He has held various leadership positions with the Volkswagen Group worldwide and has broad knowledge in the areas of strategic planning, product development, >



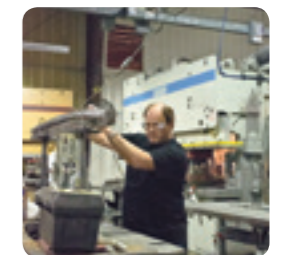
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Ricor Group are proud to announce plans for their new manufacturing facility situated 28km from Poznan, in Poland's automotive heartlands. Having a manufacturing base in Poland since 2008, Ricor Polska Sp. z o.o, supported by increased resources from Ricor China and further expansion at its UK manufacturing site, has appointed Roman Ejsmont as its new President to spearhead its new purpose built manufacturing facility to support sales of more than €40 million with further expansion on the horizon.



RICOR



"Ricor Polska is a key supply partner for Inalfa roof systems, manufacturing for the new Jaguar Saloon XE, the new Jaguar 4x4, the new Mercedes Vito and the Volvo S60 and the S90 models. As a key supplier to a host of Automotive OEM's, we are truly excited in our new development plans within Poland and the future of Ricor Polska."

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manufacturing, engineering, and international management.

Frank is also an entrepreneur and previously founded a company development business where he and his team would go into other organisations to grow them before giving them back to their owners, or selling them on. This component of his professional background was a contributing factor in him securing the top spot at Inalfa Roof Systems Group where he was dealt the task of helping to grow it from being a mid-sized company into a global player.

He says the past two years have been challenging; however, Inalfa Roof Systems Group has put a lot in place to set it up well for the future, including the construction of the new headquarters. Coming on the back of a poor financial situation, the team has been busy working to change its mid-sized perspective into a global perspective by enhancing its processes and structures.

"We have more or less doubled our turnover from 2013 and this is expected to show in 2015 and 2016," Franks says. "We expect that by around 2016 we will have a



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€1 billion gross, based on what we have already booked as contracts from our customers. That will be realised, beginning with new technologies and new facilities including small facility expansions and new production lines. That is our very next step."

That aforementioned growth is what Frank says he is currently most proud of. He credits his dedicated and enthusiastic team of staff for helping the company to realise this success and adds that they are what make Inalfa Roof Systems Group unique in the marketplace.

"Often the spirit gets lost when you are growing a company," he explains. "That spirit is still alive at Inalfa Roof Systems Group. That, I think, is the greatest thing that we have here. The people are the greatest thing and I am incredibly proud of that. We are staying together as one team and we are accelerating our organisation. We are still in the mindset that we are a mid-sized company but we certainly have a lot of spirit to make things happen. It really is the spirit of our team that makes all the difference. No technology can replace a motivated team. Without our people as our core value, success would have been impossible. That is, from my point of view, one of our greatest achievements."

Inalfa Roof Systems Group employs around 3,700 staff. Some are based in the Netherlands, while >

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"Inalfa is a professional and forward-thinking company. Ricor works very closely with the entire IRS team on many steel products from concept to completion. IRS is on a journey of rapid growth, and Ricor are supporting all the way." - Angel Esteban, New Business Manager, Ricor Group



there are others who work from the numerous offices and facilities scattered throughout the US, Mexico, Brazil, Japan, China, Korea, Slovakia, and Poland. Everyone is a specialist in their own area of expertise; for example, within innovation, business development, engineering, purchasing, validation, production, or quality. There are several training and development programs in place to ensure that everyone in the team is at the top of their game—updated on the

latest tools technologies and skilled with the appropriate methodologies. This results in the successful delivery of products and services to customers.

“For the workforce, we integrated a training program to bring them up to the necessary quality expectation with a certificate,” Frank explains. “For young professionals from school or university, we offer a program called ‘Inalfa Academy’ to give them the basic knowledge of



processes, functions, regional approach, quality management and the philosophy that are behind Inalfa Roof Systems Group. That is in order to give them a better entry into the company.

“Finally, for future leaders, there is a junior executive program in place and we just started with a senior executive program also. Alongside these kinds of training and development programs, frequent information is released by internal newspapers, and once a year direct information is shared from top management to everybody within the company to inform them about strategy, opportunities and challenges for the next 12 months and beyond.”

Inalfa Roof Systems Group’s motto is ‘quality in the DNA’—an approach which is always front of mind. The company is dedicated to providing high-quality products and services to its customers, fulfilling the highest of expectations. It consistently fosters



an atmosphere of problem prevention and continuous improvement of processes, both within the organisation and at a supplier and third-party supplier level.

