



#007 Concrete injection training - Tradecc's Academy

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SUMMARY KEYWORDS

injection, resin, applicator, academy, material, partners, customers, acrylic, people, viscosity, solution, products, concrete, crack, grow, videos, marketing, reaction time, sealing

SPEAKERS

Barbara DeNeef, Annelies Vandermeulen, Mateusz Furs

Mateusz Furs

Everyone agrees that the more you know, the better you perform.

And that's why in today's episode I've decided to bring you two fantastic concrete injection repair specialists from Belgium. They're affiliated with Tradecc, a company with a long, 50-year tradition that over the many years of its operation has validated its processes and approach to business building with an impressive customer base and project portfolio.

I spoke to Barbara DeNeef, Managing Director of Tradecc, and export manager Annelies VANDERMEULEN. We dove into some exciting developments going on at Tradecc, including an incredibly promising educational platform called Tradecc Academy.

This platform lets customers—both existing and prospective—get familiar with all the products that Tradecc offers and—crucially—how to use these products to best effect.

Because as everyone knows, it's not just about having the right tools, but it's very much about knowing how to use them that gets the job done right.

Barbara told me that so far, over 80 percent of Tradecc's customers are already using the platform and the feedback is great.

So in today's episode we'll take a deep dive into what makes this educational platform so unique, how Tradecc leverages it to give their customers even more value, and how you, too, can use it to your benefit.

So without further ado, here are Barbara and Annelies to tell you in their own words about this exciting new development.

So, if you haven't already, hit subscribe, sit back and enjoy the episode.

Hello, how are you doing there?

Annelies Vandermeulen

Thank you. We are fine.

Mateusz Furs

Oh great. I'm also Poland and you are in Belgium but where exactly

Annelies Vandermeulen

we are in Antwerp.

Mateusz Furs

Okay. Okay. I know Belgium from the time being an Erasmus student. It's great to have you on the podcast. Together, we are going to discuss something that called Tradecc's Academy. But before we get to this detail, can you tell me a little bit about the company, the Tradecc company?

Barbara DeNeef

Yes. So we are a family owned company, third generation. My brother and I, we are now in charge of it's My grandfather started it 50 years ago. Last year we had our 50 year anniversary.

Mateusz Furs

Great. Wow.

Barbara DeNeef

Yeah, and it all started our origin is application. And now the last years, the last 10 - 15 years we are growing in selling our products worldwide. And we are also very strong with our in house R&D department. Yeah, okay. We have everything from A to Z. Okay, waterproofing, water sealing and structural repair.

Mateusz Furs

Okay, so that's that's a lot stuff. You started from service. It was the same service? Water sealing and concrete repair?

Annelies Vandermeulen

In the origin 50 years ago it were special paintings epoxy paintings and then gradually during the 80s it became more into injections structural repair with injections in the last 20 -25 years and injections with PU and acrylic that we also all produce ourselves.

Mateusz Furs

Alright, so can you say that this two products meaning PU based resins and acrylic based resins are your biggest business? You feel the strongest in this this this industry.

Annelies Vandermeulen

We are very very strong in it. But we are very diverse so we are also very strong in carbon fiber, structural repair. And with application team we also do a lot of polyuria renovating bridges, highways But for our exports and the products we sell worldwide, definitely 80% 90% is waterproofing, water sealing with injection resins.

Mateusz Furs

Alright, so this is my business injection injection business. If you can, you know, say what's the share in sales in inside European countries and outside like, Where is the...

Barbara DeNeef

50/50

Mateusz Furs

50/50? Okay. How difficult is to sell the same resin inside EU countries and outside? Like what kind of documents you need to prepare to, you know, to assure your client outside of EU?

Barbara DeNeef

Yeah, he is more difficult than anything because many, many European countries are so protected. They have all their own leader rules. And certificates. And so sometimes that's really more difficult and abroad. out side of Europe, we see that techniques, quality service delivery are much more important. And we have a lot of know how and if we invite people to our laboratory in our factory, we can most of the time, convince them and then they just start to work with us. So I would not say easier, but it's different.

