



Former Apprentice Rescues Refrigeration Firm

An enterprising Yorkshire businessman has returned to his roots to acquire part of an 80-year established refrigeration business where he served his apprenticeship 14 years ago.

Martin Howlett (30) has acquired Crowther & Shaw Limited, the service and maintenance division of a Huddersfield based group that has undergone financial difficulties in recent years. Crowther & Shaw Contracting, the group's sales and installation division went into administration last month with the loss of around 30 jobs.

The deal, that sees the assets, goodwill and leases acquired by Mr Howlett in a move to build his existing refrigeration contracting business, Ambitemp Ltd, established in September 2005, will save 13 jobs.

"Crowther & Shaw is one of the UK's longest established refrigeration businesses," commented Mr Howlett, "and I know first hand the firm has invested heavily in its highly skilled workforce of engineers.

“The service and maintenance business was operating well, and will thrive alongside the client base we have with Ambitemp’s growing customer base. This deal is the best possible outcome under the circumstances, and I am delighted it gives me the chance to ensure the survival of a viable part of the business where I learned my trade,” he added.

Crowther & Shaw Limited will continue to service its 1,500 clients, as well as supporting the sales and installation clients of Ambitemp, also based in Huddersfield, and has had a turnover around £1m in 2006.

Mr Howlett started his career in refrigeration engineering at Crowther & Shaw in 1992, before leaving Yorkshire for the United States in 2000 where he underwent graduate training with US refrigeration and air conditioning specialists firm Trane.

After several years working for Trane and running an office for another specialist engineering company, he established his own refrigeration sales and installation business Ambitemp Limited in September 2005.

The deal that sees Mr Howlett take a majority shareholding and the position of managing director, will also see Mark Gledhill take a minority stake and the role of director.

Turnaround specialists and business advisers Chris Jones of Tourmalet Consulting and Tony Armitage of Armitage Corporate Solutions put the deal together. Mr Jones, who was managing partner at law firm Hammonds for some years before launching Tourmalet in 2005, explained the background to the rescue deal.

“Crowther & Shaw group comprised two distinct businesses, and Mr Howlett has acquired the service and maintenance business and medium installation projects, Crowther & Shaw Limited to ensure its survival.

"The failure of its sister company was unavoidable due to a number of market factors and business issues, but throughout the difficult trading the group's £1m turnover service business remained viable, provided it could support a complementary sales and installation business.

"Coupled with Ambitemp that is growing very fast and proving a very profitable specialist in its field, the future looks bright for both businesses," said Mr Jones.

Ambitemp which employs five staff will continue to be based at Wellington Mills in Huddersfield is set to grow turnover by 100% to £2m in 2007.

Together, it is anticipated the two firms will turnover around £3m next year.

Photography

Martin Howlett (left) who has acquired Crowther & Shaw Limited, with Chris Jones, of turnaround specialists and business advisers Tourmalet Consulting who, with Tony Armitage (centre), of Armitage Corporate Solutions, put the deal together. Also pictured is Mark Gledhill, head of operations, who will take a minority stake in the business and becomes a director.

Further Information

Details of Ambitemp can be found at www.ambitemp.com & background on Tourmalet Consulting can be found at www.tourmaletconsulting.com