Ensitech welds cleaning solutions:

From humble beginnings, Ensitech has grown into an international leader in the metal surface finishing industry, with distributors selling the company's signature TIG Brush, a stainless steel weld cleaning system, across Europe and the United States (U.S.). Propelled by a commitment to 'change the way you do business' and guided by customer care, Clive White and his staff at Ensitech are always looking for a better approach. Recently, *Stainless Steel World Americas* had the opportunity to speak to White about how his team has focused their talent for innovation on product redesign, the market ecosystem, and global expansion.

By Joanne McIntyre

In the early days, White ran Ensitech out of his garage. That was back in 2006, when the Australian company was supplying TIG Brushes to only a handful of select clients. In 2009, Ensitech showcased its product during Australia's National Manufacturing Week, and with its unparalleled ability to remove heat tint from stainless steel welds without damaging surface finishes, the TIG Brush became a sensation. When White realized entire factories were dependent on Ensitech's product, he knew he was going to need a bigger office.

In 2011, Ensitech moved to its current location in a suburb of Sydney, Australia. From there, the company started exporting to the United Kingdom (U.K.), and as White tells it, "business exploded. From 2011 onward, we won several export awards, and we went from a turnover of AUD$75,000 to more than a million dollars. Now we export to approximately 19 countries. Exporting really did put us on the map, but it all began with a novel approach to a common industry problem."

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Origins

As manufacturers are painfully aware, when stainless steel is welded, the surface of the welded sections turns black. This buildup is called heat tint, and was once very difficult to remove without damaging the stainless steel's finish. Before the TIG Brush came along, stainless steel manufacturers had limited options; they could use clumsy and slow "pad machines," as White calls them, or toxic pickling paste, although neither method is particularly effective.

The TIG Brush solves these problems with an inert, harmless fluid that is heated until it becomes reactive. Brushing the fluid over the heat tint removes the buildup while keeping the stainless steel finish intact, and overall, the process is safe for the environment, the operator, and the stainless steel. It is considerably faster than pickling paste, and it has the added benefit of being able to reach places a pad machine and pickling paste, cannot.

Another innovation introduced by the TIG Brush is portability. The heating element is contained in the tip of the applicator, which is covered in a conductive material, and the electrical power is supplied by a small, sealed housing unit made of tough plastic. Ensitech pairs this portability with customization by offering additional fluids for other stainless steel manufacturing tasks along with extra brush sizes and shapes for easy adjustment.

All of these innovations are the result of a close relationship between Ensitech and its customers, who, as White explains, "are always on our mind." This relationship affects more than product design, and when speaking to White about the company's recent expansion in the U.S., it became clear just how central the client is to Ensitech's business.

U.S. developments

Growth has been a priority for Ensitech ever since it began exporting to countries outside of Australia, and White is no stranger to international deal-making. Although, when Ensitech set up an office in Chicago, the team experienced a kind of business culture shock. As White explains, the North American market, "is so big, and there are so many suppliers and customers, that people are very time-poor. If you do not strike at exactly the right time, it can be very difficult to get the attention of the customer, because they have so many other things they are considering as well."

Despite this increased market pressure, Ensitech remains thoughtful about how it conducts business, carefully selecting its distributors to ensure that customer satisfaction would always be the number one priority. "We have tried to avoid large distributors," says White, "because these companies are in a very competitive environment, and as a result, they often want to focus on volume sale as their main competitive edge. We are a high-quality company, and spend a lot of time ensuring our clients get the most value from our products. We need distributors that also see the importance of strong customer relationships and services."

With this in mind, Ensitech's U.S.-based office recently signed an agreement with the Independent Welding Distributors Cooperative (IWDC), which has proven to be a perfect match. "The IWDC has a network of U.S. and Canadian distributors, and every IWDC member is the right size for Ensitech," White states. "Now any distributor in the IWCD group can access our products. We are very excited about that, and we know that it is

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Changing the way you do business

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the right decision for our North American clients."

More market expansion

Beyond the U.S., Ensitech also has distributors across Europe, with a new company office planned for Spain. White also mentions that they "are going to receive plenty of inquires now from new markets in locations such as the Middle East, India, and Asia. We plan to cultivate a global presence, and our repair centers are a good indication of how that will work."

