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Supporting true productivity

Steve Timms, managing director of HGS Ghana Ltd, talks to Jayne Alverca about what it means to protect and enhance mining and industrial assets

Mining and industrial plant does not come cheap. Even the most basic installation will typically represent an investment that can be measured in millions of dollars. Once a mine is up and running or an industrial plant is commissioned and functioning, its owners will share a single objective—the operation, be what it may, must be as efficient, productive and safe as possible, with downtime through equipment failure kept to an absolute minimum.

HGS Ghana Ltd was formed in August 2006 to support customers across West Africa in maximising the value of their capital assets. In global terms, 2006 might not have counted as a good year in which to launch a new enterprise; however steadily increasing commodity and mineral prices have enabled HGS to buck the trend and establish a pronounced growth curve.

Headquartered in Accra, there is also a regional HGS office in Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso, and the company is now also working with customers across the West African region in Mali, Guinea, Niger and Nigeria.

“Our original focus was as a hydraulic solutions provider to the mining industry,” explains Steve Timms, managing director. “We quickly expanded to take on board hydrocarbons in general; since then, we have grown to offer a full support service that takes in all manner of mining and industrial operations. Our range of services and products is now very broad but all of our offering has a common purpose. We are wholly geared to protecting our customer’s valuable assets and maximising their efficiency and productivity in a safe working environment and in an environmentally friendly manner.”

From a mining perspective, HGS offers support services for all mobile equipment involved in the excavation process, as well as fixed plant such as crushers, mills and conveyors. On the industrial side, the company works with customers as diverse as cement-making facilities through to bottling plants. More recently, a capability has been added to support Ghana’s booming offshore industry, where there is a requirement for specialised high performance hose and super-large hose reels.

“Our aim now is to be a ‘one-stop-shop’, offering protection and support to all kinds of machinery where there is a requirement for protection or maintenance,” says Timms. “If a poor-quality or badly fitted hose bursts, or an improperly maintained excavator refuses to budge, thousands of dollars per hour will evaporate into nothing. We work 24/7 to ensure that none of our customers ever experiences this type of scenario.”

Remote-location solutions for the hydraulic needs of the mining sector is still a speciality, and HGS supplies the best flexible hydraulic hose and fittings on the market from Italian manufacturer, Alfagomma, as well as many other ancillary items such as greasing equipment, pumps, pressure gauges and adaptors. The company has a growing footprint in satiating the region’s thirst for industrial lubricants—this is met through the product range of Lincoln, the world leader in lubrication equipment and systems, based in the US. Hose reels are supplied through Cobra and Reelcraft, another two leading industrial brands. “We are fundamentally a service and solutions provider but we quickly realised that a world-class service requires the backing of world-class products and that is why we act as an agent and distributor for many of the world’s best known industrial brands,” explains Timms.

The company also offers fully stocked and equipped containers with on-site training, enabling the customer to run and maintain the facility internally. Alternatively, HGS personnel can be located on-site.

Timms is particularly pleased with the track record that HGS has achieved in servicing some of the planet’s most inhospitable and lonely locations. “Some of our work in Sierra Leone and Nigeria has presented great logistical challenges and we are very proud of



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the comprehensive solutions we have been able to deliver at remote installations. When it comes to fuel farms, for example, we can offer a complete handling service of the fuel supply from the point of delivery to the point where it is dispensed into the machines it will operate.”

He attributes the company’s strong track record and rapid growth to the attention paid to ensuring that all staff, who are a mix of African nationals and expatriates, have a complete understanding of the task in hand. The 60 employees currently on the payroll have typically worked within the hydraulic, greasing or fuel supply industries and can be counted on to have a broad knowledge of most operational and logistical problems likely to be encountered.

“We believe strongly in empowering and upskilling the people we work with,” Timms affirms. “They are the ones who are crucial to delivering customer satisfaction and developing the business into the future. Our national staff are regularly sent overseas for training, or we will bring equipment experts to Africa. The fire suppression systems that we sell, for example, are manufactured in Australia and so we have had staff from Australia visit to train both our own people and customers. Proper training is fundamental if people are to develop the skills and confidence that can only come from a profound understanding of the equipment and products they are working with.”

Timms is delighted at the headway that HGS has achieved in just five years; but he is cautious about the benefits of sustained rapid growth. “We are constantly on the lookout for new services and products that have a good strategic fit with our core focus on asset protection. Evaluation is ongoing, as we want to offer our customers as comprehensive a service as possible.

“However, there are still so many new business opportunities that await us in West and North Africa. We would not want to overstretch ourselves by reaching beyond those geographic areas where we know we can deliver an excellent service. This is what we have built our reputation upon, and it must be preserved at all costs,” he concludes. www.hgs-gh.com ●

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