Mateusz Furs

Okay, so

Annelies Vandermeulen

Annelies, she's very good in selling outside Europe also. So of course, you need the documentation, but we are so familiar with it. That's for us. It's like business as usual. All the documents, special documents like in Irwin or ETR documents for special import permissions. We are quite familiar with that. So for us, it's standard business and not so complicated.

Mateusz Furs

Okay, so once it's prepared, it's easier to prepare another papers and other documents for new and upcoming products. Is that correct?

Annelies Vandermeulen

Yes, correct.

Mateusz Furs

So, for 35 years at least in developing this injection resins. why this is so important? I mean, because there are people, my clients because I run a service company in Warsaw, Poland, from time to time, they simply don't believe that injection works. And they say that, you know, if there is leaking problem, they would rather dig and cover This cracked concrete with some sealing material, but on the surface on the external surface of this of this concrete wall that is leaking rather than using injection technology. How would you you know, convince these people, that injection really works?

Annelies Vandermeulen

injection, it's, if you are looking at the time factor and it's less invasive, so not to do a lot of it's a very practical time saving technique. But of course, it needs to be done by good applicator. I think education and technical knowledge about injection is the key.

Mateusz Furs

I agree

Annelies Vandermeulen

The correct material for the correct application and then also to put injection itself, it will be time consuming, probably also cost consuming. And it doesn't interfere too much in the job site, only two people with a small pump can come and fix the problem. So, those are the main reasons why to choose for injection.

Mateusz Furs

Like I see it this way that injection I agreed that it saves times. It allows us to inject the resin in exactly the point of the failure of the concrete like we inject into the crack, meaning this place where the water is coming inside to the structure. So, we can really solve the problem where it is. Do you think that every single applicator can be trained to be able to investigate the construction site in order to find you know, this solution and then to run injection itself?

Annelies Vandermeulen

Injection is a technical thing and so you need skilled workforce, for sure to do the injection themselves. Now, our sister company is an applicator. We have a lot of technical knowledge about the application and also people that work with us thirty years on the job sites have a very big experience in this field, we can train applicators here or even come where they where they are located or specific project they are working on and train them or even guide them a bit if they are already experienced in injection to give them our little tips and tricks about how to do injection. Sure. It was also one of the main reasons for the Academy to be brought online is that we have all these experience. There is a lot of marketing information to be found on the internet. But that is not so many really practical advice. And only advice on injection and in the end that's where it comes to. When you

when you are on a job site. You have to do it and it's learning by doing. But we want to share our knowledge from our job sites with our partners abroad.

Mateusz Furs

I agree that there is more marketing than really information on on the internet even more, there are some information that are simply wrong. And, you know, you look at this short movie on LinkedIn or even on YouTube. And I asked myself like, where does it come from? I mean, there are like, sometimes I see 30 seconds long movie and I see five mistakes. So if I if this movie was one minute longer, you know it would be a disaster. In the quality of training, so I agree that the training is important. And I assume that it's easier to train people using internet online, then invite them to Belgium. if you sell worldwide, so it will be, you know, difficult to really invite so many people on to your training place.

Annelies Vandermeulen

It depends. I think a good combination is ideal. We are like a very classical family owned company and with our customers, we build up long term relationships. So therefore, we really liked to have them here in our company, our production to spend one to three days with them. Learn all the techniques, but also to build relationships to have some fun to go out in an Antwerp, and have a nice dinner. And I think it's a combination of it all. But of course now due to the COVID-19

Mateusz Furs

they're all just wanted to

Annelies Vandermeulen

eat yet will be less only if it's really necessary. So therefore this is great to have this Academy that we can stay in close contact with our customers and future customers.

Mateusz Furs

Okay, I've seen your post on LinkedIn about the Academy, the Tradecc's Academy. So what's inside? What's that if you can dig, go into details please.

Annelies Vandermeulen

It's a platform we built for our partners. We can download the technical data sheets and some other marketing material like case studies etc. But the most important part is the videos the vlogs where we will share our practical advice as we as we said. This can be short trainings. This can be from a real job site where we are working on. But it can also be a setup, which we make and where we give them more advice. And as I mentioned, it is very hands on. So it's really we want it to be practical, not marketing oriented at all.

Mateusz Furs

Basically, like I understand it as the owner of the applicator company. You show this across the board, step by step, helping hand solutions, how to inject let's say a crack or watertight the expansion joint or fill the void with some with some...

