



## Jacopa - 18 months on

In the spring of 2015 Ovivo Inc. sold its UK municipal wastewater business to the company's existing senior management team. The buy-out was led by Vice President, Alex Lloyd and Finance Director, Peter Sargent and the new company which was called Jacopa, swiftly declared its intention to focus firmly on the UK and Ireland wastewater sector, building on the heritage of its well established product range whilst introducing new and innovative technologies and setting an industry standard for customer service. So, eighteen months down the line have these ambitions been achieved and how has the market responded? Water Active's editor caught up with managing director Alex Lloyd in an exclusive first interview since the buy-out.

### What was behind the management buyout?

In short, we had the opportunity to make a good company even better. What the market wants is local focus and exemplary customer service and the buy-out has enabled us to concentrate firmly on the UK and Ireland utility wastewater sector to achieve this. Also, being a dedicated and autonomous business has enabled us to improve business efficiency by introducing new cloud-based ERP and IT platforms and put new, best-in-class, management systems in place to improve our business efficiency and enhance the service we provide.

### How did you achieve the transition?

We knew that our employees with their excellent customer relationships were our greatest asset and a major priority for us was that employees should remain with the company, an objective that I'm delighted to say we have achieved.

Jacopa also retained all of the products and customer contracts of the ongoing business and have kept and worked hard to further develop our key brands, which are among the UK's best known and trusted: Jones + Attwood, Copa, Aquator, Tomkinson and MBR Technology, with a licence for Brackett Green products. This is a comprehensive range that is perfectly suited to the needs of today's municipal water sector.

All of the existing ISO standard accreditations (ISO 9001, ISO 14001 and OSHAS 18001) were also successfully transitioned to Jacopa and together with our sound, corporate background underpins our culture of good governance. This is a feature much valued by water utilities and contractors alike and instils great confidence in our working relationships.

### How has this new autonomy allowed Jacopa to develop?

It has enabled us to achieve our aim of having a dedicated business focus; our employees are now able to concentrate on customer needs and achieve a truly rapid response to customer demands, which has increased motivation and morale.

It's also allowed us to build a product portfolio based closely on our local wastewater sector

that together with our move to introduce product standardisation has enabled us to improve cost efficiency and enhance customer value.

Another key aspect of what we are offering is our bespoke refurbishment service and here again this has been designed with our customers' need to prove value for money. We have invested in a purpose designed and highly specialised facility for refurbishment at our West Bromwich site. The facility enables valuable assets to be brought back to their working best, and sometimes thanks to the enhancements we are able to provide, with even better than new performance.

### What new products and technologies have been introduced?

We launched our own brand of high-performance, flat sheet membrane bioreactor (MBR) panels last year and have had a tremendous response from the industry. Our agreement with renowned manufacturer Bosker® to provide its trashrake technology in the UK and Ireland has also paid dividends building on a number of significant successes including an installation at Thames Water's massive Deepfams wastewater treatment works in Enfield.

We've also developed and launched an innovative straight through screen (STS) to provide further effective inlet works protection. And to complement our existing submerged aerated filter (SAF) range we've introduced our new energy-saving EcoSAF.

Our highly-popular RBCs (rotating biological contactors) have also been re-engineered as a standard product range which has allowed us to create further customer savings and there's been a lot of interest in our grit removal products which we've rationalised by standardisation to make them more competitive.

In everything we've achieved, we have strived to reduce costs by attention to engineering detail to ensure the best possible deal for our customers is at the heart of our offering.

### What successes has Jacopa had with water company contract wins and framework works?

We've had some notable framework successes, and as we speak much activity on framework tendering and qualification is ongoing. This is a time of intense activity in framework tenders, and Jacopa has worked hard to develop the right attributes to win these.

Completing Frameworks now requires a very demanding level of technical, operational and commercial detail, and I'm proud to say that Jacopa has the depth of expertise, qualifications and attributes to provide the depth of detail that our customers are seeking.

### Have there been any notable developments/successes outside the water sector?

Our focus is very strongly on the utility wastewater market, but we have also achieved notable success in the dairy market with two major MBR projects recently completed for 'blue chip' European dairy companies. One of these was for Ireland's largest branded dairy product supplier, Glanbia where a submerged membrane treatment plant that we had previously installed at its Ballyragget factory in Kilkenny has proved so successful that we have upgraded it recently to provide improved biological treatment capacity to allow the factory to expand.

### Any thoughts around TOTEX?

We try to be open minded about the options available to give the best overall solution for a customer's requirements, taking into account the required plant and process performance; capital, operational and maintenance costs, the life of existing equipment if it's being refurbished, and the design life required for new and refurbished equipment.

We work closely with our customers to develop the best solution with them and whilst this support can be time consuming we find that this input to help develop the ideal solution for the customer is an investment worth making. We also believe in driving value through innovation, and endeavour to achieve lowest overheads and highest productivity possible.



A concern is that the UK water industry may commit to fewer projects to compensate for higher prices. However, the current economic conditions of low interest rates and slightly higher inflation may well create a more favourable situation for our end customers, the water companies.

### Recent developments at Jacopa?

We recently appointed Tony Simister, who has a strong background in both the commercial and engineering aspects of stormwater projects and is well known for his professional contribution within the industry. His appointment is a major boost for our ambition to further develop our stormwater products division, where we will offer a comprehensive products, service and project range with the objective of becoming the market leader.

We are well qualified to participate in this market, with a range of highly competitive products which enable us to service our customers with both standard products for flow control and flushing systems and also screening products while bringing more innovation to this part of the market.

### So what can we expect in future?

We are always encouraging our own people and our supply chain to take time to consider if there is a better and more efficient way of doing something. Our future is based on doing what we do today better tomorrow, whether learning reactively from our mistakes or proactively bringing forward a business process or technical development that improves our own, our supply chain partners and our customer's business performance.

The wastewater treatment industry is very mature, however we believe there remains considerable scope to leverage our experience and skills to make improvements in equipment performance and cost to ensure Jacopa is always at the competitive leading edge, sustaining our business and delivering the efficiencies demanded by our customers.

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