

# Facing the challenges in food and pharma

STAYING AHEAD IN THE FOOD AND PHARMACEUTICALS INDUSTRIES IS TOUGHER THAN EVER. IN THIS SECTION OF KNOW+HOW, WE LOOK AT SOME OF THE ISSUES FACING MANUFACTURERS AND DISCUSS RECENT DEVELOPMENTS WHICH WILL HELP TO ADDRESS THEM.

Achieving and maintaining competitive advantage in the manufacturing industry isn't easy. It never has been. Today though, it's harder than ever. As consumers become more sophisticated, driving the need for constant product innovation, and as markets and legislation become more complex, the technical challenges facing the industry become ever greater. And the infamously difficult economic conditions of the past year or two, which have concentrated management minds across the whole of industry on the issue of minimising costs, have served only to magnify these challenges.

While these problems are hard nuts to crack in every sector, they're arguably even harder to crack for businesses in the food and pharmaceutical industries. Why? Because companies in these two sectors are governed by extremely rigorous standards and legislation, especially in the areas of health and hygiene. This is true in other sectors, too, of course – just more so in food and pharmaceuticals.

But difficult is not the same as impossible. Real breakthroughs are being made in a number of areas which will make a real difference to the industry and help them to cost-effectively address critical issues. Take pump seals, for example. The hygienic conditions and aggressive cleaning regimes typically found in food and pharma have historically presented seal technologists and

manufacturers with major challenges. But the recent development of techniques such as aseptic engineering, which significantly improve the performance of elastomeric seals, and real progress in the field of bio-hygenics, which make a seal inherently hygienic, are only two of the innovations which could revolutionise the industry. These developments are discussed more fully on page 16 of this issue of Know+How.

Another major issue facing the sector (as it faces others) is carbon footprint and energy use. For well known reasons, companies want to minimise both. The question is – how? There are, in fact, many ways that energy consumption can be cut, but some of the biggest savings are to be made through the use of high-efficiency lighting. Again, real progress has been made in this area in recent years. By implementing state-of-the-art lighting technology and intelligent systems such as presence detectors, dimming and zoning, lighting bills can be dramatically reduced – with a payback as low as six months. In fact, some systems don't merely reduce lighting costs, but can improve health and safety, too.

For a more detailed discussion of this subject, see pages 24 and 25.

Legislation, too, is an area of increasing concern for most companies in the food and pharmaceutical sectors. The need to comply

with FDA and MRHA (Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency) rules, and the NFA (National Food Authority) guidelines, means that every new product across every part of the process, from intrinsically clean environments to end-of-batch cleaning regimes, must be evaluated for strict compliance before implementation. This can make change control a major issue – more of an engineering than a straightforward MRO function.

Of course, the amount and complexity of legislation is one thing – its rate of change is another. Simply staying abreast can be a major task in itself. Changes such as the introduction of safety standard EN ISO 13849-1 (which replaces EN 954-1) on December 29th 2009, and the new version of the Machinery Directive, which also comes into force at the end of December, are examples of legislative development, discussed in more on pages 8 and 9. You can also read about an easy way to ensure that your lubricants are compliant with the HACCP process and international standards on pages 16 and 17.

But, while there is undoubted progress in many areas, the question is: how can you best take advantage of it? One answer is by working closely with a partner who completely understands the technology and has unparalleled experience of using it. One such partner is ERIKS. An industry-leader in all the fields discussed above, as well as others, we can work with you in a way that will add real value, while helping you meet and exceed your business targets. No matter what your needs, from simple product sourcing, through full custom solution design and build, we can help. If you're looking to optimise your MRO function, you'll find we're the perfect outsourcing partner. We have the resources and the experience to integrate fully with your working environment, so that our on-site personnel, to all intents and purposes, become your employees, enrolling in your internal code of conduct, matching shift patterns and fully complying with site rules and working practices. This complete site integration and compliance means that the outsourcing company can deliver its own competence while adding further value in line with corporate guidelines. In short, with customers that include AstraZeneca, 3M Healthcare, Birds Eye and Heinz, ERIKS is one of the most qualified companies in the industry to help you maximise your competitive advantage.

*No company understands the challenges you face better than ERIKS. And no company will work more closely with you, or is better qualified, to help you address them.*

