

European News



Merger of BTI and Berner Construction



From June 2023, BTI and the Berner Germany Construction Division will become the new brand BTI by Berner - and at the same time one of the largest B2B trading companies in the construction industry on the German market.

In the future, around 1,000 employees will provide building trade customers with fastening materials, tools, chemicals, work clothing and many other products and services. In the field of individual system solutions for roof and window installation, as well as for fire protection, BTI by Berner will be one of the market leading specialists.

Until now, BTI and Berner's construction divisions have operated separately on the German market. From June onwards, BTI by Berner customers in Germany will be able to obtain everything from a single source. BTI scores with customers above all in the areas of sanitary heating, air conditioning and electrical installation, roof and window installation, wood connection technology and fire protection. The Construction Division of Berner Germany is strong in construction chemicals, metal construction, tools and DIN parts.

The decision is part of the Berner Group's growth strategy in the construction segment. In order to achieve this goal, the company has invested in the expansion of logistics, in specialist training offers for employees and in the expansion of IT and the product range. "We will also massively accelerate and consistently continue the digital transformation. The team has worked hard together to achieve this, which is why we are now one of the leading medium-sized companies in Europe when it comes to transformation and digitalisation of the business model," emphasises Christian Berner.



ACL Joins Ideal Tridon Group

Ideal Tridon Group, a leading global manufacturer of clamping, coupling, and support products, has announced the acquisition of Advanced Couplings Limited (ACL) – a manufacturer and supplier of stainless steel clamp type tube connections to the food, pharmaceutical and associated process industries.

Shaun Henry, sales director at Advanced Couplings Limited, explains: "We are very excited for our partnership with Ideal Tridon –with its commitment to service and dedication to quality making it a great fit with ACL's mission. We know that our customers will benefit from the combination of our companies, allowing us to leverage Ideal's existing global footprint, product line and engineering capabilities. We are proud of the reputation that ACL has earned over the past 35 years and will be able to continue to strengthen our capabilities to better serve our customers."

Ideal Tridon serves a diverse set of end global markets by offering a broad portfolio of highly engineered clamp, coupling and strut support systems. This is the most recent acquisition for Ideal Tridon, uniquely positioning the combined companies to serve European customers with an unmatched industrial product portfolio.

"We are thrilled to have ACL join our Ideal Tridon family," said Rick Stepien, CEO of Ideal Tridon. "Bringing our companies together will allow us to expand into new geographies and extend our portfolio offerings into new and existing markets."

Ford Aerospace Acquired by SPIROL

SPIROL has announced that Ford Aerospace Ltd – based in South Shields, UK, and specialised in the manufacture of high precision metal components and sub-assemblies for the aerospace, industrial and high-technology sectors – will be joining the SPIROL group of companies.



With a legacy spanning 75 years as an expert in fastening, joining and assembly, SPIROL's well established global footprint will take the UK-based Ford Aerospace's products to a wider international market. In addition, one of SPIROL's core principles is



to continuously reinvest back into the business to ensure long-term, enhanced success and better serve its customers. This principle is also firmly held by Ford Aerospace and therefore the synergies in markets, products, history, and approach to providing value to its customers, tie SPIROL and Ford closely together.

Ford Aerospace's technical skills in 'space compensating' management – the production of laminated and solid shims that ensure fast, precision tolerance compensation used on products such as fuselages, gearboxes and movable components – was a key offering that attracted SPIROL. These solid and laminated shims enable clients to reduce stock of individual shims and offer the option of 'sizing' a particular shim by adjusting the shim pack to the desired thickness on assembly. These products simplify the assembly process while simultaneously reducing the overall cost of the assembly.



Eurobond Adhesives Acquired by Techsil

Adhesives specialist, Techsil, a company within the Diploma Group, has acquired the trade and assets of Eurobond Adhesives. Techsil has been aware of Eurobond for some time and says the two companies are a great strategic and cultural fit, sharing similar values, business models and end user markets.

Formed in 1984, Eurobond Adhesives has been a very successful business under the leadership of Simon Dearing, operating with an onus on outstanding customer service and excellent products. However, Simon felt it the right time to sell the business and find the right trusted partner to help support long-term growth with the backing of a larger resourced adhesives' group.

With a technical sales interface team established to smooth the acquisition, this augments Techsil's broad technical adhesive offering with the onus on adhesive, potting and thermal management solutions for the manufacturing sector and introduces the company to some attractive new customers and market segments, such as sign, glass and sheet metal bonding, amongst others.

Since 2021, Techsil, which was founded in 1989 with a focus on distribution of technical and high performance silicones, has been part of Diploma's 'controls' business unit, which distributes into the speciality adhesives, wire and cables, interconnect products, and specialty fasteners segments. The company has grown to encompass many more specialist adhesive technologies without losing its core reputation for excellent customer service. The company follows a problem solving engineering and design led approach to finding the right adhesive and sealant solution for its customers.

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BOSSARD

Continued Sales Growth for Bossard

Bossard Group continued its growth path in the first quarter of 2023, in spite of last year's high comparative base. Sales grew by 4.4% to CHF 304.5 million (prior year: CHF 291.6 million), equivalent to an increase of 7.7% in local currency. The Group's organic growth corresponded to 5.8% in local currency.

