



H.B. Fuller



KÖMMERLING

H.B. Fuller and Kömmerring offer a one-stop solution for RV manufacturers



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To find out more, Aboutcamp BtoB interviewed Iñaki Sigler - Marketing Manager, Durable Assembly - EIMEA at H.B. Fuller, and Ralf Fuhrmann - Business Manager, Transportation Adhesives & Aftermarket at Kömmerring Chemische Fabrik GmbH, an H.B. Fuller company.

Words Terry Owen

H.B. Fuller is a major industrial adhesives manufacturer with factories and customers worldwide. It is headquartered in Minnesota, U.S. The recent acquisition of Royal Adhesives brought its annual turnover to \$2.3 billion and included the Kömmerring brand and technology.

Aboutcamp BtoB: What has been the driver to bring these two companies together for the RV market in Europe?

Iñaki: H.B. Fuller has acquired Royal's business globally. In Europe, this means Kömmerring, and we now operate as a single company.

Ralf: Both H.B. Fuller and Kömmerring have been supplying the same market but with little overlap between their products. For example, H.B. Fuller was well known for its range of adhesives for sandwich panels and furniture, and Kömmerring is well known

for its sealants and adhesives for assembly bonding and interior finishing. It was really quite amazing how our products complemented each other, a perfect fit you might say. The acquisition has, therefore, provided the opportunity to offer a one-stop solution for all RV manufacturers. This means the one company can now supply all the sealants and adhesives needed by the RV industry where previously this was not possible.

Aboutcamp BtoB: Did you each have RV manufacturer customers already in Europe?

Ralf: Yes, we did. I was hired some 20 years ago by Kömmerring to develop the RV sector and have been doing so ever since, together with an international team in the relevant European market. Beside this, H.B. Fuller has been in the RV market for more than 30 years.

Aboutcamp BtoB: How big do you think the European market is?

Ralf: Looking at RV production numbers, the European market is very large. Indeed, we jointly supply some 1,000 tonnes of adhesives and sealants each year. We have many customers with both large production operations but also with independent single producers. So, we are already a big player in the market, and we definitely want to grow further.

Aboutcamp BtoB: Do you also sell these products outside Europe, for example to the U.S. or Australia?

Ralf: We are a global company, and we have production sites and colleagues around the world, but Kömmerring has only a small presence outside Europe. We sell to the Australian market, and a couple of years ago, we began to manufacture and sell in China. We



Ralf Fuhrmann

"We are delighted to be part of this exciting opportunity. Our name is already well established in the RV sector in Europe, and now, with the backing of H.B. Fuller and its complementary product range, we can offer our customers new technologies and even better value. We look forward to the challenges ahead and to working with our customers to solve them."

Iñaki Sigler

"Combining these two businesses allows us to offer our RV customers new technologies, expertise and capabilities. For the first time, we can submit a total solution package that is backed up by the same problem-solving passion that has been our hallmark. We will continue to discover and apply innovations in adhesive technology and to help our customers excel in this area."



see this as a market with excellent growth potential.

Aboutcamp BtoB: Presumably you see yourselves as competitors to Henkel, Sika, Deka and so on?

Ralf: Exactly! Competition is strong, and we are now in a better position to expand our business than ever before, as we are now able to supply every single technology needed for production of high quality recreational vehicles.

Aboutcamp BtoB: What about new applications and products? How do you go about testing to ensure fitness for purpose?

Ralf: Having a product for every conceivable RV application is key to the success of the new venture, and as new applications arise, we will commence dialogue with our client's technical teams and purchasing departments to better understand their requirements. Once we have a specific request, we discuss it face to face to understand the application and what environmental or other conditions might influence the joint line. Extensive testing is then carried out on the original customer substrates according to the conditions in which the new application will be used. Only once we are 100-percent happy is the new product or application released for production. But it's not only RV manufacturers we talk to about new applications. With new materials constantly coming to the market, we stay ahead of the game by talking directly to RV material suppliers and by testing samples before anything goes into production.

Aboutcamp BtoB: Which is your best-selling product in the RV market?

Ralf: Both parts of the business – legacy H.B. Fuller and Kömmerling – have strong product applications. H.B. Fuller was very strong in the sandwich panel fabrication and furniture markets, and these adhesives remain best sellers. Twenty years ago one-part polyurethane solutions dominated the market in other areas, but Kömmerling came along with a range of silane-terminated polymers and marketed these across the European RV sector. Isocyanate and solvent-free solutions have good adhesion on a wide range of substrate materials, and they offer good

temperature and UV resistance. Today, these products are amongst our best sellers.

Aboutcamp BtoB: How is the adhesives industry evolving? For example, we hear quite a bit about 'Hot Melt'. Is this a process that's gaining ground?

Iñaki: There are different solutions to meet different needs. For example, there are thermoplastic hot melt and reactive hot melt in use. H.B. Fuller is very strong in both types of technology, but in the sandwich element fabrication market, one- or two-component, liquid reactive adhesives dominate. Some years ago, the use of reactive hot melt adhesives was analyzed for this application in order to speed up fabrication times. With reactive hot melt, it's ready to go as soon as it's cool, whereas with liquid reactive adhesives, pressure over time is needed for the chemical reaction to take place. We have very good reactive hot melt solutions, though we work closely with customers to determine the right solution. What we do is align our products very closely to the conditions our customers have or want to implement. If they are liquid reactive products and our customers want to change a line, we work with them from the beginning to adjust our formulations to give maximum performance under the new conditions.

Ralf: Unlike the non-reactive thermoplastic hot melts, reactive hot melt adhesive is transformed into an infusible bond, making it more resistant to high temperatures and, therefore, more durable. In Europe, reactive hot melt technology is not widely used with sandwich panel production. It is seen more often in the U.S. market.

Iñaki: That's very true. We do supply reactive and thermoplastic hot melt adhesives to factories worldwide – high quality furniture manufacturing is one example and is an application field in RV industries as well.

Company profile

H.B. Fuller

From a one-man wallpaper paste shop in Minnesota in 1887, H.B. Fuller has grown into a \$2.3 billion adhesives global leader today. Its recent acquisition of Royal, further strengthens its market reach as the two companies have very little customer or product overlap. Nowhere is this more evident than with Royal's European brand, Kömmerling, a major supplier to the RV industry in Europe.

Kömmerling

Headquartered in Pirmasens, some 170 km south west of Frankfurt, and founded in 1897, Kömmerling is a leading international manufacturer of high-quality adhesives and sealants. In this capacity, it has been supplying the RV industry in Europe and beyond for more than 20 years. It became a member of H.B. Fuller's global network through the company's acquisition of Royal Adhesives & Sealants in October 2017.