

of our team have worked closely with them to identify suitable countries and franchise partners. The programme was initially rolled out in the UAE, Kuwait and Bahrain, but in 2008, having reached an agreement with Al Tayer Group they began to establish a presence in Saudi Arabia. They now have 4 stores in Kingdom, in Jeddah, Riyadh, Al Khobar and Madinah, with a 5th opening soon. They believe there is potential for over 20.

Another of my clients, Crosslee is a white goods manufacturer from West Yorkshire. One of their brands is Hostess Trolleys. Although this is not an obvious "sell" for the Middle East I encouraged them to take a look. An OMIS report commissioned several years ago identified some potential distributors, one of whom was subsequently appointed. They now supply between 5,000 and 10,000 units a year to Saudi specifically for Ramadan.

Our most recent mission to Saudi was in February 2009. The missioners included a lighting manufacturer, two universities, a specialist medical recruitment agency, a manufacturer of specialist oilfield and petrochemical monitoring equipment, several specialist training companies, and a manufacturer of specialist construction & oilfield related equipment. All of the missioners commissioned OMIS in advance. Two companies who had commissioned OMIS pulled out at the 11th hour for unavoidable reasons. More about them in a moment.

The Universities, Sunderland and Hull, have both reached supply agreements with Saudi Universities. The medical recruitment company has reached agreements with hospitals in Riyadh and Al Khobar to supply and train nursing staff. Total Automated Solutions, the Oilfield monitoring company was inundated with enquiries from day one of the mission, and is in the process of turning them into orders; two of the trainers have since returned to the Kingdom to deliver training programmes.

Lindapter, until recently part of Tyco,, the manufacturer of construction related equipment has been trying to become an ARAMCO approved supplier for 2 years. In January Leiden told him the equipment wouldn't be considered for another 18 months. Neil Wilson took this up with the appropriate people in Dhahran, and the approvals

have now been received, 8 weeks later. Orders are in the pipeline

One of the companies who unfortunately had to pull out was Faber Maunsell, a Leeds based consulting engineer with a worldwide turnover of £4.6 billion. As a result of an enquiry received from the BTO in Al Khobar they are now in discussions with Aramco for the construction of the dams mentioned in the Construction SIMS.

The other company who pulled out is Rosehill Polymers. They are close to reaching an agreement with a Saudi distributor/contractor for the provision of railway crossing pads for the land bridge project.

Finally, Mirza Baig, the footwear manufacturer joined the mission specifically to develop new business in the oilfield sector. I attended meeting with him with old contacts of mine at Arabian Drilling. Samples of products designed specifically for ADC are currently being field tested and performing well. He expects to convert this into orders which, in a full year, could be worth as much as £800K. Samples have also now been delivered to the other drilling companies and ARAMCO for testing & evaluation.

I intend to bring another mission to Saudi Arabia in November 2009 (dates already pencilled in). I intend to continue to become more focused on the key sectors, rather than casting the net out wide, to avoid capturing companies who have little to offer or are not well enough resourced to make a serious impact in the market. I have also proposed to my Director that we consider a mission combining the three Northern Regions – North West, North East, and Yorkshire & Humber where rather than casting out a net, we would approach and invite companies to participate, picking winners capable of ensuring this mission has a serious impact on . I think it's workable, and in my conversations with the other regions (unofficial at this stage) I know they're up for it. I'm meeting with my Director shortly to discuss and put a more formal plan together

In addition I am working with Neil Wilson to organise an Inward Mission by senior Saudi Aramco personnel to the Yorkshire & Humber region to visit world class companies who could supply them, but who may also be willing to consider manufacturing in Saudi as part of a joint venture.