

# going for a record

by Paul Dunwell

Only one nation is globally revered for its precision engineering, its eco-altruism, its ability to deliver the goods on time, its commercial *savoir faire*, and its TQM. You probably think it's yours. But if I add that they're also notorious for gratuitously excavating holes in otherwise perfectly good cheeses, and infamous for their monumental lack of wit, you'll surely realise I'm alluding to the Swiss. By consistently prospering in a largely mature

and highly competitive European market, record – the Zurich-based door manufacturer – has proved that it exemplifies all of those peculiarly Swiss strengths. It has already sold and fitted well over 100,000 units and it's well-represented throughout Europe. Indeed, to keep abreast of demand it now manufactures in France too. Their service network is already unrivalled within the sector. Not surprisingly, Michael Hirt – who's their Divisional Manager for Marketing and



Distribution – is ebullient about record's products and their prospects. He sees the company's chief strengths as its broad portfolio of fiercely competitive products and its determination to re-invest whatever is necessary into R & D to keep pace with customers' needs.

Sound familiar? How complicated can doors be, after all? Isn't it just a matter of, as the English say, 'putting the wood in the hole'?

One look at record's literature would convince anyone otherwise. I confess to being staggered by their state-of-the-art complexity and the underlying logic of it all.

"Customers know improved access more rapidly recoups their investments," he says. "They want a smooth-flowing high volume of pedestrian traffic without compromising anyone's safety or security. Nobody can afford to have push-chairs up-ended or toddlers hurt, nor queues along the pavement either.

"The only way that they can simultaneously enjoy that optimum balance of high capacity and safety is by using doors that employ a barrage of sophisticated and intelligent devices. Some of those devices are electronic controls, but others are simple-but-effective design features; record fits them all at a modest price."

I asked him how crucially the aspect of energy conservation figured in buyer-decisions.

"Thankfully the new breed of managers is ecologically aware. Most wouldn't automatically associate energy-conserving doors with an overriding need to be altruistic. But, if they start thinking about potential savings on fuel bills, it's a different story. They're businessmen first and foremost. Sadly, eco-initiatives are still usually underpinned by economic imperatives. Today's retail margins can be so narrow, that *in extremis* a customer might waste more than the profit you've just made from him on his way out. Businesses as well as people can catch colds from draughts."

Thumbing through record's specifications bears out their realisation of economic truths. All of their products, be they sliding or folding, swinging or revolving, incorporate materials and

design features conducive to low-cost maintenance. They necessarily comply with every prevailing standard. And they reflect commercial caniness. For example, record maintains that revolving doors – which are not universally favoured – may possibly deter shop theft. How? Simply put, because – even in the absence of other security measures – they slow the flight of the errant *Ladendieb*.

At the same time, a momentary pause at a door can give a proprietor a unique selling opportunity. It is there that captive customers ordinarily gain their first impression of the establishment's prevailing ethos, perhaps of temptingly showcased wares or other more subliminal but esoteric incitements to shop till they drop.

As Michael Hirt says, "Forget windows of opportunity. Nowadays smart businessmen are figuring out that doors can do more than just fill a gap!"

(Steady, now! These really are good jokes for the Swiss!) ■



For further information please see page 8 for your nearest dealer or contact the company's head office: record Türautomation Allmendstrasse 24 CH-8320 Fehraltorf Switzerland Tel: +41 1 954 9191 Fax: +41 1 954 9320