Annelies Vandermeulen

It's a work in progress. It's a work in progress we started with it...

Barbara DeNeef

We will grow so we will build it up together with the customers. We are planning to do also short seminars, short interviews with our engineers, doctors engineers, also short interview with my brother so it will grow and it will depend a little bit on what our current questions of our customers, what's our current interesting job sites that we have with ECC that we can show. New product, but all very natural. Maybe you already saw some movies so it's like me that the youth loves it. Also you see it on YouTube. People just take the camera they start filming they tell what they are doing and seeing and normally constructions are chemical are a little bit more boring. They don't do these things. But we thought this could be nice. And we got already a lot of positive feedback from our customers. They say keep going.

Annelies Vandermeulen

Because sometimes you have some problems with noise. We do it really ourselves. So it's not with the marketing. We just do...

Mateusz Furs

You know, your idea about the Academy is more or less the same as my idea about this podcast, which is also about injection. It's also about you know, knowledge sharing, and you know, asking people for advice, and to share this advice worldwide, not only like we are in five people on the job site, and we know the solution, but we are only five knowing the solution. But if you are able to share it on internet so really, more people can understand what was the cause of this, of the crack and then what was done to make this crack watertight and filled with the proper proper resin. Who's it for? Who's it for this Tradecc's Academy? For your clients, existing clients or also for prospects?

Annelies Vandermeulen

Yeah, of course for for current partners and future partners now our partners abroad are not all applicators. Some of them are distributors and we go outside Europe, we work with distributors. So it will be also oriented towards them, but also to immediately cater so most of them. At the moment, it's voluntary and we make it for them, that they can do it as they choose. But the intention is also to make longer trainings and tests on it and that they can get certificates.

Mateusz Furs

I think it will be great helping hand for your resellers that they will be easier to, you know find other clients if they tell that they have this platform. Online platform. So no matter the time they can watch a movie to learn a little bit about your resins and solutions existing in injection technology, no matter the resin they use.

Annelies Vandermeulen

Yes, for example, if you develop a new material you can send out information to your partners abroad by sharing technical data sheets, in some marketing material, then in your planning to do then also interviews with our chemists. Labor testing, short seminars. Whenever we develop a new material, and this can really help them for us to, to to to sell these materials or to apply them.

Mateusz Furs

By the way, how many people work in your development department?

Annelies Vandermeulen

The development departments are five persons, Doctor engineer, engineer and three laborants.

Mateusz Furs

Okay, so they work like there is a phone call from a client, the situation is this and that, and there is no solution. And they got this task to develop new material. Does it work like that?

Annelies Vandermeulen

Yes, they develop new material. They accept current material if necessary. Sometimes there is a change in chemicals products that are no longer allowed prices that increase too much alternatives that we have to look for. Yeah, and they're also working on totally new things out of the box things we are we have always three projects running with totally new technology. It's very important to stay ahead. And we are well, we can be very performance held, therefore we invest for this kind of company a lot in R&D. This is a together with production, of course, the heart of our company.

Mateusz Furs

How long does it take to develop a new product?

Barbara DeNeef

It depends. Sometimes it's a week, sometimes it's six months. This is the new...

Annelies Vandermeulen

No rules. No. And of course, it's all depends also on price if you if we of course we have we want to be competitive in the market, but it's very important for everyone, and there are probably a million ways to develop a material but to do it in a cost effective way. That's always the most tricky part.

Barbara DeNeef

Like your price, that's the intention.

Mateusz Furs

This Tradecc's Academy. Like is it only movies or some lessons or like sometimes I find myself that I rather would like to read something than watching movie. Is it something to be read or only movies like how does it look like?

Barbara DeNeef

There are also information which is written.

Annelies Vandermeulen

For example, we have applicator guidelines, case studies for projects, problem and solution. So there is this information there for sure, but in the end to explain something I think it gives you when you when you can explain something you can give site's advice and it's a it helps better to understand what we want to say and how you have to do it. And sometimes a movie or a picture can see so much more as describing it if you want to describe technically how to drill the hole the packet of a we have it's all on a guideline but the people on the job sites the especially abroad they don't speak always that good English. So you have this but this they sometimes don't understand the language and if you just show the movie then they know it. And of course there's also the the parts of like we are family owned. We are a small exporting and all our customers know us and it's also symphatic I think if they can see us and hear us.

