

Red Point Alloys: fast-track is in our DNA

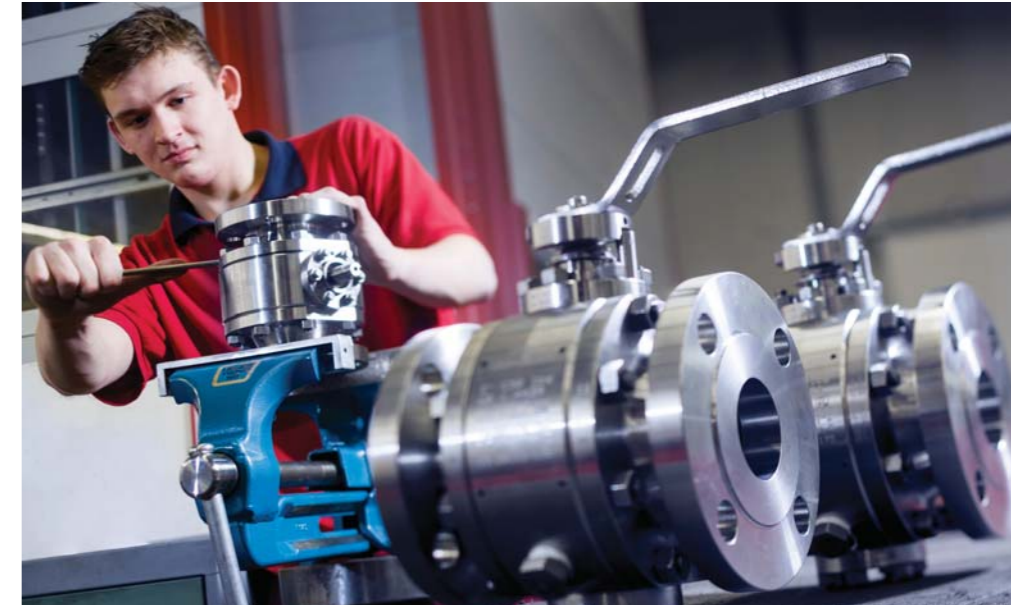


Frank van Os (CEO, on right) and Fred Jansen (Sales Director). "Unique valve requirements? Challenging delivery schedules? Red Point has the resources and expertise to deliver!"



Taking the utmost care to avoid damaging any methodologically to ensure valves are built to

components, assembly staff work the highest standards.



All departments work as a tight-knit team to engineer, manufacture, test and deliver valve solutions at lightning speed. Photo shows the final assembly of a trunnion-mounted ball valve.

Since its foundation in 1987, Red Point Alloys has firmly established itself as a leader in the fast-track supply of valves, with a proven record encompassing all types of materials and valve designs. In fact, its portfolio is so extensive that Red Point is known as the 'yes we can' company, capable of supplying valves for practically every application customers might have. To find out just how Red Point can engineer, manufacture and deliver valves to very tight deadlines, Valve World dropped by its head office in Zoetermeer, the Netherlands, where we spoke to staff, managers and directors in all departments.

By James Hoare and David Sear

Red Point couldn't have chosen a better location for its headquarters and manufacturing facility, just a stone's throw away from key customers in the Antwerp and Rotterdam industrial parks and a thirty minute drive to the global transport hubs of Rotterdam harbor and Amsterdam airport. This means valves can be quickly and easily shipped to customers around the world, so it is hardly surprising that the company has been industriously expanding its geographic reach for nearly thirty years.

Greeting Valve World upon arrival, CEO Frank van Os reflects on a year in which Red Point has further strengthened its position as a niche player in many regions and industries: "We've recently fulfilled a lot of orders originating in the US, Canada, Middle-East, Europe and

China, and I can also point to successes in the chemical industries as well as the exceptionally demanding PTA sector," he notes proudly.

Sales figures are being further boosted by Red Point's growing network of agents and representatives around the globe, as well as its dedicated sales and marketing presence in China. In fact, at the time of our visit, Red Point was in the final stages of obtaining all the necessary permits and certificates for the Russian market. Comments Mr. van Os: "Russia may be known as a challenging area to do business, but over the years we have learnt how to accommodate national standards, local business practices and import regulations. So no matter where a client may be located, if they order a Red Point valve we make it our business

to get it to them and in the best possible time-frame."

