



A quick word with...

Heidi Sommerville GEM Containers

Please tell us something about the journey of how GEM Containers came into being?

GEM's journey began as an idea shared between long-standing associates. We wanted to create a specialist tank container management company that would be recognised for its customised and personal service. Taking that idea and developing it into a distinctive leasing business has taken the dedication and commitment of an experienced team.

I have taken on the role of managing director with determination to achieve our vision. For me business is all about people and we are committed to building successful relationships with our customers and suppliers over the long term.

What prompted the entry of the company into the tank container leasing market?

I have been involved in the tank container leasing market for over 22 years. During this time I have seen the tank container leasing model change from a more unique product and service based structure, to one characterised by volume commoditisation. I believe strongly that there remains a need for individualised lease solutions backed by a high level of personal service. The desire to deliver quality in all that we do is what

Heidi Sommerville – Managing Director GEM Containers

drives GEM to succeed in a competitive market.

Are there not already sufficient tank container leasing companies?

Before establishing GEM, we carried out our own research on the growth opportunities for tank container usage based on a cross section of products, customer profiles and geographic regions. The major drivers of growth in the industry are global economic conditions, environmental considerations and commercial targets. This analysis endorsed our view that these factors interact to create a continuing demand for tank containers which looks set to remain strong for the foreseeable future, especially in the emerging markets. We believe that the tank container leasing market will maintain its material share of the overall business. Based on increased demand and our desire to provide a bespoke and personal service, we believe that there is definitely a place for GEM in the leasing sector.

It seems fair to argue that container leasing is in large part driven by cost of funds. How does GEM propose to compete here with established players?

GEM has worked hard to establish a range of funding sources which have defined financial and performance criteria over given periods. This diverse structure provides GEM with the necessary flexibility to offer a variety of lease transactions to grow the fleet.

Have you encountered any major barriers to entry?

As with many new ventures, one major barrier that we have experienced has been the impact of

timing. The initial cycle of sourcing funding, placing equipment orders, securing lease transactions and establishing cash flow has been a challenge. Now, with lines of funding available, production underway and a healthy transaction deal flow we are looking forward positively.

What specific advantages do you believe GEM Containers brings to the market?

We operate in a very competitive environment where it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between product quality and pricing. For me it is all about offering flexible solutions, personal service and transparency and excellence in all that we do.

How do you intend to stay competitive in the market?

We believe in tailor-making solutions followed by a highly personalised service. Also, as a small company we are able to react quickly and adapt to changes in the market. I value our competitors in the market as they force us continually to challenge our practices and improve our services.

With your current business plan, where do you see GEM containers in, say, five years?

GEM's five year business plan is to grow the fleet to 2,500 units. Based on the funding opportunities that we have available and the current lease transaction deal flow we are confident that we will achieve this target. We look forward to becoming an important quality supplier in the tank container leasing market and will continue to work hard to secure our success.

www.gemcontainers.com

From Chimical to Chemical

Italian company Chimical Express has changed its name to **Chemical Express** following an internal reorganisation.

After more than 34 years of history and experience in bulk liquid chemicals transport, Chimical Express decided to adopt a new structure aimed at making it more efficient and closer to customers' requirements. As a result the transport branch has been transferred to the new company and renamed.

Chemical Express says it can offer customers extensive know-how inherited from Chimical Express, and a specialist team able to offer tailor-made solutions based on high quality, cost awareness and safety.

The company is headquartered in Naples, with offices in Novara (near Milan) and Valencia (Spain).

The new structure is claimed to be leaner, with a modern and reliable transport fleet for a wide range of services - chemicals transport, tank container rent, supply chain, transport of temperature-controlled products, dangerous products, unloading with tip chassis for highly viscous products).

Intermodal (railway-road or short-sea- road) and road transport also allows the company to propose more appropriate solutions to suit each customer.

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Royal recognition for Fort Vale

HHRH the Duke of Kent visited Fort Vale to open a new £1.5 million research and development centre.

The Duke toured the company's headquarters at Simonstone, Lancashire, UK, and unveiled a plaque in the new facility, which reflects Fort Vale's on-going commitment to enterprise and training.

The Duke's visit followed Fort Vale's receipt of a fourth Queen's Award for Enterprise in International Trade earlier this year. Managing director Ian Wilson said: "We were honoured to welcome the Duke of Kent to continue what has been another exciting and excellent year for us all here at Fort Vale. The opening of the research and development centre underlines our commitment to investment in training and innovation, which, along with the people here, are cornerstones of our success.

"We pride ourselves on developing first-class engineers, who make a high quality product which has made us key exporters to new and existing markets and helped us become world leaders in our field."

Fort Vale Engineering now employs over 350 people at its Simonstone site and has boosted annual turnover to close to £45 million. The company, founded by Edward Fort OBE in 1967, exports 95 percent of its production worldwide and recently secured a number of new orders within the US rail network. It also has bases in the Netherlands, Singapore, China, Russia, and the USA.



HRH The Duke of Kent with directors and apprentices at the opening of Fort Vale's new R&D facility