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Big Interview Xtra: John Fellowes

Heike Dieckmann, 22 February 2016

Exclusively for OPI digital and premium subscribers, more from our interview with Fellowes CEO John Fellowes



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Vendor Profile: Celebrating 100 years of Fellowes

As Fellowes celebrates its 100th anniversary this year, OPI takes a good look at the manufacturer, its history, ethos and values, its product journey and its leadership team – past and present.

New patent for Fellowes

Office supplies vendor Fellowes Brands has announced another addition to its patent portfolio.

Vendor Focus: In pursuit of excellence

OPI: What are the core product and adjacent categories at Fellowes now and how are they evolving?

John Fellowes: Our goal for our core products is to achieve market leadership in every major global market. We have been advancing favourably against this goal globally, particularly so in Europe. These categories include our shredders, binding and laminating machines, and record storage.

We are also pursuing other spaces that are strategic, but in which we hold a smaller part of the market today. One of these would include air purification. This past year we launched a new commercial air purification system which is growing quickly in the US and China.

We are also working with strong conviction in our Workspace Management business. In recent years, we have started to bring innovation to this category through launches in some of our existing categories, including privacy screens, mobile portfolios and home-office ergonomics.

In 2017, our 100-year anniversary, we will also be debuting some game-changing products targeting two new categories to Fellowes within Workspace

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Vendor Profile: Inspiring communication

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Big Interview: A new (Lyreco) world

OPI's first-ever interview with Lyreco CEO Hervé Milcent turned out to be a charmingly French affair. It also provided a frank and honest assessment of where the reseller is at nearly two years after Milcent succeeded Steve Law.

Management. We are very pleased that these promising introductions will accompany our centennial celebration.

OPI: Going back to core products briefly: have you seen any uplift in Bankers Box sales, for example, after products appeared in US TV series such as *House of Cards* and *VEEP*, for example?

JF: Yes, we are fortunate to receive hundreds of millions of impressions of our Bankers Box brand each year from placement in movies and TV shows all over the world. Due in part to this exposure, our brand has become iconic in legal, office and home storage circles.

We are also very pleased that many of these clips show the Bankers Box logo clearly and in focus!

OPI: Let's talk about acquisitions. You bought Optrix in 2014. How has the international rollout of Optrix, under the Body Glove brand, been received among your customers?

JF: We acquired Optrix for our Mobile Accessories segment, which sells primarily through a mobile distribution channel. The acquisition has gone well and we are beginning to see some nice growth segments.

But the larger gain has come alongside the acquired products. Optrix has extended us beyond the cellular case business – where we were well established – and into a new category called ‘mobile photography’.

Since the acquisition, we have added mobile lens solutions for cell phone photography. At CES in January, for example, we launched a professional grade of mobile lens that will carry the famous ZEISS brand. We have received an enormously positive response to this new partnership!

OPI: When you bought Optrix, it was described as just part of your expansion plan. Will there be further acquisitions and, if so, in which product categories are they likely to be?

JF: As a business, we believe in both organic and acquisition growth. Yes, we anticipate further acquisitions. After buying Optrix in late 2014, we then acquired Connect, a UK-based records storage business. In 2015, we increased equity investments in international subsidiaries in Russia and Singapore, bringing the Russian business to a majority position.

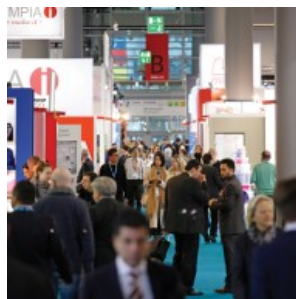
As a general rule, we are constantly evaluating acquisition opportunities in all areas of our business.

Tags: John Fellowes, shredders, vendor, Fellowes

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