Becoming indispensable

The classic perception of a fast-track supplier is a manufacturer who can provide replacements for say malfunctioning valves in a hurry or who can quickly manufacture valves which may have been overlooked on project lists. This is a role that Red Point remains very comfortable with, says Sales Director, Fred Jansen. "To give an example, we once completed an order of class A metal seated ball valves during the Christmas break—that was certainly an experience!" However, such is Red Point's reputation that the company is being increasingly invited by clients to become involved in projects much earlier, notes Mr. Jansen. "Not only do we have a proven fast track service but we can also comply



with leading standards, such as the Shell MES-C. This combination means we can deliver a very valuable service to clients, and explains why we are receiving an increasing number of invitations to join projects at the specification and initial enquiry stages."

In that light, Mr. van Os points out that Red Point is in no way restricted to meeting requests in just "ones and twos" but now has the equipment and personnel necessary to fulfill some rather large orders. "We recently supplied 300 titanium ball valves, ranging in sizes from half an inch up to sixteen inches. That was quite a substantial order, yet we were able to deliver all the valves within a challenging short delivery time - just half the time quoted elsewhere. Clients now know we can assist on project based qualifications and certifications, and that role we fulfill has become very valuable." Mr. van Os, is also proud of the fact that Red Point is firmly established on the Approved Manufacturers' List of key end users and engineering companies. "Many companies are looking to consolidate their AMLs yet see us as a reliable partner who can help them to maximize operational uptimes. I think this validates the assertion that we've become an indispensable provider in the industry," he comments. The fact that Red Point can work with all

materials from carbon steel to nickel alloys to make a complete portfolio of valves from ball to double block and bleed and from gate to globe is another important selling point, notes Mr. Jansen. "It doesn't matter what material you need or which codes apply, and nor does it matter if you want a standard valve or a tailor-made solution, we can deliver. Indeed, new customers often raise an eyebrow when they learn we don't have a product catalogue. But we simply don't need one! If they ask whether we can make a particular type of valve, the answer is invariably 'yes!'"

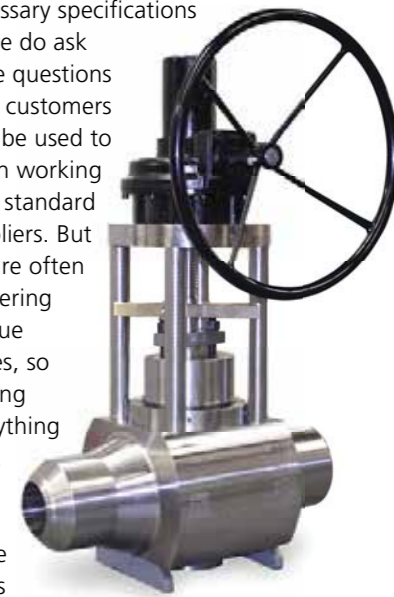
Fast track DNA

To better appreciate the operations at Red Point we asked for a quick look around the rest of the facility. During this impromptu tour we met various staff in all departments and literally everyone we spoke to was utterly committed to the 'fast track' philosophy. What makes this so noteworthy is not just that all staff work together as a tight-knit team to engineer, manufacture, test and deliver valve solutions at lightning speed and to a guaranteed high quality, but also that they are able to accommodate the simultaneous processing of multiple orders for both standard and bespoke valves. "When you consider we're set

up to take orders which can involve so many variables, then I think it is fair to say that we have a very unique organization. After so many years you tend to forget that what we do here is quite special," comments Mr. van Os.

Firstly, all orders originate from a phone call or e-mail to the customer service area, manned by knowledgeable customer service agents and sales engineers. Working with quiet efficiency, staff here put together quotes quickly and precisely. Mr. Jizke van Dura, Sales Engineer: "a key role for us is to ensure we obtain all the necessary specifications

so we do ask more questions than customers may be used to when working with standard suppliers. But we are often delivering unique valves, so getting everything right at this stage helps





Extensive engineering checklists ensure all valves fully meet client expectations



State of the art CNC machines facilitate user



Valves undergo a thorough final inspection before shipment to customers.

prevent problems and delays later on." This team maintains very short communication lines with other departments to make sure that Red Point has the materials and production capacity needed to properly fulfill each and every order. "Every quotation we provide is based on realistic and achievable delivery times. Clients put absolute faith in our quotes and we do not want to damage that trust. This is also why we have invested in significant stocks of raw materials, to ensure immediate action if required."