Mateusz Furs

Yeah. So you mentioned language Is it in English or in any other language or you can choose your language like how does it work?

Annelies Vandermeulen

English, But we of course, we work in... the advantage from from Belgium is we speak a lot of languages. So we are a small country. So we speak German, French...

Mateusz Furs

I agree, but from my perspective, you speak any foreign language if you don't speak French, because in this Dutch part do you speak English and many languages including French, whereas in the French speaking part of the country, you speak only French.

Barbara DeNeef

That's true

Annelies Vandermeulen

need to do also something in German and sometimes it's something in French, just for our partners over there. But not every video will be translated. Of course, all the documentation And like technical data sheets, everything we have in four or five, or even Chinese, for example, languages, but it will be impossible to do every video in all these different languages.

Mateusz Furs

Maybe subtitles?

Annelies Vandermeulen

Yeah, that's okay. We just do it ourselves. Like I said, I don't have like a competition.

Mateusz Furs
All right, all right.

Annelies Vandermeulen
But if you all buy much from us, we can do it in many languages.

Mateusz Furs
Than you can hire someone to produce subtitles.

Annelies Vandermeulen
We have partners in every region normally, they, most of the time also translate some parts of our for our documentation, so I'm sure they can also help us with that. Hmm.

Mateusz Furs
I just have an idea and that is it possible to comment on this lesson so people can you know exchange their own ideas?

Annelies Vandermeulen
Main Idea the main idea of the Academy is that you really want to do something together with our partners and that we grow it together. Because for us sometimes we are 50 years in this business and something needs for us are quite standards and sometimes we forget to go back to basics and to go and this is this is really important that we keep seeing it from our customers point of view and maybe for for us a five components acrylate which is very easy to use and the Rolls Royce of our materials and it's very good, but someone in India has no has no is no feeling with this material. He wants something...

Mateusz Furs
Five component acrylic is at least three components too much!

Barbara DeNeef
If you want to have The best solution we begin to understand sometimes it's not necessary to do these high complex things. Keep it simple. It's also one of our main motto, not overcomplicate things, a lot of marketing being done in this business too by inventing new materials, new techniques, which are most of the time not necessary.

Annelies Vandermeulen
Sometimes we defend that material you can do a good waterproofing solution. So that's,

Mateusz Furs
yeah, you produce these videos. Using your own product I assume. But still, you want to share the knowledge that it's no across the board. Is that correct? Yes, you know acrylics. You can use this acrylics from your brand, you can use many other acrylics from different brands and the the way of you know preparing the pump and applying this acrylic is exactly the same. So how do you convince them that you use a acrylic from your own and

at the same time you can use different one but the step by step situation on the job site can stay the same.

Barbara DeNeef

Now, indeed, for European or acrylic, generally speaking there, there are some similarities over the different producers but we can also see that every producer has their own specifications and there are for example, acrylics when you when you want to change your reaction time, you have to change different components with us you have to change the chemical salts that there are we call it catalyst that we call the initiator to play with the initiator you can change reaction time, but there are other manufacturers with other components where you have to change so, it is needs of course either meets to our materials but the general guidelines of course always apply one component polyurethane which is water reactive is similar to another one.

Mateusz Furs

How long this academy will last is it like for half a year and you just observe how it works or it will stay for good In your portfolio of products.

Annelies Vandermeulen

The plan is to stay for goods and to be become really the reference worldwide in water sealing and waterproofing. We don't do something to stay in six months we stopped that and we are wrong. We do something forever at least for my generation and the generation of my children to come Of course this will grow develop and technology change so much. This is an online platform where we can also do more of CRM has integrated customer relationship management and yet if we want to grow we have to stay also with IT and technology of today. So let's go consequence of the steps in the growing we are doing right now.

Mateusz Furs

This is like this the applicator will take this course and like finish this and Is there any you know, document saying that this person has finished the course and he passed some exam? And then now he is certified applicator. Certified by your company? Or is this like endless story of learning new things and so on and all the time and you know, in five years another acrylic gel will come. So no and of learning process...

