

NEWSFLOW INTERVIEW – NEIL JOHNSTON

In this issue, Newsflow speaks to Neil Johnston, Comap's new Managing Director, to find out more about his plans for the company in 2009 and beyond.

Q: Congratulations Neil on your recent promotion. It's just 5 weeks since you took over at the helm of Comap. Tell us a bit about your career to date and the experience you're bringing to your new role.

A: "I've worked in the heating and plumbing industry since leaving school and over the years I've held a number of senior management and director level positions within this sector.

"I've been with Comap for nearly 12 years now and I became a member of the Comap Westco Board in 1999, so I've seen and contributed to many positive and dynamic changes at the company.

"Prior to taking up the position of MD, I held the position of Commercial Director, so many of our customers will have had dealings with me in the past and know that I'm a hands on type of operator, in line with Comap's company-wide 'Can Do' culture.

"Naturally, in my new position as MD, I see my role as vital in moving the business forward and helping our customers to grow their businesses. I take great pride in the part I have played and will continue to improve the high quality of service that means so much to Comap and its customers."

Q: What Are Your Views on the New Year Ahead?

A: "A new year is dawning and the current economic climate brings significant challenges for our industry nationwide, but I fully intend to keep moving Comap forward. It is crucial that we do not allow our standards to fall in these challenging times, so Comap will maintain its sharp focus on customer service and product development.

“Throughout 2009, Comap’s customers can continue to rely on us to provide precisely the type of products that they need and they can also benefit from what I believe to be unparalleled standards of customer care.”

Q: What are your views on Comap’s product offering?

A: “Comap is firmly established as the ‘one-stop-shop’ for plumbing and heating products across the UK, however few know of our pedigree as a respected European manufacturer and part of Dutch giant, Aalberts Industries.

“This combination gives our customers the best of both worlds because they can choose from a huge variety of quality, branded products across a number of different ranges, as well as Comap’s own manufactured products.

“Importantly, the quality of all our products comes at really competitive prices, which represent considerable additional benefits in today’s market place.

Q: is your Product development Customer Focused?

“As you would expect, I am 100% behind the company’s commitment to **customer-focused** product innovation and under my leadership we will continue to be a driving force in groundbreaking developments.

“As many readers will have heard, Ged Grimes has recently been promoted to the position of Sales Director and Ged and his team will be speaking to our customers to develop the type of products that the marketplace needs.

“We don’t operate in isolation; simply developing products just to add to our existing product range of 5,500 lines, instead we pride ourselves on designing products to help our customers help *their* customers.”

Q: What do you believe are recent highlights in Comap’s product offering?

“Recent highlights include the development of our pre-packed plumbing parts and helpful display stands which are improving both impulse sales and planned purchases for merchants.

“The innovative, composite pipe system, MultiSKIN- with its many customer benefits and applications – is also proving popular throughout the industry. And, another recent addition to our product selection, The SCOPE range of taps, is already

proving a winner with its simple, yet stylish lever style and this new range further complements our full selection of taps. As with many of our key product innovations, Scope combines great visual appeal with high functionality.”

Q: How does Comap work together with its Customers?

A: “At Comap, we listen to our customers in our new product development and also our service offering and we have developed true trade partnerships – offering keen and realistic prices. Indeed, throughout 2009 we plan to offer more ‘best prices’ exclusively to our customers, with quarterly promotions on selected products.

“A true trade partnership really comes into its own in testing times. The Comap approach means that instead of having to manage order quantities from various suppliers, our valued customers, at companies of all sizes, can order what they need directly from us, within minimum order value. The fact that customers can order a vast selection of branded products in this way means that we can act as a working capital feeder for our loyal customer base.”

Q: How is the COTIF Scheme Progressing?

A: “As regular Newsflow readers will be well aware, I introduced COTIF (Complete On Time In Full) in 2005 and I take great pride in the improvements that have been made to Comap’s service year on year. So, I am extremely pleased to confirm that we have achieved a consistent 98% in 2008.

“Miriam Booth has been promoted to Operations Manager encompassing the departments of production, sales office and warehouse and she is committed to driving these impressive COTIF achievements still further.”

Q: Will you Continue with Comap’s Can-DO Promise?

A: “Most certainly! Our promise is that we’ll genuinely do everything we can to make your trading experience with Comap as simple and rewarding as possible.”

“I would like to take this opportunity to highlight the vitally important role of every member of our 96-strong team. As well as our Can-Do promise, the Comap team

offers loyalty, commitment and considerable industry knowledge. In addition, our high staff retention rates bring welcome continuity in dealings with our customers.

“On behalf of everyone at Comap, I would like to wish all our customers a happy and prosperous New Year for 2009.”