

Clean Machines

Teknek, a company founded 30 years ago in Renfrew, is seeking to double its sales over the next 3-4 years, as new markets are emerging for its products in India and China. The company has developed cutting-edge technology for cleaning machines used in the manufacture of flat-panel TVs and fuel cells. Technical director Sheila Hamilton tells us about the company's success and the recent appointment of female engineers to key positions.



"It certainly is quite a challenge to find time to do everything especially as I now have a 9 month grandchild – but it is also very rewarding. My husband is a great support and always has been since I started work again when my son was one year old and I have worked continuously for 29 years since then."

Sheila finds her job very rewarding.

"I really enjoy the variety of activities and technologies that I am involved in. There is never a dull moment. I also enjoy the travel around the world and visiting different customers and suppliers to see their facilities.

The company has more than 15,000 contact cleaning machines installed worldwide. Some of the biggest consumer electronics brands are amongst its customers. Teknek's products help manufacturers reduce wastage – one failed pixel in a flat-screen display, for example, can lead to its costly rejection.

Sheila Hamilton is delighted that recently the company has recruited a number of female engineers to key positions.

"At Teknek our recruiting policy is to choose the best candidate for each job and I'm pleased that so many good woman engineers have emerged which has allowed us to recruit several women for technical roles," said Sheila.

Sheila decided to become an engineer during her final year at school.

"Initially I set out to become a microbiologist but I was the only girl in my classes and most of the boys were going into engineering. So I began to consider it as a career and soon decided that it would suit my practical nature and changed my application to university from microbiology to engineering and have never regretted it."

She is currently studying for an MBA at Strathclyde University in her free time.

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She explains why Teknek's systems are leading edge technology.

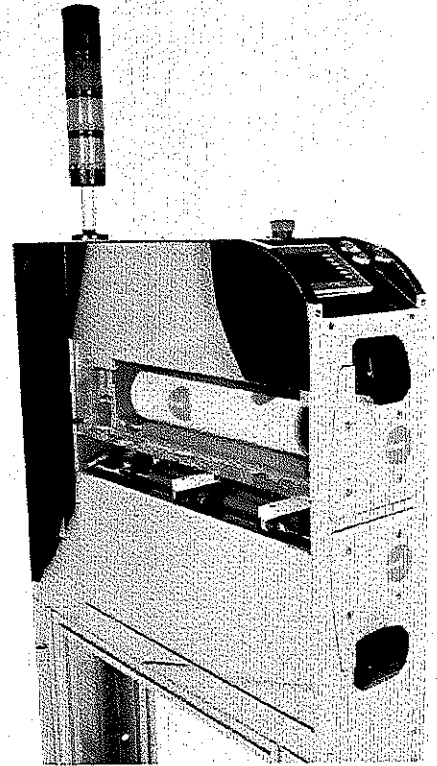
"Most cleaning systems for dry contamination use either blown air or vacuum to remove the particles. Both these systems are subject to the restriction in performance generated by the boundary layer or static layer of air on the surface of the part which restricts the size of particle which can be removed.

"Teknek uses a contact cleaning system in which a specially formulated elastomer cleaning roller actually touches the part and removes all particles down to 1 micron before rolling in contact with a matched adhesive roll which provides a permanent reservoir for the contamination. The adhesive roll is regularly refreshed by removing a wrap to expose fresh adhesive.

Teknek's cleaning system is the subject of several patents."

Overseas growth prospects promise an exciting couple of years ahead.

"As the market for consumer goods in China and India develops there is a vast increase in demand for labels and other sorts of packaging which are a major market for Teknek's Clean Machines. So we would expect significant growth in that sector. Also, particularly in China, there have been significant numbers of both Western and indigenous



Sheila Hamilton (above left); Mhairi McKenna (below); example of a Teknek machine (above)



engineer. She joined Teknek from Rolls-Royce Engineering where she fulfilled a similar role for the past two years. Before that Mhairi worked for CHEP in Barcelona as an engineering projects manager. CHEP is a leading global manufacturer of container and pallet systems and her role was to project manage the establishment of a new European service centre.

Prior to this Mhairi worked for over five years as production manager at Heil Environmental Industries, the world's leading manufacturer of refuse collection vehicles.

Evelyn is heading up a new division focused on the provision of service, spares and consumables to its installed base of 15,000 contact cleaning machines worldwide

Evelyn has a degree in microelectronics from Edinburgh University and a postgraduate diploma in business administration from Strathclyde University.

She worked for twenty years with Motorola Semiconductor, most recently as European Market Operations Manager for consumables and industrial applications. Before joining Teknek, she was a business adviser with Scottish Enterprise's High Growth Team.

electronics companies setting up plants – all of which prefer to use Western equipment which is a huge potential market. Already 50% of our sales come from Asia and we would expect that percentage to increase as the markets in China and India come on stream."

Recent recruits are Mhairi McKenna, production manager, and Evelyn Toma, business unit manager – services.

Mhairi is responsible for the day-to-day running of the production line including implementing process and business improvement 'lean manufacturing' strategies to ensure high yields whilst maintaining the highest quality standards.

Mhairi trained as an automotive