

VISIT FROM THE FAR NORTH



IN DISCUSSION WITH: ARILD BERG

The top salesmen of our partner based in Gjøvik, in Norway, Scandic Markiser, visited our Graz premises on 3rd November to gain an impression of the efficiency of its systems supplier on site. WO & WO took the opportunity to ask Scandic Markiser's owner and MD, Mr. Arild Berg, to do an interview.

WO&WO: Arild, you are the founder of Scandic Markiser. Can you give us a brief presentation of the company?

Arild Berg: Yes, of course. Scandic Markiser was founded by Bjaerne Fjellhaug and myself in 1995 in the southern Norwegian town of Gjøvik, not far from the Olympic venue of Lillehammer. Initially we had eight salesmen selling awnings made by the Swedish firm Perma. Today Scandic Markiser is one of Norway's leaders in the field of protection against the sun and has 50 permanent employees. Awnings, exterior and interior Venetian blinds, screens and "Faltstore" products are made up in a 3,400-m² factory

WO&WO: What is your core market place?

Arild Berg: We cover the whole of Norway but owing to the climatic conditions 80% of our sales are made in the centre and south of the country, i.e. south of Trondheim. End consumers are our main market, i.e. householders throughout the country, who are canvassed by 35 direct sales staff. Then comes the building trade, meaning providing public and commercial buildings with

protection against the sun. The third main support of the business is the specialist trade market, which we are only now building up. More and more sales are being made through the specialist trade, especially in the more sparsely populated parts of central and northern Norway.

WO&WO: And how are the products installed?

Arild Berg: On the one hand, via quite a number of subcontractors with whom we have installation contracts and, on the other hand, by deploying three installation teams of our own for properties in the Oslo and Gjøvik conurbations.

WO&WO: What is the present outlook for WO&WO products?

Arild Berg: We started here with OPLINE and SWINGLINE articulated arm awnings, which we manufacture in Gjøvik and we have now added TRENDLINE and SIDELINE into our production programme. Because of their importance to us we are, at the moment, still buying XLINE and PERGOLINE from WO&WO as ready-to-install systems, where we usually combine the transport with a delivery of system components in order to saving costs in that respect. ZIPLINE is the next product we would like to manufacture ourselves as we see a market for it in Norway worth developing.



WO&WO: How long has Scandic been working closely with WO&WO? How did this co-operation come about and what was the motivation for it on Scandic's side?

Arild Berg: You could say that it's been quite a long partnership that began back in 2000. WO&WO's representative for Scandinavia, Ms. Helle Klein, visited a large number of prospective customers in the course of a business trip to Norway. A visit to Stuttgart's 2000 Rollladen (roller shutter) trade fair sealed the co-operation. There were three decisive arguments for plumping for WO&WO: first, the elegant design of the awnings, second their superior quality and broad product range, and thirdly the opportunity to enter into an exclusive marketing contract for Norway.

WO&WO: How was this year's season and how do you see the prospects for the future?

Arild Berg: The 2011 awning season was very difficult owing to the poor weather conditions throughout Scandinavia. There was, on average, a 20% reduction in sales of external sun protection equipment. This did not, however, have anything to do with the product or the economic situation.

It is common knowledge that, owing to its oil wealth and strong currency, Norway has high purchasing power, which ought to inspire confidence that we will be able to resume increasing sales in the future.

WO&WO: How has the visit gone and has the trip to Graz been a success?

Arild Berg: Yes, absolutely. The aim was to motivate our top sales staff and that has certainly happened. We all gained the impression that everyone at WO&WO was taking the greatest care to convey their awning skills and knowledge to us. We would like to thank you all for that most cordially. Our next visit is to our second supplier in the province of Styria, namely Sattler Textil, after which we return to Norway.

WO&WO: May we therefore wish you and your colleagues a pleasant further stay in Graz and a safe journey home? Many thanks for your visit and for talking to us.

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