Once the sales and service team receives a confirmed order it is immediately passed on to the engineering department, where all the necessary drawings and full specifications are made within days. Engineering Supervisor Mr. Pepijn Esman, who has seen the department quadruple in size in a little over a decade, stresses that even at this stage Red Point is often in direct contact with the client. "If there is any uncertainty about the valve specifications or the intended application, we will call to get them resolved. Nothing is ever left to chance. Every detail is important, so we have developed checklists to ensure the design fully meets the client's expectations."

Mr. Esman further comments that the work is never repetitive, as practically every valve requires a unique engineering drawing. "Off the top of my head I believe that within the company we now have over 20,000 engineering drawings." Once he and his colleagues have signed off the technical drawings, the order is

formally passed to procurement staff. However, Buyer Mrs Ingrid Janmaat indicates she often starts looking for the necessary materials much earlier. "We are in constant touch with the sales team. If they anticipate that any of the materials might be especially difficult to source they inform us so that we can send out preliminary enquiries right away. We have established a global network of trusted suppliers so can normally find what we need. I would say that most materials are probably sourced from Europe, simply because that helps keep transportation times to a minimum. Every little step we can do to meet the fast-track deadline is one worth taking."

In-house expertise

Next stop on our tour is the large and impressive machine shop. Planning the efficient use of this shop must be a real challenge given the always-changing order flow, yet Production Supervisor, Mr. Patrick Huf appears utterly calm and relaxed. "Yes, our job is certainly unpredictable. An order with a six week turnaround time is no problem whatsoever, but if one or two key materials don't arrive until week five, well, that's when you appreciate the value of proper organization. The trick is to think about priorities and anticipate bottlenecks."

In that light he points to the many CNC machines, all bought from a single leading

manufacturer. "We have standardized on a particular CNC brand to facilitate user interoperability and safeguard product quality. Moreover, these machines have very quick set-up times which is a major advantage given that on any particular day an individual machine might run five, six or even seven different jobs." Next step for the valve order is the assembly area, where Valve World witnessed staff handling valve components almost as if they were made of precious crystal. Mr. Chris Vesseur, Assembling Coordinator, comments: "certain components such as lip seals and gaskets are fragile so need to be handled appropriately. But we go to great pains to avoid damaging any of the components in any way. That's why we do not allow forklift trucks into the assembly department. When we are all working to a deadline we wouldn't want to have to ask our colleagues in the machine shop to

make a new valve stem because we accidentally bent one!" Not surprisingly, the area where products are packed for dispatch is located alongside the assembly area. Even here at the logistic department—indeed, especially here—Vincent Luchtenberg knows the meaning of 'fast track'. "Sorry, can't stop to talk," he says. "The carrier will be here in thirty minutes and I need to finish packing this last valve and give the paperwork a final check." The container, it should be

interoperability and safeguard quality.

noted, is a sturdy, made-to-measure wooden crate and certainly not a cardboard box or open pallet.

"As you can see, the entire Red Point organization is geared to making sure that the client receives his or her valves on time and in perfect condition," comments Mr. van Os. "Making valves takes



co-ordination and teamwork at every step of the way: from order intake to engineering, from procurement to machining, from assembly to testing, as

we have just witnessed. From standard valves in unique materials to bespoke valves for one-off applications, a fast track service is in the Red Point DNA."



Mr. van Os: "you tend to forget that what we do here is actually quite special."

Facts & Figures

Name:	Red Point Alloys BV
Website:	www.redpoint.nl
Products:	Ball, gate, globe, check, double block and bleed, cryogenic and tailor-made valves, in the size range from 1/2" up till 24" and in pressure classes 150-4500 lbs (PN6-PN400)
Key markets:	Petrochemical, Oil & Gas, Chemical, FPSOs, LNG, Oil Sands, Desalination, Mining, Power.
Certifications:	ISO 9001:2008; 97/23/EC PED, category 3 module H; API 6D Monogram License; TR CU 032/2013; Achilles JQS; AD2000 Merkblatt W0/A4; OHSAS 18001:2007; ABSA / CRN registration 0C05690.2; 94/9/EC (ATEX)
Clients include:	Shell, ExxonMobil, Chevron, BP, BASF, Dow, Sinopec, Sabic, Eni, ADNOC, Qatar Petroleum, Petronas