Annelies Vandermeulen

No. As I said at the moment, it's voluntary. It's the intention to do that you can follow certain trainings and as you get certified applicator certificate and of course, this is something we at the moment still have to develop. It's something that we predict will be there before the end of the year. We are preparation, preparation of it.

Barbara DeNeef

So it then it will You need to see at least this kind of videos and we can monitor if you can all see this kind of videos and afterwards there will be a test online this to solve to make sure that the basics or the things to be learned are as much as you also have to teach in

accounts. Most of our customers have more than 15 years experience in injection. The most of the time know very well what they are doing so, but of course for new applicators or applicators we're familiar with polyurethane and want to go to work acrylic, it's a it's a very good test and a very good platform. But as I said, I don't think some of them that we have to teach them they know is already very, very well.

Mateusz Furs

Yeah, I understand but I know one applicator on LinkedIn. I won't mention his name, but the only he's only marketing way of finding clients is saying that he has been in this industry for almost 20 years. And when you ask him a question how to solve this situation, he says, You know, I will go there and I will just fix it. I don't have to answer any questions because I have been in this industry for almost 20 years. So I know only this answer to my direct question how to solve the situation and I give him some you know, details about the situation on the job side, and then again, 25 years on the market. So it's not enough because as you as you mentioned, you developed all the time new in new solutions, new materials, you change them a little bit. Something is too expensive. You have to find something to replace this. This subcomponent and so on. So India and this resident he knew from five years earlier, might be slightly different at the time Yeah.

Barbara DeNeef

So, so no, no, you're correct. And normally, with your partners very regularly, we visit them, or they visit us. And this is the best chance to, to to, to exchange ideas and to treat them in our new materials. That's indeed now with the COVID-19. The platform is then there. But still, I don't think we don't have the intention to not see our partners anymore. It's, for us a very big part of our business is to stay in touch and to see each other in.

Mateusz Furs

So I assume that you travel a lot.

Annelies Vandermeulen

We travel a lot.

Mateusz Furs

Okay. What kind of material basis I mean, bulk CPU acrylics like all them are mentioned?

Annelies Vandermeulen

All mentioned silica today as we also do, as Barbara also said, So, for us waterproofing water sealing is a big part of our business, but there are also carbon fiber materials we manufacture here in Belgium, most structural repair, where there will also be this will also be incorporated in the platform, but in also our poliurea hot spray coating, epoxy mortars for concrete repairs. So, the complete portfolio but the focus you will see will be on what just...

Mateusz Furs

this is this is absolutely great because this is everything in one place on one on one web page, so, no matter at the time because this is this I love internet like if I want to learn something I can only you know, start to listen to a podcast or watch a movie. And the movie or podcast was, was prepared and produced like, three years ago, and it's still available and I can still listen to this. This is internet. Great. And I don't have to call anyone with any further questions. I just, I just can listen to this even while I'm driving, which is great.

Barbara DeNeef

I don't have any recommendations for us. What do you want to see on the academy? Please leave me or feel free or your listeners if they had any recommendations. We are, as I said, very open to hearing there.

Mateusz Furs

I think and I see that you know, online, webinars work great because it's not only that you say some, some things that you prepared, but you can also hear people's questions right away, you know, and you can observe their reactions to what you say and you how you prepare how you present your product. How many participants do expect to take part in the first first half a year of this academy?

Annelies Vandermeulen

so Yeah, we already have about 80% of our customer who are subscribed. So that's very, very high positive response

Mateusz Furs

80% of your existing customers customers...

Annelies Vandermeulen

yet. But as I said, we are close to them, and many of them are. Yeah, the last thing that she does, and of course, yeah, our plans to grow. So as you also mentioned, we want to generate new interesting contacts through it's

Barbara DeNeef

by growing demand now coming up from tunnel contractors and other specialized partners in this underground infrastructure business, which are requesting to be added so there is certainly a growing demand for it. We only launched it one month, four weeks ago. So yeah, I think Yeah. Beginning impressive. Yeah. The We see every day, a lot of action. So that's, let's say the intention and that's what we want started. So

Mateusz Furs

the so it works. That's it. No. Okay. I also visited your web page and I see this news and inside of the news there is something said something like this new PU injection resin pushes itself into the crack. And I find this interesting because you know, it's hard to believe that the resin pushes really itself you know, it's like the resin says: "I can't wait to get into the crack"

Barbara DeNeef

I will send it to a video it's two component polyurethane and indeed, it has a kind of pumping effects, enlarging itself. But because of every form of forces enlargement going on, but this is a very strong PU and by the high pushing pumping effect push itself much deeper into into cracks.

