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January/February 2012

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It's All in the Swivel

These Canadian-made products can help loggers worldwide improve their bottom lines.

By Bill Tice



A small Quebec company is proving that it can do big things. Taimi Hydraulics is making quite a name for itself in forestry and other industries with the development and distribution of its hydraulic swivel coupling technology.

Taimi has patented, or has patent pending status, on the technology in 34 countries and the company's products are already being distributed and used in 16 countries. Taimi, which says its "technology is now used by eight forestry equipment OEMs, big and small, with more to come," offers unique ball-less design swivel products that bring reliability to hydraulic systems, increase the service life of components and cut out hydraulic fluid leakages.

Designed for longevity, the Taimi products help to reduce machine downtime, and improve safety, resulting in higher profits for loggers and machine operators.

Building the Brand

Taimi Hydraulics was started in 2006 when company president Michel Taillon and general manager Sébastien Tremblay decided there was a viable market for high-quality swivel components. With most companies turning to Asia for the manufacturing of their hydraulic components, Tremblay and Taillon banked on being able to produce high-quality products here at home.

"Our product is made in Canada



Taimi's Swivrol on a Logmax 7000 head in Canada. Photo courtesy of Taimi Hydraulics.

with premium materials, so it is more expensive than other swivel products on the market," Tremblay explains. "Our challenge from day one was getting people to try the product, but when we first started out, we didn't have much money for advertising so it was all word of mouth. That meant converting one logger at a time."

Tremblay adds that with today's equipment, the reliability and durability of swivels is even more important than it was just a few years ago. "There were already some failure problems with swivels five or six years ago when machines were working at around 3000

PSI," he explains. "It is even more common today as industry requires machines to work faster and be stronger, resulting in increased production. That has also meant an increase in PSI up to 4600 or more. With that much pressure and a lot of hose movements in forestry machines, lower-quality swivels will fail at an even quicker rate. That is the reality and the reason why we design and manufacture our swivels to higher standards, including the ability to handle up to 6000 PSI."

Loggers and other customers of Taimi would start by purchasing one swivel from the company, Tremblay



Taimi produces a number of different products from its facilities in Saint-Prime, Que., including the Swiwell models pictured above. Photo courtesy of Taimi Hydraulics.

says. "They would see the benefits and the return on investment and would buy a second Taimi swivel, and then a third. Our customers were realizing that our products would last much longer than other swivels they had tried, but our growth was slower than we wanted."

That changed in 2008 when Taimi struck its first deal with an OEM and started producing the products under a private label. Then, in 2009, they signed an agreement with Denver, Colo.-based Gates Corporation, which is the third largest hydraulic fitting manufacturer in the world.

"We always thought that working with Gates would be a good match," Tremblay says enthusiastically when discussing the agreement. "Gates really did their homework. They said 'your swivels look good, but are they good?' To be sure, they bought a number of different swivels that are on the market and completed an extensive testing program. Quite frankly, we were worried because we didn't have any control over how the products were tested. We already knew that our swivels worked well in the field, but the only lab testing we had done was for safety, so we didn't know how they would perform in the Gates lab."

As it turned out, Tremblay and his team had nothing to worry about as the Taimi swivels excelled, lasting six times longer than the swivel that came in second in terms of longevity, 12 times longer than the third place finisher and

more than 30 times the rest of the swivels in the test. "We were very pleased," Tremblay added. "For a small company with new products in the marketplace, the association with Gates was great for us in terms of credibility."

Ideal Location

Tremblay says people still ask them who they are and where they are from. "We say 'nowhere' when asked about our location," he jokes, referring to the fact that their offices and production facilities are located in a rural area of Quebec called the Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean region. "We are based in Saint-Prime, which is a town of fewer than 3,000 people, but in some ways our location has really helped our business grow," he explains. "We are located in the heart of the northeast logging industry and we have a major logging region of Quebec right on our doorstep. Machines in this area generally work 16 hours per day, in all kind of temperatures so it makes for a great testing ground for us."

Being in an area like Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean has other advantages as well. "Real estate here is reasonably priced so we can own our shop and plant for a lot less money than if we were in a larger centre such as Montreal or Toronto and for shipping, it basically adds one day to the shipping times. For our overseas markets, we are eight to 12 days' transit time, so one extra day doesn't really matter, and if it does, we can expedite the order."

Tremblay also says the locale



Taimi's swivels on a Tigercat in pine plantations in Brazil. Photo courtesy of Taimi Hydraulics.

attracts people who like nature and the outdoors, making it attractive to people when they are recruiting new employees.

At present, Taimi Hydraulics has a small, dedicated crew of 10 employees. They have an office, a shop and a production plant, which are all in Saint-Prime, but Tremblay stresses that they separate the work into different areas to avoid contamination. "We do the dirty work in one location and the actual assembly in another."

Products

In terms of product line, Taimi makes various types of swivels, all rated for operational pressure of up to 6000 PSI, including what they call Swiwell, which is their hydraulic swivel coupling. The company's Swiroll spherical hydraulic joint is used on harvesting equipment to enable a substantial reduction in periodic maintenance, and to improve hose protection against operational hazards.

Taimi's Swiwell Manifolds house Swiwell Cartridges. These cartridges are short and very sturdy swivelling couplings that use no balls and are extremely effective against hydraulic shocks and external constraints. They offer highly reliable new hydraulic setup possibilities. Taimi says its Swiwell Manifolds will improve hose life up to five times by eliminating torsion.



For more on Taimi's products, visit www.taimi.ca.