

Perfect Service & Supply Strategy in the World of Rigging

by Peter Hildebrandt

In these times of increasingly fast-paced globalization great benefits come from having an international perspective. This is definitely the case with the Chicago company, All Material Handling, Inc.

Peter Brettner has been in the rigging industry for 25 years since 1989. Earlier in his career, Brettner managed the U.S. Distribution of an Austrian chain company, for 12 years. In this capacity he had a lot of exposure to the rigging community. After his success in growing this North America business he was recruited back to Europe for a corporate management position. This lasted for a year until he and his wife decided that their life in the US was more important than his position. So, Peter came back to the United States.

“At that point in 2003, I decided to start up my own company” explains Brettner. “We went with a company name that actually had some meaning rather than ‘i.e. Brettner, Incorporated’. When we went to register the domain name under Material Handling, Inc. a note back was received telling us it would cost a lot of money to purchase that URL name. We tried our current name, just adding the word ‘All’ and that one was free. Having a name beginning with ‘A’ has an added advantage of sorting to the top of alphabetical lists and directories.”

In structuring the company, three more shareholders were partnered. One is a very experienced product manager in the area of hoists. Tommy Gagnet came from a large US hoist manufacturing firm, where he managed hoist related technical departments or product marketing since 1974. “Tommy brings 40 years of experience and “know-how” to the company,” adds Brettner. “When it comes to determining the right products for clients, he is the go to guy.

“Another topnotch individual here at AMH – one with 30 years of experience – is Gerhard Berger. Berger has an extensive knowledge of the rigging industry as well as Asian and European manufacturers catering to the rigging industry. He has large distribution clients in Europe as well.

“Gerhard finds the ideal source for us in such places as Europe, China, Taiwan, Korea, or Japan. In addition, he assists European manufacturers with selling their products into Asia. “It is very important for our business to find the right sources. Sourcing is our primary know-how. For any sourcing overseas it is crucial that we have boots on the ground, so to speak”. Gerhard is key to advising where to find the best factory to manufacture our product.”

The firm’s vice president, Harald Gogg, brings 20 years of material handling experience. Reporting to Harald at the Chicago office are; Purchasing, Accounting, Shipping and Administration. Peter Brettner’s wife Iwona, CFO of 12 years, is the fourth shareholder in the company. Iwona came to the US from Poland with her financial skills in 1988 meeting Peter shortly after he arrived in 1989.



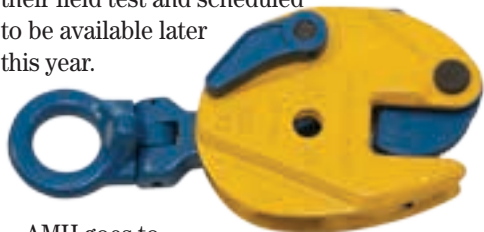
AMH Management and Shareholders

There are more differences than one would expect between Europe and the United States and one must never ignore them, according to Bettner. A good example may be the well-publicized difficulties experienced with the Chrysler – Daimler merger. Most of the differences are of a cultural nature and some due to Europe being more regulated. More relevant are the cultural differences in the way people interact which is experienced in doing business internationally.

“What we do best here at All Materials Handling is to source products in Europe and Asia, where cultures are much more challenging. These cultural differences can

never be overlooked when importing offshore manufactured product into North America. Rigging shops, Industrial distribution partners and their customers expect Americanized products that can equal the best domestic in their presentation and quality.”

All AMH products are manufactured and specified to be of the latest style, design and technology. New products and options are always being considered. Of late, a new line of universal plate lifting clamps are through their field test and scheduled to be available later this year.



AMH goes to market in two different ways. They store products at 3 USA warehouses and typically ship orders the same day they are received. Warehouses are located in the United States in such a way that products ordered may reach every customer in the continental US within two days.



The other method is with factory direct shipments. Stock orders are taken from customers and shipped directly from the factory. This direct routing of product bypasses our need to inventory in our warehouses. The related savings are passed on to our customers. There is a minimum order requirement per product group to qualify for the savings. A product group typically consist of products that are produced in each factory.

“We solicit factory direct customer orders each quarter at the same time we place orders for our AMH warehouses. The factory direct minimum purchase of each category is offset by our own demand for warehouse inventory. This keeps the minimum order dollar amount within reach of many that cannot justify full container load quantities.

“Our customers’ minimum factory direct order requirement may be one tenth of a full container, depending on the product group. Combining multiple customer factory

direct orders with AMH warehouse stock replenishment orders assures the AMH factories produce sufficient quantity to sustain production at the best price.”

All Material Handling can economically combine and ship pre-packaged factory direct orders together in full container loads. When the containers arrive in the United States, they are unloaded and the pre-packaged orders are shipped directly to customers or to the AMH warehouse. It is then in turn economical to ship multiple orders into the country and directly to multiple customers without having to order a whole container load for each customer.

“This was one of my ideas that I came up with when I started my own business. My feeling is that it is a unique system,” according to Brettner. “Dealing with offshore companies is a challenge. You have to understand the culture and capability when dealing with people in different countries. You must also keep a constant presence to insure design details and quality are optimum for the North American workplace.

“With an American company you can expect consistency. When you deal offshore, uniformity is not necessarily a given. It is particularly important to have a presence at each manufacturing location to keep an eye on things. The spectrum of quality offshore is variable. Selecting capability along with a quality assurance program is the determining factor of success.

