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# MASTERMINDING PRODUCT ENGINEERING

*Twenty years of continuous expansion have resulted in the launch of Qatar Technical. Deputy managing director Michel Mitri talks to Gay Sutton about the transformation from an industrial refrigeration company to a knowledge-based engineering and manufacturing institution*



For those with the ambition and vision to rise to new challenges, a new era in development within Qatar is creating infinite opportunities. One such enterprise is Qatar Technical. Take a look at some of the impressive new projects that have risen from the ground over the last few years—the Diplomat Tower, the Movenpick Hotel, and the Golden Bay Tower to name just a few. The stainless steel works such as decorative hand rails and guard rails, design elements, kitchen equipment, cladding and skirting—essentially anything the architect cares to imagine—have all been manufactured in Qatar and installed by this family owned and run business.

The company dates back to 1992 when the current managing director, Gabi Mitri, established Alfa Industrial Refrigeration, continuing in the family tradition of industrial refrigeration. “Then in 2004, we recognised that there was an increasing demand for engineered products that were manufactured locally rather than imported,” explains deputy managing director Michel Mitri. “And that was the beginning of our expansion and diversification into a knowledge-based, quality-oriented manufacturing and service business.”

Significant investment has gone into expanding Alfa Industrial Refrigeration, developing new areas of expertise and capability, upgrading existing production lines and adding new ones. A skilled workforce has been drawn from around the world, and the very latest technology imported and installed. All of this has been moved to an impressive new 10,000 square metre facility



Lintel beam  
in production

at the New Industrial Area. With the opening of the plant early in 2011, the business was relaunched as Qatar Technical.

The vision is to continue growing the company, to offer exceptional product quality and reliability, and to further develop staff skills, exceeding technical achievements to encompass development in other non-technical aspects of human potential. This will be a long-term process realised through the provision of knowledge and awareness towards achieving an advanced, safer and greener work environment. “We will do this in line with His Highness’s vision for 2030, to shift Qatar’s economy to non-oil exports,” says Mitri. “One year from now, we hope to begin exporting to the GCC [Gulf Cooperation Council] countries. Then after a period of reflection, if the venture has gone well, we will start targeting the Middle East, North and South Africa and possibly the Mediterranean countries. But there are possibilities around the globe.”

The business is currently managed through four divisions. The original Alfa business has become the Industrial Refrigeration Division, and continues to design and install cold rooms and refrigeration units such as refrigerated boxes for the logistics industry and cold rooms for different business sectors, the Hassad Food and Mawashi companies



Mass production of custom accessories

being just two examples. The division also supports its customers by offering ongoing maintenance services for its products.

The Steel Fabrication Division adds to Qatar Technical a wide range of services and products that are constantly in demand. Almost any architectural drawing can be transformed into final products—many of them works of art, believes Mitri. Among the division’s many achievements have been decorative items, door and elevator architraves, customised rails and stainless

steel kitchens for some of Qatar’s iconic new developments, such as the Aspire Zone.

