

Can-do attitude pays off for Bridgestone's WA team



Some of Bridgestone's WA sales team, from left: Tim Ebrall (Sales Representative), Jason McInnes (Sales Clerk), Travis Moore (Sales Representative), James Hogg (Branch Manager), Etienne Olivier (Sales Representative) and Craig Ashe (Sales Representative).

For this Summer 2007 edition of Imprint, we profile Bridgestone Earthmover Tyres' Perth Branch sales outfit, and the important contribution this team makes to Bridgestone's tyre business.

Although the WA economy is booming, the continued shortage of big tyres ensures Bridgestone's sales team in the state has had to work smarter on developing the business.

With nearly all tyres allocated, the only way that the Perth Branch has been able to meet and exceed budget is to sell by diversity.

This is reflected through such achievements as all areas of Bridgestone's Diversified Products line budget being exceeded across the produce lines of tracks, rims, service, repairs, valves and SealZit.

"We firmly believe teamwork is the key to our success in this challenging market," said James Hogg, Perth Branch Manager.

"We work on the basics and believe the sales will follow. The basics are: build relationships, sell what we have in stock, sell on quality and believe in your product 110%."

James' comments were backed up by Craig Ashe, a member of the Perth sales team.

"The approach from the entire team has been to roll up our sleeves and sell what we have got. This is driven from our WA Executive Manager Robbie Morrison through to James as Branch Manager and by us in the sales team," said Craig.

"We want to sell to the end users, so when we see a bit of gear

operating we stop, introduce ourselves and start talking about the features and benefits of Bridgestone products. We worked out some time ago that generally a customer won't find you."

The team has also had success with the bigger tracks, particularly its agricultural track range.

"We've been attending a number of field days and agricultural shows this year which have generated a fair amount of interest in the larger-size tracks," Craig said.

"Again this comes down to building relationships with customers and thinking outside the square.

"As an example of this approach, we recently went to see a new customer in regard to a possible track sale," he said.

This customer operates a Morooka MST 1500 rubber track carrier, which had a large split on the outside part of the track. If left unattended the track would have broken, leaving the customer in all sorts of trouble, as it works in remote outback Australia.

"We asked the customer if we were to repair the track to try and help extend the track life, would they order the new tracks through us?"

"They agreed to this, and the only way that we could repair the track was to get the machine into the branch and let our tyre repair technicians work their magic.

"So the customer sent the machine in, the track was repaired successfully and the new tracks were ordered – a win/win all round," said Craig.

Management and operator contributions to longer tyre life

Paul Connors, Bridgestone Earthmover Tyres' Head Office Engineering Manager, provides some advice to contractors and quarry operators on tyre management for mid-size equipment (trucks, scrapers, wheel loaders, etc) during the tyre supply shortage – which could last for at least the next two years.



Management responses

Maximising tyre life to survive the current supply shortage requires a significant culture change, driven by senior management.

While the operator is your first line of defence in maximising tyre life, other personnel such as quarry managers, project managers, fleet managers and foremen need to be aware of how their daily decisions affect tyre performance.

Close scrutiny of production data compared with tyre manufacturers' recommendations and TKPH capabilities is necessary. Tyre scrap reasons should also be analysed on a monthly basis to determine the effect of the operation on tyre performance and identify areas for improvement.

Operator training

Operators need to be trained in correct operational techniques to minimise tyre damage, and educated as to the importance of maximum tyre life in this critical supply period. Low tyre life could cost them their jobs.

Operators should also be engaged in the tyre inspection process, reporting and logging any abnormal tyre conditions, such as cuts or deformations.

Reports need to be reviewed and any necessary action taken – which may have to include removal of the tyre for repair.

Basic instructions for operators of different equipment types should be as follows:

Rigid and articulated dump trucks, scrapers

- Obey all speed limits
- For truck operators, come to a complete stop before turning to dump/



Keeping your loading areas and haul roads clean is one of the single most important steps to extending tyre life.

load, always with an "L- turn" (stop, then reverse into position turning to the truck's left-hand side)

- Don't drive through water
- Report and avoid spillage
- Drive slowly in hazardous areas.

Wheel loaders

- Ensure bucket is wider than tyres
- Ensure correct targetting of payload and load positioning
- Stop trucks from reversing onto toe
- Keep loading areas clean
- Do not operate loaded over long distances

Graders

- Do not grade uphill
- Avoid spinning rear tyres
- When grading and ripping use low gears

Conclusion

Many of the practices outlined and recommended in this article can be regarded as commonsense for any contractor or quarry operator looking to maximise equipment utilisation and life.

However, the ready availability of tyres over the past few years has encouraged many to trade off increased production at the expense of shorter tyre and equipment life.

This is no longer an option. Replacement tyres are not readily available and users must maximise tyre life by following recommended practices.

The alternative is a far more substantial fall in production and machine availability if they are forced to park up equipment because no tyres are available for their machines.

Given these two options, the choice is easy: change management practices to maximise tyre life.

Bridgestone Earthmover Tyres provides in-house training seminars on tyre management programs for its customers. For more details phone (02) 9722 6111, email tyremanagement@bridgestone-earthmover.com.au.

Bridgestone Repair System helps safely extend tyre life

With the world-wide shortage of mining and construction tyres set to continue until 2008 and beyond, Bridgestone Earthmover Tyres is expanding its tyre repair business throughout Australia, giving customers access to safe, durable repairs that can provide extended life – even for tyres with severe structural damage.

Through its investment in training, resources and technology, the Bridgestone Repair System (BRS) offers the industry's highest-quality tyre repair service, allowing customers to achieve tyre-life potential that would not otherwise be available for some damaged tyres.