In Europe, in an environment of weakening economic growth, Bossard posted a sales increase of 0.6% to CHF 170.9 million, an increase of 4% in local currency. The focus on the growth industries was supportive to further growth. Sales in America increased by 24.7% to CHF 85.3 million. Adjusted for acquisitions, growth in local currency amounted to 16.7%. The favourable business performance was driven by the ongoing diversification of the customer base. Bossard also succeeded in establishing new customer relationships in the electromobility sector, with noteworthy growth rates. Bossard Ontario Inc in Canada (formerly PENN Engineered Fasteners Corporation), consolidated since 1st December 2022, contributed to the positive sales performance. Sales in Asia declined by 9.4% to CHF 48.3 million, a drop of 3.2% in local currency. The major contributing factors included the impact of lifting of Covid-19 restrictions in China, the high comparative base from 2022, and the strong Swiss franc.

Notwithstanding the further normalisation of supply chains and improved product availability, global wage and cost inflation as well as the skilled labour shortage remain central concerns. Bossard thinks these factors are likely to further drive demand for its automated and digital Smart Factory Logistics and Smart Factory Assembly solutions, which can significantly reduce the total cost of ownership in C-parts management and assembly for customers, thereby sustainably and measurably increasing their competitiveness.

As for growth opportunities for the future, Bossard believes the course of inflation, central bank policies, geopolitical tensions, and the uncertainties on the procurement market will continue to persist. As a result, the market environment will remain challenging. Yet even a volatile market environment offers opportunities, especially for product solutions and digital services in the growth industries of electromobility, railway, electronics, and medical technology.

A Strong Q1 with Record Sales for Bulten AB

Bulten AB has reported a strong opening quarter of the year, with net sales at SEK 1.387 billion (€122.4 million), an increase of 34.1% on the same period last year (2022: SEK 1.034 billion). Operating earnings (EBIT) totalled SEK 116 million, equating to an operating margin of 8.4%.

Anders Nyström, president and CEO at Bulten, commented: "We have started the year with excellent financial results, and note that this is the fifth consecutive quarter with sales in excess of SEK 1 billion."

He continued: "The first quarter of 2023 began with an excellent sales figure of SEK 1.387 billion, which is in line with our growth targets. This is an improvement of 34% on the same period in the previous year, and slightly better than last quarter, which was itself a record quarter for sales. Furthermore, operating margin of 8.4% indicates that we are on track to deliver on the financial targets we have set for 2024. Our resolute efforts to streamline the operation, while carefully balancing cost consciousness against the need for necessary investments, have certainly produced results. In addition, our focus on adjusting prices to customers in line with rising costs and inflation has had a positive impact on the results."



"For several quarters now, I have been talking about the importance of reducing our stock levels, mainly so that we can free up capital for new investments. During the first few months of the year, we have reduced stock levels by SEK 47 million, which has had a positive effect on cash flow. Our focus on stock levels has helped us to identify further potential for improvement in our internal material flows, and in our supply chain. We still have some work to do in order to further adjust stock levels, and also to further improve control and planning of production and material deliveries."

Expansion at TCB Continues at a Rapid Pace

Tension Control Bolts Ltd (TCB) states it is better placed than ever to meet demand, following significant investment in its production, warehousing and Quality Assurance Laboratory – with every aspect of the business geared up for increased demand from discerning customers globally.

Firstly, TCB's new warehouse has created additional 9,000 pallet spaces. There has also been major investment in a new purpose built QA laboratory at its UK headquarters in Wrexham, including the recruitment of technical engineering roles and the commissioning of updated test kits to carry out tensile strength tests under



wedge, core hardness, pre-load and carburisation tests, which the company points out not only meets but also exceeds the mandatory European and British standards. As always there is also full traceability with 3.1 certification now having additional detail, providing the related assurance in a transparent and comprehensive manner.

With the investments in its new QA laboratory, TCB is inviting all customers to see its QA laboratory and capabilities first hand. Recent visitors include a project team from Laing O'Rourke who are building 'The People Stadium'; the new home of Everton football club, with over 30,000 TCB's being supplied to that stadium alone.



An AFC Industries Company

TFC Seals New Acquisition to Strengthen VMI Portfolio

TFC Ltd, an AFC Industries Company, has added to its portfolio of services and products with the acquisition of EAP Seals. This move strengthens TFC's position as a leading provider of Vendor Managed Inventory (VMI) solutions and technical engineering products.

EAP Seals is a leading distributor of rubber sealing products, including O-rings, gaskets and associated technical products. With almost 50 years' experience in the industry, the business has strong and long-standing relationships both with its suppliers and customers. The business' specialty is the O-ring, which it supplies in a range of materials including nitrile, genuine DuPont Viton, EPDM, silicone and high value chemically-inert perfluorelastomers. Alongside its product offering, the business has established complementary services including degassing, bespoke vulcanised joint manufacturing, and a bagging and barcoding service.

EAP Seals states it has one of the most varied stockholdings in Europe, and offers an individualised and personal service to its customers across several industries, including the oil and gas, food and beverage, energy and power, aerospace and defence, automotive, pharmaceutical, petrochemical, process engineering and water industries. EAP's high-quality products are used in sealing applications in difficult environments, such those with high temperatures and those subject to aggressive chemicals.

EAP Seals will continue to be run by its current management team and operate out of its existing premises in Heywood, Greater Manchester, UK. ■



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