“You can get junk and you can get excellent quality product. As an example; the quality of materials from US and European producers is usually not less than 8 on a scale of 10. Offshore the scale of quality can begin at 3 on a scale of 10.” I cannot emphasize enough how important it is to have boots on the ground at all times when producing Offshore.”

After securing the best quality you cannot walk away. Assessments must be continually made both here and there to insure that that quality continues. Any change in management of a factory must also be monitored as it can have a huge impact. “There is excellent quality coming from Offshore,” adds Brettner. “The key is to find it and to stay on top of anything that might be happening in the organization that can potentially affect the product or quality.”

When you deal with lifting products, specifications and certifications are important. The proper certificates need to

be in the box. In addition every factory test certificate, for any one of our Lifting Equipment products, is accessible through a database on line. This test database is made available to our servicing distributors to input and maintain their own test certifications.



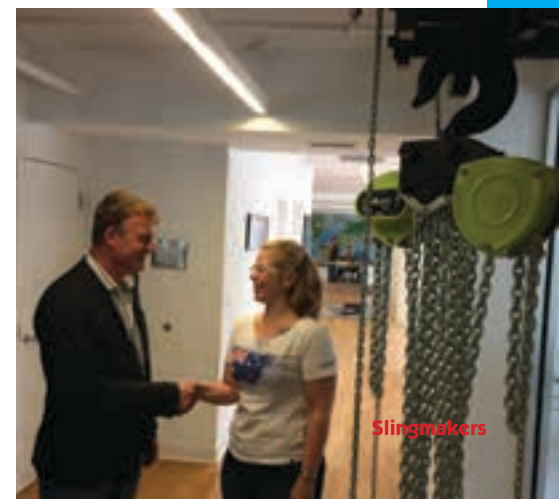
AMH hoists are in USA assembled with USA made load chain and re-tested here Hoists are AMH primary product line

It may also be available to AMH sales and distributors for retrieval of certifications by serial number. Future plans are for sales and servicing

distributors to recommend access by end users and inspection agencies; Handheld devices including apps for smart phones are planned to aid with field verifications.

Not necessarily a unique feature for business, but one that makes a real difference is attitude and follow-through when it comes to customer service.

AMH keeps customers satisfied in many ways. Top among these is there ability to ship items usually the first day an order is received. When a customer calls they will be speaking to a well trained human being that understands both the industry and the product. With some competitors, this might not always be the case. A customer may end up in the voice mailbox or the person on the other end may not have the training or resources to respond. This may be especially true if the conversation goes into how the product is applied in the workplace. AMH advertise that they can have a good, meaningful conversation with their customers as well as excellent personal relations.



Slingmakers

All Materials Handling does not have huge brand recognition, but is very nimble in addition to being good in sourcing and logistics. In a nutshell, they have good products at very competitive prices that are backed by good service. AMH may not yet be the most well-known name out there but time can only improve their recognition.

“An interesting side effect developed in the course of the 2008 recession,” explains Brettner. “Construction, maintenance and related businesses serviced were all severely affected. The value AMH offer in combination of quality products at a very competitive price was greatly appreciated when customers needed to maintain operations with limited resources. In those days, the big brand name was less relevant compared to value. The side affect was that AMH got a lot of attention from new customers and grew their sales during that time. When customers look for improved margins or to extending their operating budget then that’s where AMH comes into play.”

Brettner would like to point out their new updated web-site at: www.allmaterialhandling.com. AMH, All Material Handling Inc., is a privately-owned and operated provider of quality material handling equipment and accessories to service applications in Construction, Industrial Supply, Maintenance, Marine, Military, Mining, Petrochemical, Railroad, Rental, Ship Building and utilities, etc., through a distribution network across America. They continue to sell to North American distribution companies, primarily rigging shops, the traditional way, through a warehouse setup.

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International Capabilities but a good fit Regionally and Locally

AMH owners have more than 100 years of combined experience in manufacturing, engineering and marketing of lifting equipment. AMH distributors are found throughout North America and are supported by their main office located in Chicago, Illinois and service and distribution centers located in such excellent regional locations as Des Moines, Houston and Monroe, Georgia. AMH encourages frequent inspections and preventive maintenance programs for lifting equipment. Distributors and service centers assist in sustaining products and provide requested test documentation to comply with ASME B30 and OSHA.

They pride themselves in providing unequalled service to our customers. Quality, Support, and Quick order fulfillment remain highest priorities. They provide distributors and customers with a well-stocked, quick responding network of Service Centers and Warehouses.

Availability of complete units and parts is insured through all AMH North American Warehouses and Service Center facilities in Houston TX, Des Moines IA, and Monroe, GA. Supply networks allow shipments from multiple locations, to insure customer demands are met promptly, they have a continuous flow of products to these facilities that can be redirected while in process or in route to satisfy urgent and exceptional requirements. Authorized repair service is available from many distributors and backed by AMH North American Service Centers.

AMH's Mission

To support distributors with personal service, high quality, competitive pricing, and provide quicker delivery times than anyone else in the industry. All Material Handling (AMH) is an American based one-stop-shop company for hoist, rigging hardware, and synthetic sling needs.

With hoist capacities ranging from ¼-ton to 30-ton, and multiple warehouse locations in the continental U.S. (IA, TX and GA) they are able to cover most every need a customer might have. AMH is able to convert from order placement to front door delivery within two days. Providing not only quality to their customers, but an important time saving advantage.

As time is of the essence, so is the continuous development of the product and its accessories.

AMH sees the trend of increasing demand for self-locking hooks in wire-rope and chain-sling applications. Therefore, All Material Handling has introduced a new Self-Locking Hook option for lever hoists and hand chain hoists.

