



De Tomi hits the right notes

De Tomi. The name has been synonymous with high quality valve kits for over fifty years. Fast and flexible, the company is constantly looking to innovate, engineer and invest, to ensure clients benefit from valve components that will provide decades of trouble-free operation. Valve World travelled to the north of Italy, to see for ourselves what makes De Tomi a real Maestro of ball valve kit manufacture.

By David Sear

At face value, De Tomi is yet another shining example of a successful Italian family business. Founded in 1960 by two young engineers, De Tomi quickly carved out a solid niche for itself manufacturing valve kits. Typical values such as craftsmanship, a commitment to perfection and putting the customer first and foremost won De Tomi a solid reputation amongst its clientele. Commenting on the status of the company, Managing Director Mr. Danilo De Tomi says: "For certain we pride ourselves on being a traditional company. My father

was one of the founders and has set an excellent example for us to follow. Even today, at the age of 80, he remains very active in the business. Throughout our 54 year history, the focus has always been on the manufacture of valve components for use in ball, gate and expanding-gate valves. And to answer the question many people pose: no, we have never made finished valves, and neither do we intend to start." Although De Tomi still embraces traditional values, there is nothing "old-school" about this company. On arrival at its premises, for example, Valve World

had time to admire a very modern building, which perfectly reflects De Tomi's stature at the cutting edge of component manufacture. The initial high-tech impression is further confirmed once inside. This is a company that operates with extreme efficiency in both the offices and factory areas. Comments Mr. De Tomi: "Some seven or eight years ago, we decided that the company needed extra momentum to ensure continued success. We therefore took action on two levels: firstly by developing the managerial and organizational side, and secondly by placing extra attention on innovation and the product range. But even whilst adding this extra industrial dimension to the company, we were very careful to maintain our core values as craftsmen. Now I would say we have the ideal mix of both a family company, with private finance, flexibility and passion, with that of an industrial concern, with management expertise, structure and industrial strengths."



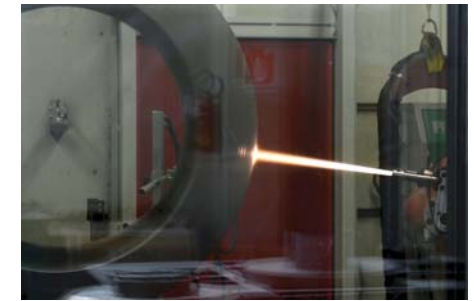
One-Stop-Shop

As part and parcel of their plans, De Tomi made strategic investments in various areas. For example, two additional buildings have recently been constructed, more than doubling the covered floor space from 2000 to 4500 m². Moreover, new equipment such as grinders and milling machines has been added. This has helped to significantly broaden the product range. Says a proud Mr. De Tomi: "we are the only company in Europe that can make complete ball valve kits – meaning both the ball and the seat – in such large sizes up to 72 inches. But we certainly haven't neglected customers who need smaller items - at the other end of the scale, we can just as easily deliver kits for valves starting from 1.5 inches." A quick around through the De Tomi premises is enough to confirm that the company has indeed invested in plenty of new equipment. Moreover, De Tomi has a very efficient workflow, which facilitates the fast and efficient production of components.

Everything is in place to serve customers looking for valve kits, from the in-house engineering capabilities, well-equipped machine shops and the quality control department. In short, De Tomi can live up to its claim of being a "one-stop-shop" supplier.

Mr. Pietro Branca, the QA manager continues: "we can precisely meet all the customer's expectations and specifications, also in terms of quality assurance, single source, quick deliveries, etc. In effect, our job is to provide the customer with the beating heart of the valve, so all he has to do is fit our parts to the body." With all the machinery at its disposal De Tomi can make kits for practically every type of ball valve, whether the client needs metal-to-metal or soft-seated balls, or whether he needs clad or coated components. Comments again Mr. De Tomi: "In recent years we have focused exclusively on making kits for ball valves. However, if a customer should request kits for other designs, such as wedge-gate valves, then we would certainly be pleased to oblige."

HVOF



Taking pride of place in the factory is a so-called HVOF spray unit (see box). HVOF – or High Velocity Oxygen Fuel, to give it its proper name - is a thermal spray coating process which is used to improve surface properties. "As a technique HVOF has been around for a few decades, but has only recently been considered for industrial scale application on valve components," notes Mr. De Tomi. "I believe I am right in saying we are the only company supplying the valve industry which has its own in-house HVOF equipment. The advantages of HVOF coatings for valve users are superior



The meaning of round!



A catchy slogan used by De Tomi as part of its advertising message is "we think round". Whilst this can obviously apply to De Tomi's perfectly-formed ball and seats, the slogan implies much more than that, explains Mr. De Tomi. "Like many great ideas this one just popped into my head during a plane flight. In fact, we use it to convey several means. So it certainly relates to the quality of the products we make. But in addition, round stands for perfection. It also stands for the team here at De Tomi, which are together behind everything we do. In addition, thinking round means we look at all angles, to provide a one-stop-shop capability. In short, we think of everything, so the customer does not have to."

