

# We Don't Focus on Making Our Products Cheaper, We Focus on Making Them Better

*Peter Knak, General Manager of IMEX EU Trading S.R.L., answers the questions of Information Agency "Business-Inform"*

## 1. The year 2017, what had it been for your company? Which main achievements would you like to note?

2017 may have been one of the key years in IMEX history as we have been able to find answers on some of the toughest challenges in the latest generation toner technologies. OEMs managed to set the bar very high with their new extremely low fusing temperature toners which need very good transfer efficiency to perform sufficiently in their new cartridges.

Already during our initial analysis of these new generation products, we understood that the normal approach with classical pulverized toners will not be sufficient to satisfy quality expectations on OEM level.

Thanks to some new technologies and our longstanding expertise on working with polyester resins and particle shaping we have been able to develop a couple of toner products which we think will help the aftermarket as a whole to keep up with the pace the market is setting.

So in 2018 we will be able to launch a couple of new monochrome and colour toners for use in HP and Kyocera.

## 2. What are the advantages of your products that preferably distinguish them from the competitors? How important are they for the Russian consumer?

Historically the backbone of our success in Russia is the universality and robustness of our products. Russia is a refilling market with very extreme climatic conditions. There are many varying factors for the users and we do our best to provide them one component they can rely on. Ensuring this reliability requires a rigorous internal quality system.

Obviously, such a system is quite cost intensive and reflects on the sales price, which really is our limiting factor in Russia.

We know that due to our approach, the accessible segment of the local market may only be around 20% of its overall size. However, our mindset is not making products cheaper to be able to sustain the ongoing price erosion, but to make them better.

This seems to be a unique way which sets us apart from our competition and gives our customers the chance to address new businesses and to generate new revenue streams for themselves.

## 3. What are the main lines of working with partners for your company? Do you change those principles depending on the partner or current market situation?

Certainly, our approaches to markets differ slightly. You cannot sell the same way to a large Japanese remanufacturer as to a Central African distributor.

However, within our markets, once the mentality is understood and our strategy is defined, we will provide stability and reliability to our partners. Our business relationships really are meant to be long term. We believe that it pays off to build sustainable relationships. We know that we may miss spot opportunities along the way, but our success during the last decades seems to prove us right, that slow and steady growth is a healthy way forward for us and as well fits our company principles.

## 4. What perspectives do you see in 2018 for your company? Are there any new activity vectors?

Firstly we will try to harvest what we have sown during last years in our R&D.

Those who are following our ways a little will know, that we always take long time in product development which impacts the number of product launches we have.

Now we have just launched our new super-universal colour toner for use in HP applications: TMC040. Also, we are now re-releasing solutions for M402/506 (AKO3) and M102 (AJI). Both of these monochrome toners are polyester based and spheroidized (round-shaped) so that they meet the requirements these cartridges have, to perform sufficiently.

With Kyocera we have something new in the pipeline as well, a toner for the TK31xx range which we will launch fairly soon.

## 5. Which dangers and problems for the office equipment and supplies market do you see for 2018?

The biggest danger for the office supplies aftermarket is always the large share of players who sacrifice quality for pricing, which always impacts the reputation of the whole industry.

If the market would have a stronger focus on product performance, it would be seen as a more serious alternative to OEM, for those who really require constant and stable quality. This applies for the monochrome but even more for the colour market, where we are still not unfolding our full potential.

## 6. How do you evaluate the importance of the Internet as the office equipment and supplies sales channel? How important are for your company the online sales of your products?



*Peter Knak, General Manager of IMEX EU Trading S.R.L.*

Obviously the internet is constantly gaining relevance and those who are engaged in B2C business cannot ignore it as a sales channel, as it is greatly changing people's buying behavior. The end-user is not interested to talk at length about a product to buy, as it takes his time.

They want to browse the options, find conclusive explanations, which product is best for their needs and place the order with a maximum of three clicks.

In conclusion, I think that distributors have to simplify their content and make online purchasing as easy as possible to maximize their potential in this sales channel.

For us, the internet still is only a side tool which is not really fit for purpose as a sales platform.

We sell a technical product to professional companies who buy in large volumes.

To enable our prospects to make the right purchasing decision, we have to open a good and comprehensive technical communication. We have to provide samples which they test internally and as well respond to their technical queries to ensure that they can come to an educated validation of the products quality. After this we enter price negotiations with their purchasing teams.

All this requires proper personal attention and with the current tools, this process is far too complex to be run by the internet.

## 7. What would you like to wish for yourself and your colleagues in 2018?

We wish to everyone, that the current rise of global political tensions and distrust may end, so that we all together can continue trying to build a better, safer and happier world to live in.