



Specialty aluminas

Almatis diversifies its offer through dedicated BUs

Almatis, which has been a stand-alone company for 4 years now following its mother company Alcoa's divestment, has recently created two dedicated commercial business units for the refractories and the ceramics markets. The new CPO business, which includes Polishing and Other non-Refractory (CPO) applications, is a spin-off from the former Refractories, Ceramics, and Polishing (RCP) unit. ICV has interviewed Marcelo Zocchi, V.P., Global Commercial Ceramics & Polishing based in the US at Leetsdale (PA) and Dr. Lutz Figge, Vice President Commercial Refractories, based in Frankfurt on this new commercial organization.

ICV: Why was it necessary to redefine your existing commercial organization?

Dr Lutz Figge: Up to now, the company's staff (R&D, applications and sales) was acting for the same customers, irrespective of the different final applications. Yet, from one business unit to another, customer profiles vary a great deal. On the steel market, a lot of consolidation has already been taken place. There are fewer and fewer big players in the iron ore sector, steel producers are acquiring their own mines to secure their supply resources and consolidation is on the agenda of refractories producers too.

Consequently, providing reliable and long-lasting raw material solutions to better fulfill these needs implies a totally different market and business approach. We have hence to adapt and offer our customers a more focused commercial structure. The refractories business can rely on more than 60 well-educated and trained people.

Marcelo Zocchi: It is indeed quite another picture in the ceramics and especially in the technical ceramics industry which is very diverse and divided into a myriad of sub-segments with key applications in high-value and high-tech application markets. We can name for example as diversified sectors as electronics, high-voltage insulators, catalysts, LCD glass, chinaware, substrates or investment casting. The range is very broad as are the product specifications and service requirements of these industrial branches.

Therefore, we needed a dedicated structure to provide better technical and application support to our customers. In addition to our staff in the USA, we have one person here in Frankfurt who is dedicated to the technical and application support for our CPO customers all over the world. *ICV: Mr Zocchi, as you are based in the USA, I suppose that your main focus is also on the American market? What comes next?*

M.Z.: Our major focus in the ceramics sectors is indeed on the American markets, then I would say, in order of magnitude, the European and Asian markets.

ICV: How will both BUs work together? Won't there be any interest conflicts?

Dr L.F.: No, we share the same goals as the product lines share the same production and logistics facilities.

M.Z.: Absolutely. We'll strive to develop new specific grades like the low soda content alumina we launched on the market for the ceramics parts dedicated to the electronics sector while using the same production capacities as our colleagues from the refractories BU.



1. **Andreas Pütz**, Almatis Communication Officer, **Dr Lutz Figge**, Vice President, Commercial Refractories and **Marcelo Zocchi**, Vice President Commercial CPO

ICV: Speaking of refractory users, how would you characterize their current demands?

Dr L. F.: High performance steel producers ask for reduced production downtimes as they aim at higher productivity. They need long-lasting and lower maintenance refractories for example for their steel ladles, nozzles and slide gates and so on and as they face increased productivity requirements, they expect better consumables. If product lifetime

New Vice Presidents Commercial

The CPO business unit is managed by Marcelo Zocchi, Vice President Commercial CPO (see photo). Mr Zocchi joined Almatis in June 2005 as the General Manager of the Specialty Hydrates business unit and assumed the position of Americas Leader for RCP in January 2006.

Last December, Dr Lutz Figge (see photo) joined Almatis as Vice President, Commercial Refractories. He comes to Almatis following ten years with the Degussa Group, where he most recently served as Vice President Americas for the Degussa Corporation in the U.S. Both Mr Zocchi and Mr Figge report to Martin Laudenbach, Almatis CEO.



2. Almatiss' manufacturing locations worldwide



increases, use of refractories per tonne of produced steel is logically diminishing but as international markets are currently very buoyant all over the world, we - as high-quality alumi-

na suppliers - cannot complain.
ICV: Mr Zocchi, how would you characterize your customers' business approach?
M. Z.: Confidentiality matters a lot for our customers and given the broad diversity of the high-end applications we are dealing with, we often have little knowledge of the final use of our products. Our aim is nevertheless to integrate our customers in the development process as much as possible.
ICV: Will this new commercial organisation also serve your diversification purposes?

Dr L. F.: Yes. We aim at increasing our market share in the glass manufacturing and petrochemicals sectors for instance where high-value raw materials are also required. This new structure will certainly help this diversification process.

ICV: What is Almatiss current position in Brazil, Russia, India and China?

Dr L. F.: We organically follow our customers wherever they develop a business and globalization has logically led us to gain foot on double-digit growth markets such as the BRIC ones. We have recently hired more staff at our Qingdao plant in China where we have 10 people working for us as sales force, technical engineers and laboratory staff and are considering doing it also at Falta

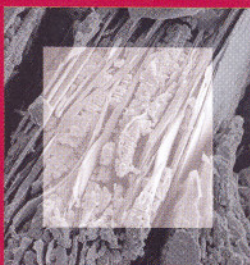
in India. After adding new batch milling capacities in 2006 in Huangdao, China, we are also in the final step of choosing the location for a brand new calcine production plant in Asia.

Brazil and Russia are also markets we are closely scrutinizing as huge investments are currently made by our customers but consolidation is still going on and the domestic political agendas of these countries have also to be taken into account when considering big moves on these markets. We'll naturally make use of our historical base in the USA to cater for the needs of the growing Brazilian market.
ICV. Can you tell us a little bit more about product innovation, especially the temperature independent cement you showcased at Unitecr'07?

Dr L. F.: We aim at being technology leaders in our business and the refractory industry desires for almost decades a cement which behaves more robust under different ambient temperatures. Therefore we developed this new cement which provides a much more robust setting behavior especially at the critical low ambient temperatures. It will contribute to increased reliability of castables even under challenging conditions.

LES ARGILES

Michel Rautureau, Simone Caillère, Stéphane Hélin



Seconde édition - Éditions Septima - 2004

Dans cet ouvrage de base, **Melle Caillère, MM. Hélin et Rautureau** décrivent aussi bien les différentes méthodes d'analyses, de classification et de caractérisation, que les propriétés et usages pour toutes les argiles.

Vous êtes **extracteur** ou **transformateur d'argile** ; vous êtes **étudiant,**

utilisateur ou vous faites de la **recherche sur les argiles, cet ouvrage vous est destiné.**

Commandez dès aujourd'hui l'ouvrage "Les Argiles" en téléchargeant le bulletin d'information et de commande sur <http://lasim.org/docs/argiles.pdf>

Format : 148 x 210 mm - Nombre de pages : 100

Nombre d'illustrations : 29 - Nombre de tableaux : 8

Prix de vente public unitaire : 25 € + port 15 %

ISBN : 2-904845-31-3 - Email : contact@lasim.org

icv.515

www.lasim.org tél. +33 (0)1 53 10 14 70
17 rue Saint-Séverin 75005 Paris fax +33 (0)1 53 10 14 71

société de l'industrie minérale