

SME's Craftsman-Built Fans Solve Occupational Health Issues Australia-wide

Knox Business Life recently caught up with Morse Low Noise Fans in Ferntree Gully to see what they were up to following some new contract wins to port facilities and the mining sector in Queensland and Western Australia.

Following is a Q & A with the Sales and Marketing Manager, Chris Morse.

Q: Tell me about your company?

A: Morse Low Noise Fans commenced business in 1984 producing air cooling systems for electric motors and transmission drives. In 1989 we moved from Clayton to our current location in Dempster Street. Our other company is Morse Air Systems, which started in 1979 and is involved in the design and manufacture of specialised industrial fans, conveying systems and consulting.

Q: How many personnel are there? Do they live locally?

A: All up we have 15. My father Michael Morse, who started the business still works three days a week and we are both directors. We also employ some local contractors to help keep up with the workload. Around 70 per cent live locally.

Q: What skill sets are required?

A: Our design staff are all mechanical engineers including a graduate engineer to whom we are providing on-the-job training. In the factory, fifty per cent of the staff are trained fitters and turners and the other half have no formal qualifications.

Q: What do you look for in new staff?

A: The business is fairly specialised, so even though someone may have very good qualifications, they may not be suitable. Whether young or old, we look for, and train people to become a craftsman as our factory staff skills are more akin to a watchmaker as opposed to a boilermaker. Our products are rotating at high speed, so a high degree of care and accuracy is required. "Near enough is good enough" doesn't work here.

Q: What are some of your significant achievements?

A: Supplying a series of low noise fans and cowls to Veolia Water to install on electric motors in a suburban pump station to significantly reduce the noise.

The pump station was in a residential area and had to meet reduced levels of noise pollution. Including its subsidiary, United Water, Veolia Water provides water and wastewater services to over two million people in Australia and New Zealand.

We also supplied Western Mining Corporation (now BHP Billiton) with an extensive range of low noise fans for all their larger electric motors on a WA mine site in order to comply with new site regulations relating to occupational health and safety.

Q: How do you grow and keep ahead of your competitors?

A: We are always expanding in terms of the type of work we do and the customers we

"I believe that if you are to be a true pioneer on the Australian business landscape then you are bound to have your set backs," Chris Morse.

previous case studies and test results. We do a lot of the preliminary calculations and testing here and can also work with the customer on site at their facilities.

Q: What advice have you for other SMEs?

A: Keenly observing what is happening around you and actively participating in change, where necessary will help to remain competitive. We embrace failure as



Chris Morse (right) in the Morse factory where product innovation and motivated staff are a key part of the mix in a successful engineering business.

service. In our business we supply most of our products to motor and transmission drive manufacturers, not to end users.

There is a high emphasis on the technical or engineered aspects of our work, with a premium on our intellectual knowledge. Through product innovation and harnessing new technologies we ensure continuous development of new products to stay one step ahead.

Q: How do you develop new products?

A: If a customer is bringing out a new motor or transmission drive assembly and they require a cooling fan for it, they will talk to us about their needs. We rely on

we know we have the confidence, ability and resources to learn from our mistakes and move forward. We do this on many fronts including marketing, engineering (product development) and internal business systems.

We also recognised long ago that to have motivated and enthusiastic staff is a key element in any business. We focus on this and encourage additional advancement through training and self development; we accommodate flexible working hours and holiday structures, and work extremely hard at maintaining a work environment without any communication barriers between staff and managers.