Frank says that when a company is growing, people often get distracted and overlook the values they hold the closest. “We can’t forget about what our customers need from us—delivering on quality and delivering on price. Our slogan ‘quality in the DNA’ refers to having the perfect product, behaviours, attitudes, and processes.

“It makes us aware of how we are behaving internally, as well as externally, to our customers; how we are qualifying ourselves; and how we are running our processes and improving our way of working—that’s the kind of quality we strive for and it’s a focus right throughout the entire company.”

Another core value within Inalfa Roof Systems Group is its commitment to innovation. That is a driving force behind its growth ambitions and continuous product improvement. Its global advanced technology function is centralised at the Venray headquarters and is the heart of all of the company’s innovation processes. It has a balanced team of highly experienced, creative, and culturally diverse people who work daily on planning, engineering and managing future concepts.

Here, long-term product strategies are developed based on a data-driven process with input from original equipment manufacturers, market trends, consumer research, and supplier innovations. Then the products are developed based on these creative concepts and product roadmaps. The focus is always on maximising customer value.

Inalfa Roof Systems Group’s modularity strategy drives its development process to reduce technical risks and create maximum cost efficiency. The final execution of this global standardisation and modularity control is completed before the release of any new technology. Finally, the innovation is safeguarded by the technology specialist who works together with the intellectual property department.

The research and development unit is vital to ensuring that Inalfa Roof Systems Group is able to deliver its highly innovative solutions to its customer base. The business has global capability, employing approximately 380 staff who are predominantly located at its home base of Venray in the Netherlands, as well as Auburn Hills in the US, and Mado-myeon in Korea. Inalfa Roof Systems Group has almost 400 patents protecting its intellectual property.

“Innovation is enormously important to us,” Frank says. “However, it does not always mean



“It does not make any sense to be the best at researching and developing to find a new idea only to discover that, at the end of the day, it is not at all interesting for the customer.”

- Frank Loeschmann

that we are creating something new. It means we are creating something new in relation to our customer as well as in relation to our suppliers. It does not make any sense to be the best at researching and developing to find a new idea only to discover that, at the end of the day, it is not at all interesting for the customer.

“Innovation is very important but it has to be guided by the necessity from the market and by the necessity of our customers. For example, in relation to new functions, it has to be also reliable in terms of costs because that’s what the client wants. At the end of the day, nobody wants to pay more for a sunroof only because it is a shadow system. These are the things we constantly need to be considering.”

Frank continues on to say that he doesn’t believe Inalfa Roof Systems Group has all that much competition in the market. “There are some three companies leading the roof market and some six or seven following that, but they are all on a different level. We are a >



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Developments within the automotive industry are rapid and Ewals Cargo Care is serious about keeping ahead of the changes. Innovation is a key factor both in equipment and ICT, and in logistic networks and services. With this in mind, Ewals Cargo Care has become one of the most important logistics partners for the European automotive industry.

Wherever you grow, we follow

Over 100 years ago, Ewals Cargo Care shipped its first load and today it is a lead logistics provider with more than 3.000 Mega Huckepack Trailers in a European intermodal network. It has a distinct focus on the development and optimisation of supply chains.

The creator of the MEGA trailer

Customer-driven innovation is in Ewals Cargo Care's DNA. The standard was set with the development of the MEGA trailer, followed by the intermodal Mega Huckepack trailer and recently, by the all new Mega Huckepack XLS with its extra safe and secure side curtains.

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For Ewals Cargo Care, innovation goes beyond its trailer development. An example of this is TES (Tactical Engineering Solution). TES has already proved itself as a tool that, in the hands of experienced process engineers, achieves supply chain cost reductions of up to 15 per cent for automotive companies with complex supply chains.



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For those that want to optimise their supply chain, with a partner which purely functions as a control tower, Ewals Cargo Care launched its 4PL daughter company e-Logistics Control at the beginning of this century.

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With its roots in the Ewals Cargo Care organisation, e-Logistics Control manages to combine the best of two worlds. On one hand the complete neutrality and objective recommendations as a 4PL whilst on the other hand being able to provide services, project managers and experience from within an organisation with more than 100 years of experience.

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Besides the constant optimisation of your supply chain and the strategic network design, e-Logistics Control takes full operational responsibility. It is strong in delivering change management processes and the implementation of improvement projects.

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As a neutral partner, we will perform many logistics activities and handle a lot of information in your supply chain. All this data can be translated into relevant management information such as KPIs, environmental statistics and financial savings that have been achieved.



e-Logistics Control and Inalfa

e-Logistics Control started managing lanes for Inalfa Roof Systems in 2009 and since then has grown to become the lead logistics provider for Inalfa in Europe, managing all its flows as of 2012.

