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From welder to global crane maker

The 100 year story of Tadano

Tadano has celebrated the 100th anniversary of its foundation on August 29th, 1919, when Masuo Tadano left Takamatsu for Asahikawa, Hokkaido, to start a welding and steel fabrication business, just as welding technology was beginning to take hold in Japan.

In 1930 the company ventured into machine design and production when it launched a cylindrical sawing machine for keg production. In 1945 the factory and Tadano's home were destroyed by allied air raids, however the company bounced back and in 1947 it unveiled a roof tile manufacturing machine. A year later Masuo Tadano registered the company Tadano Iron Works and set up in Takamatsu, Japan and began producing an oil extraction machine.

In the early 1950s the company began designing and manufacturing machinery for laying railway tracks, gaining a patent for a new track maintenance machine that it had invented, for delivery to Japan National Railways. In 1954 it started manufacturing equipment that used hydraulics, initially relatively simple products such as tipper bed for dump trucks.

The crane age

Since the start of the business Tadano had worked hard to refine its welding, fabrication and hydraulics technology introducing various unusual - even unique - products, none of which were truly ground breaking. But in 1955 it built its first hydraulic truck crane, the two tonne OC-2, which is developed from seeing a similar machine in the pages of construction equipment magazine. The new crane was a



The company foundation - the young Masuo Tadano is second from the left

success and seems to have hit the market at a perfect time. Orders came from customers all over Japan to the point that after 36 years of trial and error and practice the Tadano family felt that it had found its 'hero' product.

As its confidence and knowledge grew the company followed up with its telescopic boom crane, the five tonne OC-5, which it launched in 1957 at the Cargo handling machine exhibition in Osaka. By 1959 the business was entering a rapid stage of expansion, and the company relocated its offices and production facility to its present location in Takamatsu City. A year later it received its first crane export order, delivering four OC-5 truck cranes to a buyer in Indonesia.

In 1960 it adopted, or perhaps formalised a three word philosophy: Sozo (create/imagine) Hoshi (contribute) and Kyoryoku (cooperation). In order to fund



Tadano RT150



C&A

Tadano

The first Tadano crane, the two tonne OC-2



The Takamatsu plant

First crane exports - four OC-5s off to Indonesia



further expansion the company listed its shares on the Osaka secondary market and a year later launched its first loader crane, the telescopic TM series. 1964 saw the arrival of the TS series a more sophisticated crane line mounted on commercial chassis topped by the 10 tonne TS100. Truck cranes mounted on purpose-built crane carriers came along just two years later with the 12.5 tonne TL125 in 1966 adding a 15 tonne version a year later, followed by the TL200 and TL280 in 1968 and 1969.

First RTs

The first Tadano Rough Terrain crane, the 15 tonne TR150 was unveiled in 1970, the first Japanese built Rough Terrain crane, a bold move given that the domestic market was very much a truck crane market, while globally the market was dominated by American producers. It had though dipped its toe in the American market in 1967 and perhaps realised that it needed to branch out if it was to become a truly international player.

In 1971 the company introduced its popular TG truck crane range with the 75 tonne TG750, a very big crane at the time, which began shipping in 1972 along with Tadano's AML overload system, the first such device from a Japanese manufacturer.

In 1973 it opened its first overseas subsidiary Tadano International (Europe) in the Netherlands and in 1980 broke ground on a new factory - the Shido Plant in Sanuki City - to produce the new Z loader telescopic loader crane.

In 1983 Tadano decided to enter the aerial work platform market with the AT-136TE and AT-140TE insulated



Tadano Aerial lifts

truck mounts for utility work. A year later it opened an office in Beijing, China although it actually signed a licence agreement for China as early as 1980. In 1986 it opened Tadano America - a joint venture with Mitsubishi and in 1993 it was superseded by the wholly-owned Tadano America Corporation based in Houston, Texas.





The Tadano AR1000M



The 550 tonne Tadano AR5500M

Jumping forward to 1989, the Japanese market was booming thanks to what became known as the 'Bubble Economy' and Tadano dropped the Iron Works from its corporate name becoming Tadano Ltd. That year it also unveiled the TG800R, an all-wheel steer truck crane, looking to add some All Terrain benefits to the lower costs of a truck crane.

1990 was a big year as the company made its first major overseas acquisition buying German based crane and carrier manufacturer Faun. In 1992 this development resulted in the launch of the new AR Series of All Terrain cranes, with the 60 tonne AR600M followed by the four axle 100 tonne AR1000M on Faun carrier.

The company began to push into larger cranes, and in 1998 it unveiled what it claimed was the world's largest All Terrain crane, the seven axle 550 tonne AR5500M with its highly unusual triple lift cylinder design.

Tougher times

As the new millennium approach the company got into 'choppy waters' implementing substantial layoffs in each year between 1998 and 2001. Then in 2004 it recalled 15,278 Rough Terrain cranes, following a fatal accident in Okayama when a safety device failed to work. At the time it made a statement saying: "In recognition that our cranes are allowed to travel on public roads is a privilege and comes with a great responsibility, we began to devote

our efforts to our Corporate Social Responsibility." That same year it unveiled the current range of ATF - G or Global All Terrain models.

Mantis crawlers

In 1998 it acquired the US based telescopic crawler crane manufacturer Spandek, which designed, built and sold its cranes under the Mantis brand. More recently it has opened or acquired its distribution operations in Australia, the UK, Brazil, France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Chile. It took a 15 percent stake in US crane and platform manufacture Manitex and started manufacturing in Thailand - loader cranes - and India where its majority owned Joint Venture Tadano Escorts is now operational.

And the future?

Finally to end our story Tadano completed the deal just last month to acquire the Demag mobile crane business - potentially its most challenging acquisition to date, which places it firmly among the top two crane manufacturers worldwide.

As the company enters its second century, it is still managed by a Tadano family member - Koichi Tadano. The challenge is to digest its latest acquisition and look for the next step towards achieving its goal of market leadership.



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