

# Adjusting internal activity focus due to the effects of COVID-19

RKB Bearing Industries Group is a Swiss manufacturing organisation that has been operating in the bearing industry since 1936. We spoke to Sales Director, Alessandro Russi.

**W**e are proud to have over 80 years of active presence in the bearings industry and we are committed to developing this valuable legacy further.”

The COVID-19 pandemic for RKB resulted in many additional challenges they had to overcome. Like many other manufacturers in the bearing industry, these challenges were both from the direct and indirect effects of the pandemic.

As far as the direct effect is concerned, RKB had to find and implement appropriate solutions for a severe decrease in the demand of all regions and industrial sectors. Equally important, RKB had to properly adjust its internal activity to the indirect effects of COVID-19 in terms of work safety and working procedures.

On the other hand, RKB headquarters being based in Switzerland was hugely beneficial due to the fast and helpful decisions that were put together by the Swiss government. This allowed their staff to continue to work.

However, throughout these challenging times, essential industries were operating as normal and therefore the need for bearings continued.

“We are focused on the development, innovation and diversity of our product

portfolio. This portfolio covers most industries and ranges from small-scale size bearings to bearings weighing over 4 tons. The fact that bearings are crucial components for a huge number of industrial applications represents a major opportunity, but also a challenge for RKB. Providing necessary products proved to be a solid basis for the continuity of our business operations even in these adverse circumstances. With this optimistic but also realistic view, we pro-actively tried to successfully face this year's negative market environment, mainly characterised by decreased demand and multiple uncertainties.

In answering the current challenges, RKB management believes it was important that we never stopped identifying and implementing solid solutions regarding the full range of our activity, from design and production to clients' training and service.”

In an industry where all clients are focused on cost optimisation, RKB saw the importance that they continued to provide tangible competitive advantages for their customers. In this respect, their products and all the related activities in their operation deliver an attractive return on investment (ROI) and value for money to their customers.

To overcome all the difficulties generated by the new coronavirus pandemic, RKB adapted to the times and chose smart working for their staff. Their colleagues continued to be performance-focused and effective throughout this difficult period.

“They were amazing and showed a great team spirit. We used video calls all the time to keep in touch with everyone. Additionally, we revised documents, increased our knowledge through continuous reading, further

learning and partaking in organised online seminars.”

For RKB, the lessons of the past crises were valuable in dealing with the current one. For instance, in the time of the steel industry crisis, they further diversified their product range to reach other businesses within the market. On the other hand, when the Euro crisis arrived, RKB expanded their presence worldwide through their partners and branches.

As a result, they now have a worldwide distribution network and export to more than 50 countries. Their sales force grew based on long-term partnerships and trust, mutual respect and interest in achieving each party's business objectives.

RKB's business model considers warehouse availability and just in time service as a critical central resource for the ongoing organic growth of their company. The evaluation of RKB's business performance during this year confirms the validity of this strategic option.

RKB has one of the three largest stocks of standard and technological rolling bearings in Europe, carefully supervised by an advanced software system - RKB Active Strategic Stock Management.

“Our large and locally based warehouses solved many critical situations that our clients across the world were facing.”

This allowed RKB to react promptly to many clients' urgent requests and confirmed our just-in-time delivery commitment.



