

Building pioneers set new benchmark in Middle East

Pioneers in providing turnkey building solutions in the Middle East for over 30 years, Al Masaood Bergum (AMB) is setting a new benchmark in construction globally using the FRAMECAD technology.

While previously a large part of the company's business involved timber frame buildings, AMB invested in FRAMECAD three years ago in a decision that has had a positive impact on their business.

Today, almost 75% of AMB's modular construction work involves cold-formed steel framing, and being the largest company of its type in the Middle East, that represents a huge volume of building activity.

"Our target is approximately 40,000 sq metres a month," says Paolo Pedroni, Estimation Manager at AMB, "and 30,000 sq metres of that would be cold formed steel. The rest is traditional steel and concrete work, some timber."

EFFICIENCY DRIVE

According to Paolo, the motivation for making the switch to cold form steel framing was two fold.

"First, we wanted to improve our production efficiency and quality. We were geared up to do a lot of timber construction but our production systems were not integrated so we were doing things manually. It worked but it wasn't the most productive solution.

"Secondly, there was a strong move in the region to revise building regulations to reduce fire risk and that eventually was going to make timber frame buildings unacceptable in many parts of the Gulf Region.

"As it turns out, that is exactly what has happened."



MAKING THE TRANSITION

Making the transition from timber to cold form steel frame production was relatively easy for AMB says Paolo.

"It wasn't a big deal at all. We set up the Qatar factory right from the beginning to work exclusively with steel and we used this as training for the whole group.

"Our staff were keen on the technology straight away. When they got the FRAMECAD machine and saw integrated automation, it made their jobs easier and there was less room for error and timely delays.

"Good skilled labour is very difficult to come by in this part of the world so FRAMECAD technology is ideal. It works for the company and it works for the staff and our contractors because the system is simple; it is driven through our in house designers, architects, and engineers, and then executed efficiently through one of our production facilities.

"I think the ideal transition time from timber to steel is about 2 to 3 months. After that, usually all the concerns are sorted and production generally runs pretty smoothly."



HIGH VOLUME PRODUCTION

Since purchasing FRAMECAD technology in 2008, AMB has bought a further three machines over the last two years, and are awaiting the arrival of a new machine for 2011.

“We run our machines harder than anyone in the world, generally 20 hours a day,” says Paolo who estimates AMB’s total annual production of cold formed steel buildings at 400,000 sq metres.

“We are a large company and we handle between 20 and 30 new projects globally every month. For example, we’ve just completed a 2400m² warehouse in Afghanistan and a 1400-man labour camp in Papua New Guinea using our in house capabilities and the FRAMECAD technology. Now that’s international diversity!”

“We are currently working on Al Masaood Village, a 5300-man labour camp project in Abu Dhabi, which is the first of 5 similar camps to be completed in the next 18 months.

We’re also commencing work on a larger camp (7500 man) in the Shah region of Abu Dhabi.”

In 2010, AMB was the largest fast-tracked supplier of modular buildings in the Middle East and the leading supplier of turnkey building solutions for the oil, gas, commercial, residential, industrial and for large-scale infrastructure developments.



THE PIONEERING SPIRIT

AMB was the first company in the Gulf region to adopt FRAMECAD technology and Paolo believes it gave the company a decisive advantage.

“We were the first to proactively adopt the FRAMECAD technology. We started off with stud and track and then we purchased the FRAMECAD machines. We’re always trying to remain one step ahead of the field.”

“We were able to provide detailed design, advanced engineering and new systems that streamlined the design and build processes and gave our client’s superior value at no extra cost.”

SURVIVING THE DOWNTURN

In the construction industry, the fall out from the world financial crisis since 2008 has affected many companies, and AMB has been no exception.

However, Paolo believes FRAMECAD technology played a large part in helping the company come through the crisis.

“From our point of view here in the UAE, we saw a massive fall towards the end of 2008 where projects weren’t flowing in as easily as they were in previous years. We had to try a lot harder and be a lot smarter in what we were proposing.

“With our own machines and expertise in cold formed steel technology, we were in a better position to be able to value engineer our design concepts, utilizing cold formed steel. We needed to be a lot smarter and sharper with our pencils.”

“We operate out of four factories, have 2500 workers and 200 support staff so when the market dropped we still had to cover these costs. It was difficult, it was a challenge and I think we’re out of it now and looking back, I think we did ok.”