The BRS is the only national tyre repair operation in Australia, with repair plants in Perth, Kalgoorlie, Mt Isa, Mackay, the Hunter Valley, and Melbourne. It can repair both Bridgestone and non-Bridgestone tyres.

Tyres repaired through the BRS are achieving significant life after repair; for example, mining haul truck tyres are now documented as regularly lasting well beyond 3000 hours following major repair by the company – although this is dependent on application.

Ultimately through its BRS business, Bridgestone aims to be able to provide a tyre repair that offers the same effective life as a tyre that has not been damaged – a service unmatched by any other tyre repairer, according to Mick Ryan, Executive Manager, Diversified Products at Bridgestone Earthmover Tyres.

"The primary aim of the Bridgestone Repair System business is to achieve a high-endurance tyre repair that will see out the remaining life of the tyre – without compromising safety.

"Our tyre repair specialists evaluate the damage and develop a custom response which takes into account the overall structure of the tyre. This is based on their in-depth knowledge of tyre construction and the manufacturing process," he said.

Mick said that Bridgestone Earthmover Tyres has a strong advantage in this area as it is also a designer, developer, manufacturer and supplier of tyres.

"We look at the damaged tyre from a problem/solution perspective, rather than simply following a rigid repair process guideline."

He said that key issues tyre users need to look at when considering tyre repair include:

- Safety of the repair: Not all damaged tyres can be safely, or effectively, repaired, and the repairer needs to have the expertise to be able to accurately evaluate a tyre before starting a repair.
- Durability of the repair: Much of the durability of a repair comes down to the methodology employed by the repairer and the experience and training of the repair technician. To be able to design an appropriate repair, a tyre technician needs to fully understand tyre design and structure.
- Trust in the repair: Serious safety issues can also arise when poorly-trained tyre repairers either carry out a poor repair job – or even attempt to repair tyres that are too damaged to be repaired safely. "A repaired tyre should be easily achieving 1000 hours, and in most instances over 3000 hours – except in very difficult applications, such as steep haul grades," said Ryan.



Bridgestone's tyre repair specialists assess each tyre for damage, then develop a custom repair designed to give the best-possible result for on-going tyre life and safety.

"If a tyre repairer can't demonstrate verifiable evidence of after-repair lives of several thousand hours, you should look elsewhere.

With Bridgestone Earthmover Tyres putting considerable resources into repair of earthmoving tyres in the past few years, the pace of development has been rapid.

"Our repair methodology is being continuously improved, and we're always striving to find the best way to deal with a particular type of tyre damage," said Ryan.

"In addition, we have sufficient scale to be able to design and manufacture our own custom patches, rather than rely on off-the-shelf patches."

According to Ryan, this gives Bridgestone far more control and flexibility over the repair process.

"The skill of the repairer is crucial when evaluating tyre damage and developing custom repairs, which is why we invest considerable time and effort in training. As part of this focus on training, we are currently working on an OTR tyre repairer accreditation program," said Ryan.

The company is committed to continually improving its repair methodology to maximise the durability of its tyre repairs, and it is also currently preparing an ISO 9001 Quality Assurance program for tyre repairs.

Representatives of Bridgestone Earthmover Tyres are also represented on a Standards Australia committee – in conjunction with other tyre manufacturers and tyre repairers – developing a standard for the repair of off-the-road tyres. This standard will include guidelines for end users on the safe usage and monitoring of repaired tyres.

Quick delivery makes a happy Bridgestone track customer



Kehbin's 2 tonne mini excavator, fitted with Bridgestone rubber tracks. Inset, Wayne Francis, owner of Kehbin Pty Ltd.

Next day delivery of urgently required rubber tracks for a 2 tonne mini excavator by Bridgestone Earthmover Tyres has made a committed customer out of Wayne Francis, owner of Melbourne-based earthmoving and civil contractor Kehbin Pty Ltd.

On top of that, the price was so good, he bought a set of two, instead of just a single track.

Wayne's introduction to rubber tracks through Bridgestone came early last year, when he was looking for a replacement track on his Yanmar VI020 excavator after one broke unexpectedly.

"We were running round trying to get a replacement track in a hurry," he said.

"Someone mentioned that Bridgestone was selling its own-branded track, so I gave them a call. They had it to me the next day, which was just brilliant."

Wayne said he'd found other brands of rubber tracks prone to breaking fairly quickly without warning once they get a few hours up on them.

"We were always having trouble getting the tracks we want within a reasonable time, and that's why it's been so good to find out about Bridgestone, because they have a database of all the tracks they have available throughout Australia, and what track fits what machines.

"They can also get you the track pretty quickly; the track we needed turned out to be in Sydney or Brisbane, and we had it the next day; I was blown away by the service," he said.

"They were so good, we'll certainly get onto them in the future. We have five rubber track excavators in our fleet, from 2-7 tonnes, plus two rubber track tipplers.

"Since we put the tracks on about 16-18 months ago, they've worn very

well; they are still like new tracks. I've been very happy with them."

Wayne also described the price from Bridgestone as "more than competitive".

"I was only going to buy one track, because only one had broken, but at the price they were asking, I went for two of them.

"From now on, I'll just be using Bridgestone for my rubber tracks," he said.

Kehbin carries out earthmoving and civil works throughout metropolitan Melbourne, Victoria and interstate, including full subdivision works from initial earthmoving on an uncleared block of land, until it's ready for the building stage, as well as final subdivision landscaping and cleanup.

The company also does everything related to civil construction, including roads, kerbing, drainage, levelling, etc.

Its fleet includes 14 excavators, 2-30 tonne operating weight, four skidsteers, and tipplers.

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