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Refrigeration giant Epta strengthens national service, design and installation offering with purchase of Cold Service

By Andrew Gaved

Italian packs-to-cabinets group expands to serve national customers as it brings Ringwood-based retail and high street specialist Cold Service into portfolio alongside Bradford-based George Barker.

Italian packs-to-cabinets giant Epta has bought Ringwood-based Cold Service for an undisclosed amount, to expand its contracting services in the UK and give it a broader base to serve national customers. The contractor, which has installation contracts with the likes of Morrisons, Harrods and Pret A Manger, will be run as a separate subsidiary alongside fellow Epta subsidiary, Bradford-based George Barker.

Given the two contractors' regional strengths in the south and north, they provide complimentary coverage with which to serve major national retail customers.

Epta said in a statement; "This is a significant strategic transaction for the Group which perfectly positions Epta as national service provider, in line with retail industry increasing demand of national coverage."

In so doing Epta becomes the second major manufacturing group this year to make serious investment into the UK service and installation sector, following HillPhoenix's substantial minority stake in Space Engineering in April.

Epta said Cold Service has been providing retailers and other commercial refrigeration customers with 'excellently designed, highly efficient systems for over 65 years', supported by more than 100 refrigeration technicians located throughout the South of the UK.

A well-established business with strong local roots, Cold Service is organised in four divisions (Commercial, Local, Central and Distribution) and has contracts with clients such as Harrods, Fortnum & Mason, Greggs, Morrisons, One-Stop and Pret a Manger.

Epta, already established in the UK with George Barker, a leading supplier in the design and production of refrigerated cabinets, together with an established contracting and service & maintenance business has entered into this agreement with the intent to encourage 'important synergies between the two British brands, with growth opportunities for the entire Group.'

Peter Grimes Chairman of Cold Service said: "Both parties strongly sought this merger, built on a common value system centred on people, high-quality service and long-term development plans. The strength of a company like Epta represents an important competitive advantage for us, complementing our range and expanding our market share."

Sergio Chiostrì, Epta's Chairman and Managing Director, said: "One year after the merging of Iarp with the Group, we are delighted to announce the acquisition of Cold Service. This agreement expands our portfolio and aims to optimise the resources used, in the frame of an expansion plan that will integrate the skills and technological know-how of our two companies".

Epta group and Cold Service are both sponsors of RAC's Cooling Industry Awards on September 24th.

Epta's quest for a UK contractor hit the buffers last summer when negotiations over the purchase of WR Refrigeration were halted at the eleventh hour due to discovery of the extent of WR's financial problems.

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