



# Slide-outs, the new course of Lippert Components in Europe



Words Antonio Mazzucchelli, photo Enrico Bona

The Caravan Salon 2016 marked the debut of the first Lippert Components slide-out version designed for Europe. The American team spent three years or so interviewing European holidaymakers, manufacturers and suppliers to identify the ideal combination to integrate the functionality of a slide-out system with the design of German, Italian, French and British vehicles. Slide-out solutions were already present in Europe but only as a specific solution on maxi motor-



homes, known as liners, to extend the already very ample living quarters. So, Lippert Components decided to apply the particular slide-out technology to the most interesting market segment, that is of vehicles under 3500 kilograms of weight. But then the project came to a grinding halt. We asked

Lorenzo Manni, LCI RV Europe Sales Director, to explain what happened and tell us more about the company's new course in terms of slide-outs.

**Aboutcamp BtoB: Can you tell us how the idea of bringing slide-out systems to Europe came to be and what were the first evolutions of the product?**

**Lorenzo Manni:** We started out with an American product that soon showed some technical limitations. So, we decided to develop a new system together with a European company that already had a semi-industrialised, patented product. An agreement was signed for the production and exclusive distribution of a product called the Euro Slide. Adria was the first to fit it. It meant that the company was the first to be able to offer a slide-out function on a standard production vehicle lighter than 3500 kilograms and shorter than 6 metres in length (it was 599 cm long). With this solution, Adria won almost all the awards due to the innovative nature of the application. Unfortunately, the cooperation with our European partner experienced a number of problems, including the essential issue of quality. We moved the production to the Project 2000 factory in Italy, where we made several upgrades and improved a number of details aimed to make the product more reliable from the technical point of view. Unfortunately, relations with the European supplier began to deteriorate and eventually broke down altogether.

**Aboutcamp BtoB: Is this why you halted the project for almost two years?**

**Lorenzo Manni:** Yes, that's right. We needed to develop our own patented system that was not too discontinuous with respect to the old one but entirely owned by us. We understand that as the world leader in slide-out solutions we cannot rely on anyone else for our production. After a long period of design, the Smart Room came to be. We presented it at the trade show this year. At last, we had a Lippert Components product for Europe. The Smart Room solution can be mass-produced. It has been extensively tested and offers a level of quality that meets our standards and those of our customers.

**Aboutcamp BtoB: So, now the Smart Room is back and officially on the market.**

**Lorenzo Manni:** Yes. Our customer Adria starts production of a compact semi-integrated unit again with this slide-out at the back. We are also developing the product further and we strongly believe that you will hear talking and see "smart rooms" more and more in the next months. On the other hand, there is a great demand for compact layouts and light vehicles. A well-designed slide-out can make the vehicle lighter.

**Aboutcamp BtoB: Can you explain this concept better?**

**Lorenzo Manni:** Of course. Adding a slide-out to an existing layout certainly means increasing its weight. But if the layout is developed from the start to include a slide-out, the vehicle can be shorter and have more than two square metres of extra space but with less weight per square metre. Adria understood and interpreted this concept to

perfection. We are also supplying the slide-out to Tabbert for their high-end Cellini caravan. In this case, the application is more similar to those found in the United States because consists in adding extra space to an already very generous living pod to provide all the comfort of a real home.

**Aboutcamp BtoB: How do you see the**

**development of Smart Room in the van segment?**

**Lorenzo Manni:** Absolutely successful. Slide-outs can be a real revolution in the van world, comparable to that of the variable height bed in semi-integrated motorhomes. We are working on a specific project to offer Smart Rooms also on vans but there is a problem to overcome in a very compact

space with walls that cannot be modified like those of vans. The usability of the vehicle decreases when the slide-out is retracted. We are working on systems in which Smart Room is less invasive when closed allowing full use of the interior space. The goal is to be able to offer a van with a slide-out layout, with four comfortable beds, a spacious bathroom and a comfortable dinette.

**LCI RV Europe doubles the size of its main plant**

**L**CI RV Europe established its headquarters in Tuscany, near San Casciano, in January 2019. The industrial hub called Plant 304 has an area of 6600 square metres, of which 1200 square metres are used for technical, administrative, commercial and executive offices. The remaining 5400 square metres are used for manufacturing living pod doors, hatches and some models of beds. The building is characterised by a single row of supporting pillars to exploit all the available space and make the industrial building suitable for any type of production.



LCI Italy purchased the adjacent building and will be able to double the available area reaching a total of 13,000 square metres. There will be more space for offices, for pro-

duction, to better organise logistics starting from loading, and for parking. The new building is similar to the current one and has the same architectural features.

**Lippert Components mosquito nets and blinds**

**L**CI Italy acquired Lavet Srl, a manufacturer of window blinds based in Siena, Italy, in June 2019. The acquisition of Lavet has enabled LCI to expand the product portfolio into a key category such as that of blinds and screens for windows and doors.

*"We acquired Lavet because it was one of the most important suppliers of Metallarte. There is a Lavet screen on every door made by Lippert Components", explained Michele Checucci, CEO of LCI RV Europe "Lavet also has the know-how and production capacity to supply window blinds, as well. So, we developed a new product, bringing into fruition a project that had suffered over the years and that had a very functional approach at the expense of design. The new prototype window shade we presented at our stand at the Caravan*

*Salon in Düsseldorf 2019 has already attracted a lot of interest."* LCI Italy has confirmed its full trust in all the staff, headed by Lavet's managing director, Maurizio Pieramici, by bolstering the design part and structuring the company in a more industrialised perspective. *"We reconfirmed the Lavet team because this is how Lippert Components operates", continued Michele Checucci. "In all our acquisitions, the management team and the workers are one of the reasons that contribute to the choice and evaluation of the company. For us, this acquisition is strategic because it takes us into the new and interesting segment of window blinds for motorhomes. It also allows us to operate synergies of logistical nature within our own company".*



**LCI is growing big in Europe also in the rail and marine sectors**

Lippert Components is continuing its growth and diversification into the train sector with the acquisition of Ciesse S.p.A., a supplier of railway interior products and systems. LCI Italy acquired Ciesse, based in Rignano sull'Arno, Italy, on August 31, 2019. Ciesse had annual sales of approximately €22.5 million up to June 2019. The acquisition of Ciesse will create greater synergies for customers in the rail sector. This follows LCI's acquisition in 2017, Italy-based manufacturer Sessa Klein S.p.A., which enabled it to offer highly engineered side window systems for both high speed and commuter rail. LCI's growth plans have also included diversifying in to the marine sector, with the recent acquisitions of Taylor Made, TrendMarine

and Lewmar Leisure Products. *"The addition of Ciesse's products, leadership, and customer base allows us to continue our growth and pursuit of obtaining a more complete suite of components and solutions for the global rail industries,"* said Jason Lippert, CEO and President of LCI. *"As the overseas rail market is beginning to see some real growth, we are enthusiastic about further evolving our railway product offerings and market share in that market. We look forward to the Ciesse leadership team's continued service of existing customers and collaboration with our U.S.-based leadership teams to find new opportunities in the international railway market"* continued Jason Lippert.