White continues to give an example of a recently-opened repair center in Mexico. "Our repair centers are located anywhere that TIG Brushes are sold. Any distributor that wants to do repair work can approach us for training, and once they are trained, they are allowed to service our products. That way, customers all over the world have access to speedy, reliable service. In the same respect, when we are confident that we are ready and capable of entering a new market, we will do so."

When asked how Ensitech goes about creating and maintaining such a vast international network of distributors and end-users, White mentions another Ensitech innovation: digital outreach. "We have an employee who is great at social media marketing, and he has done some amazing work on our social media platforms. Before this, we never really used social media as a platform for industrial purposes, and in general, I do not think a lot of companies do. But we have to keep on our toes when it comes to finding new ways for people to buy our products," he explains.

"We have been innovative in the way we search the marketplace because people are changing the way they buy," White concludes. "It is for this same reason that we are going to redevelop our website. However, at the moment our current plan is so innovative that we cannot find anyone to build it for us! When we are able to complete our website, we hope it will become a model for a new, modern way of doing business."

Make it new

Revisiting the TIG Brush, White reveals some of the ways Ensitech is improving its core product. Beyond doubling the speed of the initial TIG Brush design, White and his team have been working on increasing the efficiency of the TIG Brush concept by introducing a completely new prototype. As usual, their ideas for this model derive primarily from customer feedback. "We determined that about 30% of the current TIG Brush operation time, is taken up by dipping," White explains, referring to the fact that the current model requires users to manually dip the applicator end of the brush into the cleaning fluid.

White continues, "We are now looking to develop a fully automatic brush. In this approach, the machine itself will work out how much fluid is required moment to moment, and deliver the fluid to the brush-end automatically. This will allow the new TIG Brush to be used for longer durations, as fluid will not have a chance to cool down between dips, and it will also allow operators to focus on the actual task of removing heat tint instead of worrying about how wet the applicator is. That way, a new TIG Brush design can save our customer significant operating time, just by having the fluid injected automatically. This means happier operators and a more efficient operation."

Another new program, dubbed SSALLY for stainless steel and aluminum, involves a cleaning solution that can be used with aluminum as well as stainless steel. "I cannot say too much more at the moment, but we are looking at doing robotics with SSALLY," says White. "An automatic fluid delivery system lends itself to robotic installations, and combined with the ability to clean aluminum, we think the project is very exciting."

Old problems, fresh approach

As customers eagerly await a fully-automatic TIG Brush and the capability to treat aluminium, they can expect continued Ensitech innovation in other areas. Recent examples of this come in the form of environmentally-friendly fluid containers, and self-service filling stations. "We now offer bags instead of solid containers, and this helps us accomplish two goals," White begins. "First, we can do our part for the environment, because the bags are recyclable and certified in Europe as landfill-friendly. Second, when paired with our digital filling stations, we are able to save the customer money on shipping costs," he continues. "Either the customer themselves or the distributors can buy these filling stations, along with our cleaning fluid in bulk. They can distribute them across their warehouses, and refill the bags themselves. It is a different way of looking at the whole process. Instead of going to buy some fluid bottles and leaving the shop, it is thinking about fluid in terms of the whole market ecosystem."

White does admit, "at first, we were not sure how the customers would respond, seeing as this is such a new idea. But they have been wonderful, and have really embraced the change. We hope that this type of innovation will catch on and suppliers will use the technology more, and more. The filling station and reusable concept is really a good example of the values we have always tried to emphasize: at Ensitech, we want to complete old tasks with modern materials and fresh approaches. That is what we are about. We try to introduce as much innovation as we can. So far, I believe we have achieved that."

▶ Ensitech at a glance

Global Headquarters	144 Old Bathurst Road, Unit 1, Emu Plains, NSW 2750, Australia
American Headquarters	1005 N Commons Drive, Aurora, Illinois, 60504, U.S.A.
Products	TIG Brush: 440 series, 550 series, 700 series; Marking kit; PROPEL Torch kit; assorted TIG Brush fluids: Pre and post, weld cleaning, neutralizing, stainless steel marking, etc.; Parts and accessories: Brush tips, dual brush adapter, quad brush adapter, insulating shrouds, wands, extension cables, etc.
Industries	Oil and gas, food and beverage, building and construction, metal fabrication, marine, etc.
Websites	www.ensitech.com.au www.tigbrush.com.au www.tigbrush.com
Social Media	www.facebook.com/ENSITECH/ @TIG_Brush @ensitech_tig_brush