

Downstream Oil Company of the Year 2016 - UK



Gulf Oil International Ltd is a global downstream oil group supporting a wide range of industries across a number of verticals. We spoke to Vice President of Gulf Oil International UK Ltd Frank Rutten to learn more about the firm and how its focus on innovation is critical to its success.

The Gulf Oil International Group is a large and growing family of companies, united under the renowned symbol, the Gulf Brand. The group draws upon its 115-year history to provide clients with the very highest quality oil products, working across a wide variety of sectors including petrol stations, marine oil supplies, lubricant supplies and wholesale aviation fuel.

Gulf Oil International Group operations are present in over 100 countries worldwide (excluding Portugal, Spain and the U.S.A, where the Gulf brand is under separate ownership), focusing on lubricant, fuel products and services. The operations vary in size and structure but the universal factor is the iconic Gulf brand that links all of these businesses.

This brand, as Frank is eager to emphasise, is built upon the group's focus on innovation and dedication to supporting clients.

"Personally, with over 25 years of experience working with companies throughout the oil and gas market I am proud to say that the Gulf Oil International Group is a truly unique business, combining an innovative, ambitious approach with a client focus which ensures that we are always adapting to meet the ever evolving needs of our customers."

Headquartered in The Cayman Islands and operating in countries around the world, there are different internal practices in every office; but, as Frank is keen to explain, what unites the group is its positivity and drive towards excellence in every aspect of its work.

"With offices around the world there are many different working practices, however what remains consistent throughout the group is our focus on positive reinforcement. Being an ambitious, driven company means that we have to constantly try out new ideas and experiment with new products, solutions and processes. Sometimes things don't go as planned, but what is important is that we have tried and we will learn from every mistake, and as such we view every unsuccessful project as a positive opportunity to gain new experience, rather than a failure.

"With a flat hierarchical structure we are able to implement new ideas quickly, working flexibly to deliver new innovations as soon as the idea comes to us. This ensures that we are always at the forefront of the latest developments in the market and pioneer new strategies, such as our partnership with Manchester United football club, which is a first for an oil company and has garnered international attention."



What sets the firm apart, and allows it this agility and flexibility, is that it is exclusively a downstream firm, with no upstream operations, which, as Frank explains, allows it to remain stable despite the global oil crisis.

"As a downstream focused group Gulf Oil International is immune to some of the fluctuations in crude oil pricing, meaning that whilst many firms are only focused on cutting costs and overall profitability, we are able to look towards investing in new technologies and being open to new ideas. Investment in marketing, research and development and infrastructure such as blending plants ensures our ongoing success, and we are not afraid to invest in order to reap the rewards later. As part of this approach we are always seeking customer feedback and implementing any changes which will ensure that they receive the services that they need.

"This is particularly important in certain areas of the business, such as in Gulf Oil Marine, which provides lubricants to ships in over 1000 ports around the world. Many of our clients have short stopovers, therefore they need their lubricants to be on time. In addition, due to the nature of the industry these ships often change destination quickly, and as such we many need to deliver to them in a very short space of time to a port which many miles away from the distribution hub. All of these challenges require a flexible, dedicated and pragmatic company, and Gulf Oil Marine has proved itself to embody each of these traits. Staff are contactable around the clock and throughout the year, and clients receive prompt, accurate feedback on every query. Many firms are 'customer focused' but I believe that Gulf Oil International is 'customer obsessed'- we truly listen to our clients and take their feedback on board, which is why many of them choose to work with us on an ongoing basis."

The success of Gulf Oil Marine, despite being founded at the beginning of the global recession in 2008, highlights the effectiveness of the firm's entrepreneurial approach. By always being open to new ideas and solutions the group is able to adapt quickly to changes in the market, enabling it to anticipate any challenges and take swift advantage of any opportunities.

Another key factor which differentiates the firm from other companies in the industry is its focus on emerging markets. Whilst many oil and gas companies look towards established markets such as America and Europe, Gulf

Oil International Group prefers to explore emerging markets, where there is potential for greater innovation, as Frank highlights eagerly.

"Emerging markets such as India and China are our core focus, as we look towards creating new innovations to save our clients time and money. For example, in India, where we are fourth largest private oil company (although we are aiming to become the second largest in two years), we have provided innovative new technology which supports clients in the areas they need the most innovation. For example, the typical distance between oil changes for trucks in the country is around 40,000 km, however we have developed new technology which allows a vehicle to travel for over 100,000 km before requiring fresh oil. By increasing the time between services we are helping clients to increase their productivity and save money.

"Another key market which we are currently exploring is China, where we are rapidly growing. In addition, as we have already established ourselves within many of the major emerging economies, our focus is now shifting towards Europe, and we have plans to increase our market share throughout this region. We have already created a strong brand in the Netherlands, and we are now exploring other key markets"

Looking to the future, innovation remains at the forefront of the firm's focus as it aims to achieve its ambitious targets, as Frank concludes.

"Gulf Oil International has a 2020 mission to move our global ranking from number 14 into the top 10 and double the group's size. Organic growth is our core focus as we are keen to maintain our high standards and client focus, however we are not opposed to inorganic growth, and are always exploring the market for any companies which would align with our core strategies and offer significant benefit to the group.

"Ultimately achieving our targets will be a challenge, but one which are excited to undertake, and we are already looking into the latest innovations and developments which will ensure that we achieve it."

Company: Gulf Oil International Ltd
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