

EMULSION FORUM

A European Alliance

Norjohn has entered into a strategic alliance with a similar company, based in Europe, to further research and develop new products.

Like Norjohn's parent company, Walker Industries, Govi is a multigenerational family business. Headquartered in Ghent, Belgium, the company has production sites there as well as in Italy, Russia and Serbia.

"Both Norjohn and Govi have similar products, clients and production issues to contend with," says Technical Services and Innovation Group director Larry Sinnige. "They are a great company to work with – they're innovative, with a similar corporate culture and the same goals and values."

Larry says since the two companies have separate geographic markets and do not compete with each other, it made sense to form a collaborative arrangement. "We are collaborating on all of our products and product lines," he says. "There are several projects we are working on that have a lot of potential."

News



Lab Moves to McMaster Innovation Park

Norjohn has consolidated its Burlington quality assurance function and its Thorold research lab into a new space at the McMaster Innovation Park in west Hamilton.

Norjohn is occupying 1,400 square feet in a building that will ultimately be part of a campus offering 1.7 million square feet of space to some 3,000 tenants.

The vision for the park "is to be an internationally recognized focal point for innovation, creativity, learning and research excellence aligned with the research strengths of McMaster University."

Norjohn moved into its new space in mid December and the lab became fully functional by mid January. "This is excellent space, it's clean and modern, is only 15 minutes from our Burlington plant and has meeting space for up to 100 people," says the company's Research and Development manager Maria Racota.

She says benefits of the new space include its proximity to McMaster University, where two graduate students are working with the Norjohn team on a polymer-based emulsifier for wax emulsions as part of their Masters degree project.

"It's inspiring to be located here, surrounded by people involved in innovation," Maria says.



McMaster Innovation Park



Employee Profile

Tracey Miranda Office Administrator

If you phone or walk into Norjohn's office, the first person you'll be greeted by is the cheerful Tracey Miranda. As Norjohn's office administrator, she ensures that all office operations run efficiently and effectively. "My job involves everything from invoicing to ordering coffee," she says of her role.

Tracey joined the company just over a year ago. Her previous jobs included working in customer service and administrative positions for a paper shredding company and a home health care business that rents medical equipment to seniors.

At Norjohn, Tracey says one of the aspects she enjoys most about her job is that it's fast paced. "I'm never stuck to my chair," she says. "Every day there's a new challenge to tackle."

Tracey says one of the qualities she enjoys most about a Walker Industries company is its support of employees and their families. "Whether it's participating in the annual summer trip to Marineland with my daughter or attending the children's Christmas party, our families are always included. It's a great perk to working here."

Tracey is a single mother to nine-year-old Madelyn, and enjoys the work-life balance of living just five minutes from the Burlington office. A dedicated mom, she spends most of her free time with her daughter in out-of-doors activities, such as biking, swimming and tubing down snowy hills in the wintertime.

Another Good Year for Asphalt Emulsions

Last year was a solid year for the asphalt emulsions business with government-funded infrastructure projects underway to stimulate the economy. The completion of the government infrastructure spending and soaring crude prices will present some challenges for 2011, according to general manager Rocco Battaglia.

On the industrial front, one of the major challenges faced by the company last year was the exit of two of Canada's four refineries from the wax manufacturing business. Both Imperial Oil in Sarnia, Ontario, and Shell in Montreal, Quebec, left the business. Norjohn has secured an alternate supply for its customers in 2011. Again, the soaring price of crude will have a potential impact on pricing, moving into the second quarter of 2011.



Better Performance and Value for 2011

The goal for the Norjohn team in 2011 will be to enhance the performance of its products, while reducing costs.

"Our customers are under pressure to reduce costs, so we'll be looking to do the same, while ensuring our products are as good or better," says Technical Services and Innovation Group director Larry Sinnige.

As an example he points to a new, less expensive and more efficient low-solids wax emulsion for use in the manufacture of composite wood panels.

"We've increased the amount of the aqueous phase and modified the particle size in the dispersed phase," he says.

"This contributes to better blending when incorporated into the customer's process. The customer is getting more efficiency from the wax with the same quality."

Normal concentrations are 57 per cent wax, while the new low solids product is 45 per cent.

Larry says the Norjohn research and product development teams are "looking to conserve wax any way we can to help our customers reduce their costs."



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