



Golden Key Profile



# BUCKING THE TREND



*Scott MacCallum meets up with Andrew Robinson, Managing Director of BIGGA Golden Key Company, Rigby Taylor*

**Waking up in a cold sweat is a state which must be approaching epidemic proportions among businessmen worldwide, but you can be fairly sure that Andrew Robinson, Managing Director of Rigby Taylor isn't one of those afflicted.**

Bolton-based Rigby Taylor is a company very much bucking the trend in these troubled times and is, in fact, aiming for 10% growth in 2009. And it's not just blind optimism with three new reps having been appointed in the last three months and with them having just taken delivery of three new trucks with off loading facilities built in to improve service levels it's all pointing to a positive outlook.

"We've grown our sales on average 10-12% every year over the last four years and we are working hard to give value for money during these tough times. Asda and Tesco aren't struggling at the moment as they deal in necessities and giving value for money. We see ourselves as a one stop shop offering essential products from our Mascot range which include Fertilisers, Chemicals, Grass Seeds, Line Marking, Specialities, Top Dressings and Golf Course Equipment to the golf industry,"

said Andrew, who works extremely closely with Chairman, Bernard Hedley.

So how has Rigby Taylor been able to buck the trend? Well, Andrew attributes much of the company's recent success to being a supplier to Manchester United, and the path the relationship with the Premiership, European and World Champions has taken them down.

"Through Manchester United we got involved with Envirowise, a Government funded organisation, which is all about minimising waste and reducing the carbon footprint. We had been a supplier to Manchester United for 17 years but four years ago the club decided that as part of its "Reds Go Green" Environmental Management System it would introduce some of its main high profile suppliers to the Manchester United - Envirowise supply chain programme," explained Andrew.

He admitted that initially he had been a little sceptical about how Rigby Taylor would benefit from becoming involved, and went along to the first meeting inclined to think that it would be no more than a series of boxes to tick to retain Manchester United as a customer. However, when he was told that significant savings could be made he began to see the real value of taking part.

"Envirowise said that any decent company could save a minimum of 1% of turnover, but that it could be as much as 4%. With Rigby Taylor turning over £20 million I could see the level of savings it could bring us."

Working very closely with Keith McIntosh, Manchester United's Environmental Manager, and Envirowise, Rigby Taylor's management team set about looking at every aspect of their business with a view to improving their carbon footprint and their service to customers.

And the results that have been achieved are astonishing and Andrew has been invited to speak at Envirowise seminars as one of the programmes real success stories.

Rigby Taylor has saved £205,000 on deliveries over three and a half years alone, which equates to 66,000 road miles and 1.5 million pallet miles.

Much of that has come from identifying the fact that transporting water-based products was an expensive exercise and, working with their own suppliers, they have developed better quality concentrates and powdered products.

Through these meetings a revolutionary new white lining product was developed



Andrew with Tony Holt (right) Director of Linemark (UK) Ltd and inventor of revolutionary Impact linemarking paint

“We had been a supplier to Manchester United for 17 years but the club decided to introduce some of its main high profile suppliers to the Envirowise supply chain programme”

Andrew Robinson

FEATURE

which has subsequently taken that particular market sector by storm.

“Previously a white lining product would arrive as a three litre concentrate to which the customer would add 12 litres of water. With that 15 litre mix you’d spray one football pitch. Our supplier came up with Impact, which is a three litre pack which doesn’t need any water adding to it. That three litres does one football pitch, so there is no messy mixing required. It really is incredible science – almost magic!

“It means that a council with 20 football pitches doesn’t have to turn up with 20 packs and 240 litres of water and mix on site. We have a 10 litre bag-in-a-box which means the operator can do three pitches before swapping the bag and going off to do the next three. It saves so much time and is much more efficient.”

Indeed a council with 100 pitches will save 30,000 litres of water a year and Andrew says that some councils have gone from having to use a transit van with 1,000 litres of water on board to a much smaller van.

Another area where significant savings have been made is in liquid seaweed.

“A 10 litre pack will spray 18 greens, but we’ve got one of our suppliers to produce a two kilo pack of powdered seaweed which is 100% pure and to which the greenkeeper adds water. So instead of us transporting pallets of liquid we’ve got this one small pack instead of something five times larger and heavier.”

Rigby Taylor has also liaised with suppliers to make sure that wherever it is practical deliveries are made direct to the customer rather than via their own warehouses, while bespoke solutions to golf

clubs have also proven to be a great success.

“If a Course Manager is using more than one product instead of supplying him with 20 litres of this and 20 litres of that we make them a 200 litre drum and a pump which comes pre-mixed. Often mixing products increases the benefits of both and once the club has ordered its fifth drum we will come and collect the other four from them, this saves the club money on disposal of empties.”

Rigby Taylor is celebrating its 90th birthday this year having been formed by Mr Herbert Rigby and Mr Robert Taylor in 1919 to sell degreasing solvents to cotton and textile mills. A fertilisers division was formed a short time later as the company moved into the area of business for which it has become known since then.

A management buyout in the early 80s, led by Bernard Hedley, and an expansion from being a northern focussed company to one which serviced the entire country was the making of Rigby Taylor. The development of the Mascot range, in 1981, was another significant milestone.

Since then Rigby Taylor has become one of the best known names in the industry and well placed to survive the ups and downs of the current economic situation.

Among these have been the high cost of fertilisers, brought about from a major mining collapse in China, which reduced the stocks of potash, and the strong Euro which has upped the cost of dealing with those in the Euro-zone but Andrew has worked hard with suppliers to ensure good value, not to mention quality, for customers.

“Along with our Product Manager I set the challenge to our suppliers of reducing our chemical costs without reducing the quality of the product and they rose to that magnificently.

“All our outfield granuals now include recycled Organic material which has a natural NPK so we’ve gone from a chemical analysis to one which is partly chemical and partly organic. This has extended the release of the product so it’s not as quick release as it was, but a much more gentle release which reduces the clippings.

“So it’s not costing the client any more money for a better product than before,” explained Andrew.

Rigby Taylor has a sales team numbering 50, the largest in the country and they pride themselves on forming close relationships with their customers and helping them wherever possible to produce what is right for the club and right for the golf course.

“Our reps work on a six weekly visit schedule and can advise on what is a probably 4,000 different lines. We recently took on Pin Seeker as a supplier which has meant us breaking into signage and golf course furniture while another new addition has been Rainbow, which produces pathway materials,” explained Andrew, who spends his time between the three sites at Newbridge, Guildford and the head office at Bolton, he also enjoys his visits out to see Customers and finding out their needs.

When it comes to EU pesticide legislation Andrew admits that they are watching developments with interest but points to the recent addition to the Rigby Taylor portfolio as part of the strategy.

“Rigby Taylor won’t rely on any one particular market sector. If there was a pesticide ban it would be painful but it wouldn’t kill us. We try to be as diverse as we can.”

He is very keen that golf clubs help the overall situation by only using product that is licensed for amenity use.

“The clubs who are using agricultural products at the moment are not doing us any favours as the better the amenity sector behaves the more chance the UK will be left to manage our own affairs without the need of European legislation.”

With 2019 in its sights you can be sure that Rigby Taylor will be working hard to ensure that the current successes stretch way beyond its 100th birthday.