

SEW-Eurodrive looks to the future at EMA

At a press briefing at the SEW-Eurodrive stand at Electra Mining, the company's South African MD, Raymond Obermeyer, outlined some of the company's global expansion plans while national sales and marketing manager, Norman Maleka, presented the forward-looking control, drive and motion technologies on display.

"SEW Eurodrive is a global and local market leader in drive technology and we are continually striving to make sure that our local subsidiary keeps up the standards expected of us by our global partners," begins Obermeyer.

Setting SEW-Eurodrive apart, he says: "We are one of the only private companies in this industry, with all of our major competitors being international public companies. We are owned and run by two brothers, Jeorgen and Rainer Blickle, who are hands-on people that run this company as if it were a ship. We have direct access to them and if I ask for permission to put up a new building, after examining the justification, they will approve the investment quickly and willingly," Obermeyer continues.

"In spite of the challenges facing the South African economy with its weak rand and depressed mining sector, we find it easy to speak

to our shareholders who are always willing to assist in easing our pain."

He says that SEW-Eurodrive is expanding all over the world: "We are putting up five plants in Russia, a market that we have never touched before, and in Africa, plants are going up in up in Morocco and Cameroon. We in South Africa are at an advanced planning stage for our new Aeroton plant in Johannesburg and we intend to also establish a plant in Port Elizabeth," he notes adding that wherever SEW invests, it does not take the money back out. The investment is set up for the long-term benefit of the country and its local communities.

With respect to product development and support, Obermeyer says that SEW-Eurodrive has over 500 engineers designing products, "which means we are on the move all the time, continually improving our products and expanding our range to meet international



The centrepiece of SEW-Eurodrive's Electra Mining Africa 2018 stand consisted of two automated guided vehicles (AGVs) servicing a conveyor to simulate how a warehouse or a logistics operation might pick up and move products from stores to a dispatching point.

quality standards and market demands," says the company's South African MD, before handing over to Norman Maleka.



SEW-Eurodrive's MIG (mechatronic industrial gearbox) concept is an all in one compact power pack designed to be complete, efficient and very easy to assemble.

A walk through the stand

Taking us through SEW-Eurodrive's 2018 stand at Electra Mining Africa, Maleka starts with a VSD cabinet showcasing the drives portfolio. "Here we have specialised products such as our LTP-B Eco variable speed drive, which can be used to extract dust or circulate clean air into a shaft. It can pump out slurry water, or even pump in water for cooling applications. It is a new product for us, which is why it is at the forefront at Electra Mining Africa 2018," Maleka begins.

"For this year, though, we wanted to make the exhibits more interactive, so you will see how we are able to use the VSD in auto mode to maintain an air flow or we can adjust the flow to a new value from the drive," Maleka explains.

Pointing to a conveyor being serviced by two automated guided vehicles (AGVs) on the stand, Maleka first lifts out the MoviSafe units on show, which use sensors and light barriers to ensure run-safe operations of systems such as AGVs. The public is able to safely move around and in front of the moving vehicles, which will automatically stop to avoid a collision.

The AGV-based system itself, Maleka explains, is a new product for SEW and an example of its ever expanding portfolio. "This is a new offering in our conveyor portfolio called EasyDrive. What we are showcasing here is how a warehouse or a logistics opera-

tion might pick up and move products from stores to a dispatching point," he says.

The use of AGVs can eliminate the need for extensive and rigid conveyor systems, while also reducing the requirements for fork lift trucks. Traditional conveyor systems have to be permanently installed, which makes changing loading and offloading points much more difficult. "With these AGVs, we can simply adjust the path by moving the taped track on the floor," Maleka points out. "This makes it

easier to plan a factory layout, and far easier to upgrade or change that layout as throughput increases," he adds.

He then points to a power pack unit for mine conveyor applications. "Here we have an SEW industrial gear (IG) unit coupled to an SEW motor being driven by an SEW VSD. It's a complete conveyor drive solution. Rather than focusing on the individual products, we now prefer to engineer the total solution – and the applications for solutions such as these are endless," he says.

He then moves on to camera positioning system suspended on four cables. "This four-line system uses our MoviAxis positioning system, typically to control a video camera's movement and position at a football stadium. The camera is able to follow the player with the ball and keep up with the play – and we have installed one of these systems at Ellis Park."

The system uses four pulleys, synchronised and controlled by SEW-Eurodrive's MoviAxis multi-axis servo inverter, which enable the camera's position to be accurately and dynamically controlled to follow the game. "We have also had enquiries for using this system instead of drones for inspecting the inside of large tanks. Being a tethered solution, this is far safer and just as flexible," Maleka suggests.

Turning to a futuristic looking power pack unit called MIG (mechatronic industrial gearbox), Maleka says that this future concept is an all in one compact power pack designed to be very easy to assemble. "What is the future of mining? I promise you now that as long as the lights are still on at our mines, SEW-Eurodrive will continue to be there developing new and better solutions for mine operators, and for all of our other industries, for that matter. We are a progressive and forward-looking company who believes in our future," he concludes. □



SEW-Eurodrive's MoviAxis servo inverter system was shown controlling a video camera via four pulley wheels reeling lines tethered to the top of the camera's support platform.