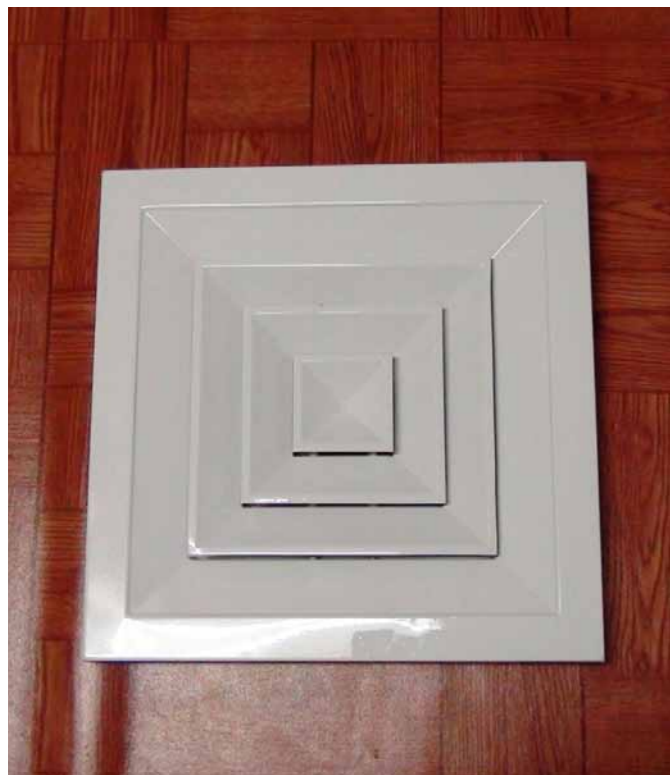
The Machining Division, with its state-of-the-art machines and skilled engineers, designs and fabricates custom manufactured skids and moulds of up to 6,000 kilos in weight to meet the everyday needs of a variety of industrial facilities. Services provided include repairing steel moulds, tools and mechanical machine parts. Finally, the Standard Products Division, including one of the largest automatic powder coating plants in Qatar, manufactures a wide range of items including cable support systems, interior fixtures, cabinets and enclosures, and structural support systems.

“The Industrial Refrigeration and Steel Fabrication Divisions are both project-based,

so we manufacture, supply and install,” says Mitri. “However, as we currently only provide maintenance services for our Refrigeration Division customers, we’re working to expand that side of the business. We’re currently looking to provide mechanical and electrical maintenance services for joineries, carpentries, business towers, industrial and water treatment facilities. All those maintenance activities will then become a fifth division of the company.”

Qatar Technical currently has a workforce of 55 people and assets comprising over 120 of the latest machines ranging from laser cutting and water jet machines through CNC production lines. Quality and reliability are the company’s hallmarks, and work is underway to verify this through

“ONE YEAR FROM NOW, WE HOPE TO BEGIN EXPORTING TO THE GCC COUNTRIES”



A new product—aluminium ceiling air diffuser



Stainless steel kitchen equipment and decorative elements



Qatar Technical's best-selling product—Kahramaa water service cabinet

## “THERE IS A LOT FOR US TO DO, SO WE ARE CURRENTLY JUST SCRATCHING THE SURFACE”

international certification of all the products.

2012 is likely to be another landmark year in the company's development from a management perspective. “I am currently restructuring the organisation,” Mitri explains. “Within the coming months, I shall be launching a new corporate structure. By then, we will have training programmes in place across all levels of the company, including technical, health and safety, and environmental training.”

The company is fully committed to

becoming a green organisation. “It's something we all have a duty to do,” Mitri says. “But we are really just at the beginning of the environmental process. We have started by providing orientation for our employees regarding the disposal of harmful waste products such as lubricants, oil and refrigerant gas.”

Some recycling initiatives are already in place. Waste steel is segregated into zones, depending on the type of raw material. This is then collected by contractors hired from

the government, recycled where possible or disposed of. And there are more initiatives at the development stage. Refrigerant gases, containing CFCs, have a very damaging effect on the environment, and the company is in the process of implementing a system to recycle refrigerant gases and prevent leakage into the atmosphere. “When we install refrigeration units for a cold room, for example, one of the steps in the installation process is to charge the system with refrigerant,” Mitri explains. “We have acquired the equipment to recycle the refrigerant, and we're working with the government to get the necessary training.” In a similar way, the company is working with the Ministry of the Environment to identify ways to safely dispose of waste oil and lubricants.

Looking to the future, there are some megaprojects currently out to tender in Qatar. There is the Heart of Doha project which is an urban renewal initiative for the residential centre of Doha. The new city of Lusail is a massive project that will include luxury residential, commercial and leisure facilities, occupying some 37 square kilometres of waterfront, and there is a new Metro system planned for Doha. “There is a lot for us to do, so we are currently just scratching the surface,” Mitri concludes. “This is just the start.” **BE**

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