



This will cover it

As a company, when focussing on a very particular type of product, it is sensible, in return, to make this product suitable for a large variety of applications and customers. This has been the successful strategy of GROUPE BHD based in Nort-sur-Erdre north of Nantes in the Pays de la Loire region of France. Originally focussed on textiles for lorry trailers, today, GROUPE BHD provides an extensive portfolio for a wide range of applications.

“Our core business are technical textiles,” states General Director Vincent Plessis. “These are used for different purposes which can be summed up as the protection of people and goods as well as for communication purposes.” With its textile portfolio, GROUPE BHD addresses a broad target group. “We have a very wide product spectrum covering various industries,” Mr. Plessis adds. “Our main focus is on custom-made products made from different types of woven fabric from thin canvas to textiles used to cover the roof of a stadium, for example.” The textiles used by GROUPE BHD are sourced from producers across Europe, particularly from within France.

While the company started out as a provider of canvas curtains for lorry trailers, today, this business area only makes up around 5 to 6% of turnover. Other fields of activity are textile architecture such as covers for stadiums, swimming pools or pool bars. “We provide covers for buildings such as stadiums,” says



GROUPE BHD is an expert in technical textiles for various purposes such as textile architecture

the General Director. “For example, we made the covering for the stadiums in Lyon, Lille and Nice.” Sheeting for environmental protection for waterproofing, biogas treatment and storage containment; as well as agricultural solutions for use on silos, stables and water tanks are part of GROUPE BHD’s extensive product portfolio. “We also work in aviation,” Mr. Plessis explains. “This is a rapidly evolving

industry for us, we deliver various products from seat covers to side panneling to floor coverings. We also provide products for the transportation of airplane parts before assembly.” Furthermore, GROUPE BHD works in civilian protection, producing products such as firefighting equipment or blow-up tents. Even innovative barriers to confine pollution at sea such as oil spills from ships, for example

the Costa Concordia, are provided by the group. Camouflage tents, helicopter covers and textiles for mobile hospitals are products used by yet another target group, the defence industry.

“We also cater to the leisure industry with a wide variety of solutions, for example for sporting events such as the Olympic Games or circus tents,” the General Director



For the aviation industry GROUPE BHD provides different products from seat covers to side panelling to floor coverings



Industrial use is another sector for the group's innovative products

says. "Cirque du Soleil is one of our biggest customers." Last but not least, GROUPE BHD's portfolio encompasses tents and banners for marketing events and festivals, and various products for industrial purposes.

The company was founded by the father of current president Jean Dominique Blond 40 years ago in 1974. Since its foundation, the group has grown mainly through acquisitions. Today, it comprises 26 subsidiaries. "The Maine Bache subsidiary has three branches, all the other subsidiaries only have one," Mr. Plessis explains. "Our latest office opened in Morocco just a few weeks ago. It is the only subsidiary we maintain outside France." At the headquarters of the parent company in Nort-sur-Erdre GROUPE BHD has also integrated a research and development department. The group of companies employs 440 members of staff who turn over 62 million EUR in revenue annually. "Export varies depending on the industry,"

says Mr. Plessis. "Our military tents for example are used the world over. But the export in this case is indirect – we deliver to customers in France who then take our products abroad."

Concerning its marketing activities the Managing Director states that GROUPE BHD regularly cooperates with architects. Competition is not a major topic for the group: "When it comes to competition, there are various small suppliers that are competitors only in one particular niche," Mr. Plessis states. "But these small companies often struggle economically." The General Director puts the success of GROUPE BHD down to a variety of factors: "We have an extremely wide portfolio with many diverse customers. Thanks to our high level of expertise and our equally broad know-how, we are able to fulfil every need any customer might have. That way, we have several main pillars and do not depend on individual customers or cyclical fluctuations. What's more

– thanks to our broad network we are very close to our customers, which these appreciate a lot."

Considering the company's long history of successful development it is no surprise that Mr. Plessis has a very positive view of the future of GROUPE BHD. "In the years to come we are planning to grow further through additional acquisitions," he explains. "We expect that by 2018 we will be able to achieve a turnover of between 90 and 100 million EUR." The company also intends to increase the number of employees to about 500 in the same time span. What's

more, GROUPE BHD might also not limit itself to French soil in the future as the General Director reveals: "We are indeed considering a geographic diversification, too. We already have first contacts to Canada today." In the aviation industry there will be a pole in the North American country by 2018 concerning the renovation of aeroplane. "We are going to establish ourselves in that area," Mr. Plessis adds. "Another region we are currently considering is Asia but there are no concrete plans on our agenda yet." ■

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