

Elastic fantastic

As the year draws to a close, for one company this has resulted in more success and the promise of even bigger things for 2008...

The Elastilon brand has become one of the success stories in the flooring industry. Winning this year's ContractFloors readers' award for hard covering underlay supplier of the year, it brings managing director Fred van Bers' year to a perfect end.

Mr van Bers is a man who doesn't mince his words and he exudes sheer pride when talking about the company:

Fred, can you tell us the history of Elastilon and its products?

'The history of the renowned Elastilon systems takes us back to the middle of the 1980s. It started with the sudden change in demand for parquet and for strip floors that were no longer made

from small parts, but produced in large and wide sections. The fact that this caused difficulties from a woodworking point of view – the broader the section, the more pronounced the shrinkage and swelling, resulting in open seams – did not appear to curb the interest in broad strips.

'These were being launched onto the market from all sides, although a sound laying system was not available and parquet and glue manufactures offered no solutions.

'For this reason, Osbe Parket BV decided to find a solution itself, and, after long investigations and many experiments, finally found one in the

shape of an elastic mat to which a heavy, elastic, adhesive layer was applied. This catapulted the company into a sector to which it was a complete stranger, namely the synthetic industry.

'It was now a matter of selecting the material, with the inventor often working until deep into the night. Eventually it was decided to use closed-cell polyethylene foam of a certain density. Its positive and favourable characteristics, namely the "elastic memory", are known, and it is also able to withstand critical environmental tests with regard to indoor climate. Its emission level is practically zero.

'It's quite unique for two completely



Award winners: Collecting the prize for hard underlay supplier of the year at Wembley Stadium, Elastilon managing director Fred Van Bers, sales development manager Ingrid Vlemmix, ContractFloors sales account manager Paul Bartram and Elastilon international account manager Mark Simkens

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different sectors, that have no affinity at all with one another, to create a product that – thanks to the inventor – has caused such a revolutionary development and, in particular, has had such a large impact on the entire sector.'

What about the entry into the UK market and the challenges that accompany it?

'From the very start, the launch onto the UK market – which is a merciless judge of quality – was on such a large scale that it seemed as though the market had been waiting for it. The challenges and perspectives of this are impossible to assess. At any rate, the growth in demand for Elastilon has been doubling from year to year.'

What has been the impact of the copycat products that have appeared and how they have been dealt with?

'When a patent infringement is reported, we no longer ask "In which country?", because we already know. It's always England. It's very strange. Both large and small companies have been guilty of this. Many through naivety and innocence in how to deal with the intellectual and industrial property of other people. Others, however, do it consciously and in bad faith. These are the exploiters, the wide boys – the bad guys among us. Or, according to an FBI analyst, companies that have sunk to a level of an almost psychopathic personality disorder as a result of merciless "corporate greed".'

'They are not all that dangerous. Because, without exception, they all struggle with the problem that they have no know-how at all in wood technology, and therefore have no insight into, and no experience with parquet floors. That is their greatest handicap.'

'The amount to which Elastilon is troubled by this can be estimated. One method that provides some insight into the matter is to compare the growth of Elastilon in the UK to its growth in Germany, where infringements are unheard

of. If this method is correct, infringers turn out to be an advantage, rather than a burden when the figures are compared to each other. In fact, the demand for Elastilon in the UK has increased more strongly, and is ahead of Germany.'

'This indicates that, in many cases, the companies in question act more like promoters of Elastilon. They pave the way – free of charge – and make it even easier for the authentic and original product "Elastilon" to establish itself.'

What is so original about Elastilon and its approved products?

'While the emphasis was originally placed on Elastilon Basic and Elastilon Strong, and still is, Elastilon BV has not been simply sitting on its laurels. A property of both Elastilon Basic and Strong, for example, is that the wooden parts that are applied with this system are almost inextricably bound to the system. This can be an advantage, but may also sometimes be a disadvantage.'

'After a long thought process, Elastilon Removable was developed in order to remove this disadvantage. The Post-It sticker-effect has been applied to the system. The result: floors that have been applied to it can be quickly removed from it at an acute angle.'

'The next branch of the Elastilon tree was the development of Elastilon Lock. This product was inspired by the developments in the heating industry, particularly in Switzerland and Austria, which, as well as being "under-floor



The principle of Elastilon's newest product has been inspired by the resistant qualities of Post-it notes

heating" countries, are also outstanding "parquet countries. As a result, the parquet floor and the floor heating system become a complete and perfect unit, which is not possible to the same extent with bonding due to its application in spots. Elastilon Lock has been extensively tested by the renowned "Entwicklungs- und Prüflabor für Holztechnologie" (Development and Testing Laboratory for Wood Technology) in Dresden (also in terms of heat transmission resistance). The test reports are excellent.'

'A completely different application of Elastilon Lock is the reduction of the impact noise to a whisper, particularly in laminate and strip floors. A major law company in the Netherlands.'

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Issue XII 2007 **ContractFloors** 75