Further collaboration was established in 2012 when also more and more intercontinental shippings from the far east and the United States into Europe came under the supervision of e-Logistics Control's Air & Ocean department.

Nowadays, Inalfa Roof Systems is one of the most appreciated customers of e-Logistics Control and a testament to the long term collaboration that can exist between companies.

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Every second year, Inalfa Roof Systems Group hosts a Global Supplier Day where it promotes its 'quality in the DNA' catchphrase. The most recent event was held in November 2014 in Frankfurt, Germany. It was the fourth event to be run and saw 39 suppliers participate with a total attendance of 110 people.

Frank delivered an interesting speech which focused on a variety of topics. These included: 'quality in the DNA' being present everywhere and every day; the company's growth phase, which is bringing ample opportunities for everyone; its path to be the winner in the sunroof business; having strategically formed relations with suppliers; innovation and new production concepts; and how its manufacturing strategy works in line with its global footprint development.

In a series of workshops, suppliers then had the opportunity to share feedback on a variety of issues such as quality, innovation, and continuous improvement. Points raised were summarised by Inalfa Roof Systems Group for it to take action and address the problems in the immediate future.



An important part of the product development process for Inalfa Roof Systems Group is the intensive and thorough validation of the roof systems against the required specifications of the customer, the legal requirements, and the company's engineering standards. During the early design phase, it uses 3-D computer-aided design kinematics and virtual verification methods to verify the strength, stiffness, and behaviour of the roof systems in a vehicle environment.

"We work together with the original equipment manufacturers to find new ideas and also to accelerate new innovations which are related to what the customer is requesting."

- Frank Loeschmann

part of the top three and we initially came into the market as a fast follower. Now, I think we are on a step forward in terms of innovation and we are going to get ahead of our competitors. Our specialty is having a good price, giving good-quality service and products to the customer, and, as I said earlier, having a good spirit in the workplace.

"We work together with the original equipment manufacturers to find new ideas and also to accelerate new innovations which are related to what the customer is requesting. I think that is quite a specialty of our research and development team—not to wait to only find our own solutions but to find solutions in cooperation with the customer as well."

After these virtual analyses, the first prototypes of the roofs and the first serial roof systems, built on the production line, are tested at Inalfa Roof Systems Group's validation centre. This centre is a specially developed test laboratory where the robustness of the roof systems is checked under extreme climate conditions, such as high and low temperatures, humidity, and sunlight. Noise, vibration, corrosion and hardness testing are also part of the product validation phase to ensure high-quality roof systems.

The facility has restricted access and covers a surface area of around 1,600 square metres; it is equipped with many climate chambers, vibration tables, the sound chambers and special areas

"There were some issues raised in terms of how sometimes the speed of growth can make it a little bit difficult to follow. We also discussed the quality level that we are constantly expecting from our suppliers. These are minor issues, not really huge problems; just issues that we all have to address to come to a common understanding of what we all need to do together to fulfil the customers' expectations. At the end of the day, we want to meet our end customers' expectations and deliver what they require from us in the automotive area."

Frank says the Global Supplier Day is always a great opportunity to review the last couple of years and share plans for the future. At the end of the formalities, the Global



Suppliers Awards were presented to the best-performing suppliers from the various regions. The winners for 2014 were: Hatch in North America, Samwoo in South Korea, Feiyu in China, and CC Plast in Europe.

“It’s exactly what I mentioned earlier in terms of ‘quality in the DNA,’” Frank explains. “We are holding this Global Supplier Day every two years. At the previous event, in 2012, we gave our suppliers—our partners—a very good overview of what will happen in the future, and not everybody saw it so optimistically at that time, because in 2012 the situation was not really perfect. So there was a little bit of a struggle with the suppliers during that time. That’s what we found.

“Last year, we were able to show that everything we promised at that 2012 event we were able to deliver on. The success was on the table and that also gave the suppliers a lot of confidence in

what we are doing, and also in terms of the future of the business.

“I got some very nice and some very good feedback after the Global Supplier Day. People were saying that it is really good to partner with Inalfa Roof Systems Group and to be able to do something together as a team. We also had a lot of requests from suppliers about not only doing business with them but about also doing some top technology work with them. This is in order to get the right technologies out to the customer.

“The main benefit we believe that came from the fourth Global Supplier Day was the trust that we were able to form and develop with our suppliers. It is all about giving them confidence in us so they know we are talking in real terms and that we are the real deal. We walk the talk and at the end of the day that was seen by our suppliers. Everybody was able to learn what we are all about and



know that we value our supply chain a lot.

“The Global Supplier Day is not only about supplier and customer relations, it’s also about developing a more directional type of partnership, and that is really important for us. That is because we are still not a huge company and we need this direct connection with our suppliers, and also their partnership in terms of technologies and also in terms of quality.”

