

Are we a good customer?

CATALYSE N°54

Excellence is much more than just a management method at Francolor Pigments. Even if Francolor is very demanding towards its suppliers, this customer also knows how to put himself into question.

As soon as you enter the Villers Saint Paul headquarters you are confronted with ISO ⁽¹⁾ certificates, de Robien agreements signed since 1997... Could it be the influence of the Japanese mother company that has propelled this company onto the road to excellence? « *We have always been ahead of the times*, explains Patrick Hardy, SMQ and SME Manager ⁽²⁾ *this is one of our trade marks. We manage to progress and maintain our drive By being regularly audited by the outside world* ». Francolor's constant concern for progress is also applied to its numerous suppliers, for which Solvay holds an important position ⁽³⁾. Like other suppliers, Solvay undergoes rigorous appraisal, a procedure which can lead to a change in status ⁽⁴⁾, or even disapproval.

Supplier appraisal, what could be more expected of a company that makes quality its warhorse? Even more original – though a little masochistic – Francolor Pigments does not hesitate in having itself judged as a customer. Every three years, a questionnaire is sent out to suppliers to check the progress made. *Are you satisfied by the clarity of our orders, the payment conditions, the telephone reception? Is strategic information transferred to you and does it allow you to understand our demands? Even more direct: are we a good partner? What area should we improve to reinforce our relationship?*

“These questionnaires help us to learn more about our partners and about ourselves says Patrick Hardy. Most companies reply. A good result in the evaluation by our suppliers is an essential point in the participation in the European Quality Award ⁽⁵⁾. Our customers, personnel and local communities are questioned in the same way”

So if we refer to the 1998 edition, Solvay considers Francolor Pigments to be one of the “difficult contracts to obtain”. Amongst the requests: more frequent visits in order to get to know each other better and regularly exchange good experiences.

- (1) certified AFAQ ISO 9002 (1989- 2001), ISO 9001 version 2000 (July 2001) and ISO 14001 (1997)
- (2) SMQ: quality management system, SME: environment management system
- (3) Tavaux delivers a large part of the 3000 tons of soda used each year by the Oissel production site
- (4) Solvay has the supplier approval (no blocking of the product, total confidence as a partner-supplier). Other companies have a status which means blocking products whilst waiting for the analysis certificate (CA status) or results from reception control (status CR)
- (5) This very sought-after award puts fifty or so European companies with strict management criteria into competition. One needs five to ten years to prepare for it. Francolor Pigments has participated twice (1999 and 2001)

Francolor Pigments in short

Turnover : 58 million euros in 2000, 90% exports (delivered to 41 countries worldwide)

Business: production of organic pigments (inks, plastics, paints)

Personnel: 200 employees

Production sites: Villers Saint Paul (blue) and Oissel (yellow, red and violet)

Shareholder: Toyo Ink (Japanese group, turnover - 1.8 billion euros, 4400 employees)