In fact, as a build up to its fiftieth anniversary celebrations in 2010, De Tomi challenged its customers to explain what the slogan meant to them. When they came in, the replies were very flattering, referring as they did to De Tomi's professionalism, skills, punctuality, etc, all of which naturally contribute to the reliability and high efficiency of the customers' valves. As one satisfied client reported: "De Tomi is more than a supplier, De Tomi is your best colleague!"

erosion and wear resistance, as well as corrosion protection."

De Tomi first turned its attention to upgrading the cladding line in 2010, culminating in the recent installation and commissioning of the HVOF unit. In addition, De Tomi has also installed an in-house laboratory, enabling it to immediately perform any necessary quality checks on the coating.

Pointing out the various features of the HVOF unit, Mr. De Tomi adds that the first commercial orders were starting to arrive. Indeed, it seems that the news of De Tomi's latest in-house capabilities has quickly struck a chord amongst the customer base, something which any manufacturer would naturally find extremely gratifying. Mr. De Tomi: "after all the years of planning, I can say it is very



satisfying to see this new equipment being used. Previously we relied on a third-party to obtain coatings, so having our own equipment makes us that much more flexible and gives us total control of the quality. So of course I am glad to book the first orders, but I am not interested in making a quick profit. De Tomi's primary goal is to set a very high standard with everything we do and so to become the global reference point for ball valve kit manufacture."

Visitors welcome



Towards the end of Valve World's enjoyable and informative visit, Mr. De Tomi raises a somewhat philosophical question about quality or more specifically,

About HVOF

High Velocity Oxygen Fuel (HVOF) coats equipment with a molten or semi-molten material using a high temperature, high velocity gas stream. This results in a dense spray coating, which readily adheres to the prepared surface (usually prepared by grit blasting) This surface can subsequently be ground to a high surface finish, resulting in a product with enhanced abrasion, temperature and corrosion resistance.

Coatings commonly in demand in the valve sector include tungsten carbide and chrome carbide powder. However, De Tomi can readily apply other metallic coatings according to the customer's requirements. De Tomi's ultra-modern HVOF equipment means the coatings have incredibly low porosity levels, which helps to ensure optimum product quality and performance. Moreover, as parameters can be stored in the control panel, De Tomi can deliver consistent high quality series production, or can make exact duplicate parts long after the initial delivery.



non-quality. "How can we measure quality?" he ponders. "What does quality mean for valve users? Perhaps the easiest assessment is to consider the cost of non-quality. By that I mean the direct and indirect costs of a valve failure. As everyone knows, if a cheap valve fails in a critical, hard-to-reach application, then the cost of solving the problem is many, many times greater than the initial saving. That's what our customers repeatedly tell us, which is why quality has such a top priority here at De Tomi."

When talking about safeguarding quality, Mr. De Tomi is referring not just to specific items of high tech equipment, but more to the functioning of the entire manufacturing organization. All the departments – sales, administration, the shop floor, quality control, etc - work closely together to ensure each and every customer is entirely satisfied. "Seeing is, of course, believing," notes Mr. De Tomi. "Plenty of our direct customers have come to visit us. But I think it is important for us to send our message about quality to others in the procurement chain, especially the people who will ultimately be using the valves. In fact, we would like to extend an invitation to more oil companies to visit our premises. I am always delighted to show valve users our infrastructure and capabilities, and explain to them what it takes to make a really first-class product. I think that open

dialogue benefits both sides, as end users need valves they can rely on in ever-more demanding conditions, especially offshore."

Positive sentiments

Whilst discussing offshore applications, Mr. De Tomi naturally turns to the topic of new markets. He adds that North America is definitely an interesting region and one where De Tomi has found trade shows to be an excellent way to reach out to potential customers. "North America is of course rich in oil and gas, so there is a natural customer base for us in that continent. We are also following developments in the Middle East and Russia, but these areas are more challenging and so not our short-term goals. But in fact, there are still plenty of opportunities for us to grow closer to home. So a current plan is to strengthen our focus in Europe, which explains why we have recruited some highly

trained and motivated sales team members. The importance of having well-educated and knowledgeable staff should never be underestimated!"

Clearly Mr. De Tomi is finely tuned to the evolving needs of the valve industry, having the ability to seek out opportunities plus the confidence to invest in new equipment or extra staff whenever appropriate. He concludes on an upbeat note: "To my mind the business context is becoming increasingly complicated and fluid. This is a roller coaster climate and a real challenge to work in. However, the industries we ultimately serve are buoyant, so there is every reason for us to have positive sentiments. And the valve industry is growing solidly, at around three per cent per year. At the same time we are very flexible and highly focused, so yes, I would say there are excellent future perspectives for De Tomi."

Facts & Figures

Name	De Tomi
Principal activity	Manufacture of kits (ball and seats) plus related components for ball valve manufacturers
Materials	All common metals and alloys, including plated and/or coated.
Product range	1 1/2 inches - 72 inches in diameter
Main markets	Most kits ultimately used in oil, gas, and power plant applications.
Workforce	Over fifty highly-qualified staff
Premises	12,000 m ² (of which 4,500 m ² covered)
Location	Close to Milan, Italy
Founded	1960