Relationships with suppliers are all about forming a collaboration in order to ensure the ongoing improvement of product quality, service, and support for customers. As a benchmark of reliability in both product and service quality, Inalfa Roof Systems Group adheres to a formal quality system that conforms with all TS 16949 and ISO 14001 standards, as well as a number of supplementary customer requirements. Furthermore, its facilities in Korea have been awarded with the OHSAS 18004 certification.

Frank adds that it is “very important” for Inalfa Roof Systems Group to establish strong relationships with its supply chain early on before spending the time to nurture those connections. “We can do a lot by having bilateral meetings, by communicating on the phone, and by WebEx, which is a company that provides on-demand collaborations, online meetings, web conferencing, and video-conferencing applications.

“We have all of these kinds of communication methods that we use, and then once a year, or biannually, we have to meet directly with them and we have to share what has been happening. For me, it is also enormously important to get the suppliers together to get to know each other and perhaps create something new out of the complete supply meeting. For example, we might be doing something with a glass supplier and a frame supplier in a common sense and this understanding is crucially important. It is the best when you have a name card from somebody that you have met and then you can call them directly and you know exactly with whom you are talking.”

Inalfa Roof Systems Group is committed to protecting the environment that its employees, customers, suppliers, and the broader community live and work in. Through its environmental management system, the business >

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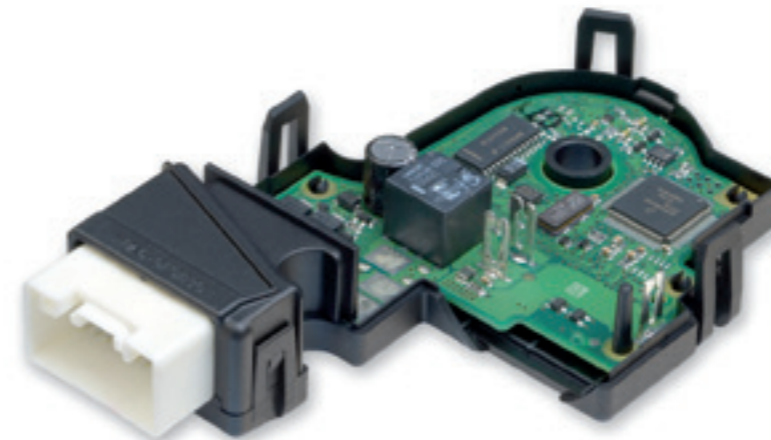
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Regarding tools of automotive heat shields, we have customers like ElingKlinger AG and Lydall Gerhardi from Germany and achieved great successes on the development of heat shield tools for cars like Lamborghini and Mercedes-Benz.

The holding volume of cars in China is about 150 million. Now the annual auto production in China is about 20 million, which can only meet the demand of replacing old cars after a few years. Thus, the development potential of the Chinese automotive industry is promising. We are willing to have win-win cooperation and share a future with old and new customers.

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periodically establishes objectives and targets that enable it to continually improve its processes. Therefore, it is committed to preventing pollution and complying with applicable legal and other requirements that relate to its environmental management system.

Furthermore, Inalfa Roof Systems Group ensures its actions are socially responsible. It wants to provide a valuable contribution to society and therefore supports, where possible, initiatives that fit into the organisation and its identity. It only currently sponsors various causes through its Dutch organisation but welcomes submissions.

Looking forward, Franks says that the Inalfa Roof Systems Group has to work hard to balance its actions out, following on from the great period of growth it has experienced over the past couple of years.

"I think at this moment we have to take care to stabilise our way of doing," he notes. "As I already mentioned earlier, we doubled our turnover in a short period of time so now we really have to have a stabilised organisation to make the next growth step happen.

"The next growth step will come and I would like to say that it will happen nearly automatically because we have developed such a high level of trust with our customers. We are requested to work with them together and they are asking us to do business for them. The growth will not be the



challenge; instead, the challenge for us will be to stabilise ourselves in terms of delivering quality for, let's say as an example, a €500 million turnover.

"And to deliver that same high level of quality also for €1 billion or €1.5 billion turnover, and so on, will be a challenge in the future. What is the most important and most critical thing in a growing phase is to take the time to stabilise ourselves in terms of quality and administration; not to spend too

much on things that are not going to be really valuable for the business. From my point of view, we now have to take care with what we are doing next, and we are prepared to do that."

With its new headquarters under construction, well-developed relationships with staff, customers, suppliers, and partners, and a solid plan in place to continue its success in the automotive market, the future for Inalfa Roof Systems Group looks bright. •