Mateusz Furs

I checked the I checked the viscosity of this resin and it says that the viscosity is around 175 milli Pascal's seconds at the 20 Celsius degrees. So, I must admit that when I inject the crack in the concrete, we use resins of the viscosity lower much lower around 50 maybe 60 milli Pascal's seconds and this is the resin that you know it flows almost like a water water is by the way one milli Pascal seconds the viscosity. So, how is it possible that 175 mili Pascal seconds allows this resin to get into the crack so easily as described.

Barbara DeNeef

So, you are completely correct. Viscosity is the one parameter for an injection resin to do good waterproofing and we also have injection resins, much lower viscosity. But this is not a resin that is being used for injection of small cracks. This is an injection resin which is being used when you have very high water pressure and water gushing out you're out of soil or out of a joint and then use it and then if you compare the viscosity of this resin to an alternative of one of another manufacturer you will see that ours is still very low. Other manufactures have more like 400 or 500 or even 600 milli Pascal Similar residence. So for indeed I think this is also one of our main strength is the viscosity of the material. If you do an injection with low pressure with the lowest viscosity, you will have the best results. But in order to manufacture this specific injection resin, you always have to do compromises and this was the lowest we could obtain.

Mateusz Furs

I see. Okay, I assumed that this was in react really fast. So it needs 2K injection pump?

Annelies Vandermeulen

Yes, even we have accelerators to increase forming increased reaction time, because there are job sites, as you probably are familiar with, where the water has very high pressure, and then this is the only solution. Yeah,

Mateusz Furs

you're right. You're right. You need fast reacting and creating foam really instantly. Even before it touches the water, this groundwater which is sometimes very cold, so it will reduce the speed of the reaction. So we need this resin to be really fast and the strength is impressive. Around 70 mega Pascal's. It's way more than the concrete.

Barbara DeNeef

Yeah, indeed, that's always in the concrete will be always in the met in the matrix of epoxy or these kind of high string polyurethanes will be the weakest factor.

Mateusz Furs

This is a duromer, but PU. Okay, I like this resins. I need to try it because this you know, I was I was, I know that this is different kind of resin like I wouldn't use it to regular crack injection because of this quite high viscosity. But still low when it comes to this. So, you can even inject it into the ground to stabilize it and to lift a slab. So, I think it will also be good...

Barbara DeNeef

we have so many different resins. Of course there are the five standard ones but I think we have in total maybe 30-40 resins and all of them have been developed for special cases special job sites. Most of the time there is no need to go for a very very specific resin, but in any way in any case we we have them and we can supply them.

Mateusz Furs

all right. Do you have any question to your clients your prospects you know worldwide to or maybe you would like to encourage them to join your Academy. Feel free you know, this podcast is also worldwide it will be available on iTunes. So even when you slip someone in will be able to listen to this conversation.

Barbara DeNeef

Yeah, we really look forward to all reactions, all advice all feedback that everybody who wants subscribe themselves and we look forward to get in contact with them when you subscribe you have to fill in a small questionnaire and that is sent first to us so that we check if we already know you or not. Normally we always call you first to get also the personal contact. So it is not here a multinational but we are we know all our customers and our contats and then we give you special login codes. And we really look forward to all reactions and it's something great that we want to build up together with you.

Mateusz Furs

So we are waiting for another people joining Your Academy. Please let me know if there were someone you know, joining you and saying that this person heard about your company and about this Academy thanks to this conversation on the Concrete Injection Made Easy podcast. That will be great. Even for me that I helped you a little bit with launching this new...

Barbara DeNeef

Thank you for the podcast then now.

Mateusz Furs

All right.

Barbara DeNeef

Yes!

Mateusz Furs

That's it. Thanks for finding a time for me. And see you and talk to you soon, I guess.

Barbara DeNeef

Yes, indeed.

Mateusz Furs

Thank you very much. All the best and bye

Barbara DeNeef

Bye