

Wednesday, 20 September 2006

The art of Export Success

By Barbara Weil

Original New Zealand works of art cover the walls of award winning company IBEX Group in East Tamaki, courtesy of a major investor, art collector James Wallace.

IBEX recently won the Manukau Business Excellence Award for Excellence in Exporting (sponsored by Express Logistics). With branches in Australia, United Kingdom and Brazil IBEX has more than 20 years experience in designing and developing abattoir tools, processing equipment and temperature and sortation solutions.

The group had its beginnings in 1983 when Raph Engle, who lived in St Heliers and was a refrigeration engineer began supplying equipment to the meat industry. The company moved to East Tamaki in 1999.

“We handle some large contracts—from \$1 million to \$7 million says son and chief executive Jonathan Engle. “The last five years has seen a 3000 per cent growth in the company.”

IBEX specialises in customised designs and installation of innovation temperature change and sortation systems, designing each to customers’ requirements. “Our approach is to first look at the overall production process then design a system that best suits their needs,” Jonathan explains.

Products range from simple ‘first in, first out’ freezers such as the revolutionary Stack Freezing System (SFS) to the flagship product Temperature Control System (TCS). These are all designed to improve efficiency and product quality.

SFS is for products needing a single specific temperature profile change. It is suited for production volumes of up to two tonnes an hour and gives the opportunity to increase capacity while reducing the cost per unit to freeze.

To meet the demands of bigger volumes IBEX developed the TCS, a shelf type carton tunnel designed to handle multiple products with different freezing and chilling needs and production rates of up to 100 tonnes per hour.

But that’s not all—adding to the ability to sort up to 80 per cent of a day’s production from a single in-feed conveyor, the TCS allows an operator to track products at all times, vary the retention time of individual products and can act as buffer storage to ensure that the operation continues in the event of processing interruptions—all at the press of a button.

“The TCS is changing the industry’s approach to freezing, chilling and product sortation,” Jonathan says.

Another innovation is the IBEX Product Collation System (PCS) that collates and sorts multiple product types simultaneously. “This reduces damage and spoilage, worker injury and compensation claims and improves tracking and traceability.

“The PCS is a stand alone system that can be integrated into existing freezing or chilling operations or in conjunction with the TCS for increased efficiency. It operates at all times in a chilled or frozen environment and requires less space than traditional methods.”

Jonathan whose background is in marketing says IBEX is successful because “we stick to what we’re good at,’ that means constant research, development and improvement.

“We are always seeking new methods and new business. In Brazil where we have a branch we are looking at the



IBEX CEO Jonathan Engle with the award the company won at the Manukau Excellence in Business Awards for Excellence in Exporting. Times photo Michelle Hyslop.

fastest growing agricultural economy in the world. That is where we come in with constant innovation. No two customers are identical and no two IBEX products are the same—they are tailored to the customers' requirements."

In its effort to ensure thorough and detailed planning and market strategy development senior management meet in March each year at head office for a week. The planning week is divided in two—a summary of the previous year and the second to addressing action plans aimed at future growth.

"Our long term plan involves significant development to become a true global player," Jonathan says.

"That goal will be met through our excellent team and our strategic approach to exporting."

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Original File Location: <http://www.midweek.co.nz/cms/profiles/2006/09/art10001159.php>