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Les Prefa Bressuirais in France Sees Early Success
with the Manufacture of Retaining Wall Blocks

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Redi-Rock International, Charlevoix, MI 49720, USA

Les Prefa Bressuirais in France Sees Early Success with the Manufacture of Retaining Wall Blocks

After a 25-year career as an engineer exploring innovative technology for the Fiat Group, Fabrice Poisbleau was no stranger to pursuing new ideas when he purchased Les Prefa Bressuirais four years ago. In fact, while he was in the process of purchasing the company with precast and rebar divisions, he was also researching new products to bring into the portfolio.

"I was looking for something new - some innovation in France," he said. "I was in charge of innovation in my previous job, so I was looking, not for something which was already in place in France, but I wanted to find a new solution." Fabrice's research via the internet, industry publications (like CPI), and trade shows led him to Redi-Rock - a large, precast

modular block retaining wall system. The product line of massive, one-ton concrete blocks with natural stone textures dry-stack together like giant Lego blocks to hold back the earth. Redi-Rock has been on the market in the United States since 2000, but at the time, there were no producers in France. Fabrice explored the product in person with a trip to Manchester, United Kingdom where producer CPM had making Redi-Rock for close to a decade, but he didn't stop there. He reached out to the extensive network of technical expertise in the United States - both staff of Redi-Rock International and the network of producers - to ensure he knew what he was getting into. It was important that the product be different than his other offerings, so as not to compete and take revenue away from the existing precast business.



Fabrice Poisbleau brought Redi-Rock into the fold of his precast portfolio after extensive research. He wanted to find an innovative solution to complement his existing product line.

"I wanted to secure the company," he said. "This kind of product is really interesting because it's absolutely nothing [like] my precast pieces. It's an alternative...If tomorrow that business [revenue declines], I wanted to have another product in my portfolio to increase the potential business." Les Prefa Bressuirais began production of Redi-Rock as PB Rock at the end of 2017, and a handful of other licensed producers have also started production of Redi-Rock in France under ML Rock.

First Projects in the Ground

In March of 2018 PB Rock's first Redi-Rock project went in the ground – a repair of a slip along a road. It was that initial project that won them their second project the following month. The owner of COVI, a meat processing factory in Bressuire, was renovating the facility and had approached a contractor to install a mass gravity wall using boulders along the driveway. The installer, having seen that first Redi-Rock wall along the road, took the factory owner to the project with the suggestion for an alternative solution.

Approving of the natural stone appearance, the factory owner decided to move forward with 20 meters (60 feet) of Redi-Rock wall where it was needed for engineering purposes adjacent to his building. However, upon seeing the wall installed, he decided to extend the end of the wall -- twice. The finished wall is a curving, 50-meter (165-foot) long gravity wall that stands 4.8 meters (16 feet) at its tallest point. The 200-block project is about 100 square meters (1,077 square feet)

and accents the driveway as well as supports vehicular access to the upper level of the facility.

Because of the success of the installation, the factory owner is planning another wall of about 500 Redi-Rock blocks to expand his car park at the back of the facility.

"That's an excellent example of how if you take care of your customer – you listen to their needs, you promise product in a timely fashion, and you deliver it with excellence to solve their problems – that they'll continue repeat work with you," said Kevin Loe, Director of Sales for Redi-Rock International. In addition to the owners being happy with the project where they're already becoming repeat customers, Fabrice has also found contractors are pleased with the installation process due to the speed.

"We have worked with 10-15 contractors, and everyone is really, really happy," said Fabrice. Typically, the contractors work in small crews of two to three men with an excavator to machine-set the blocks. On average, the installers PB Rock has worked with have been able to place about 100 blocks a day, which translates to 54 square meters (575 square feet) of wall constructed a day.

Thus far, the process has had a ripple effect, not just with Redi-Rock projects leading to more Redi-Rock work, but also with more awareness of the other avenues of Les Prefa Bressuirais business. In total, PB Rock has completed 30 Redi-Rock projects since the beginning of 2018, averaging about two projects per month. The overall sales of the precast business has grown 50 percent since Fabrice took over the company.

"Ten years ago, this company did 9,000 - 10,000 cubic meters



One benefit of the Redi-Rock system for Les Prefa Bressuirais is the product line can be inventoried, improving the ability to provide the large, precast modular blocks in a timely fashion to retaining wall customers.



The finished Redi-Rock wall at the COVI meat processing factory in Bressuire winds along the driveway, providing access to vehicles at two levels of the plant.

per year, and in the last two years we grew dramatically. This market is now 15,000 cubic meters per year,” said Fabrice.

Three Awards are Early Signs of Success

It's not just customers that have been impressed with Redi-Rock thus far in France, PB Rock has received multiple awards in their short tenure producing Redi-Rock. The first was at the end of 2017 as a finalist for innovation at the Salon des Maires in Paris. The second was being among the top 20 finalists out of 1,000 applicants for innovation at the 2018 ARTIBAT fair in Rennes.

Then, most recently, Fabrice traveled to Paris at the end of February to receive a prestigious French award. Les Préfa Bressuirais received a most innovative product award for Redi-Rock in the landscaping category in the 2019 L'Election des Produits du BTP organized by Sagaret, Fichiers-BTP, and CAPEB. This was the seventh year the national database of construction products has run the competition, and Redi-Rock scored 4.78 out of 5 from 250,000 companies and 30,000 specifiers.

“This award truly speaks to how Redi-Rock is solving people's problems in France,” said Loe. “Fabrice is such a passionate person, and he got started very quickly. He's so ingrained with every single employee, and he's so involved in pushing his business forward that I'm sure this award is just the start of his success partnering with Redi-Rock.”

Redi-Rock is still pursuing new manufacturers

Redi-Rock International is part of the Aster Brands family of business opportunities whose purpose is “Changing the



The 2019 L'Election des Produits du BTP award for the most innovative product in the landscaping category received by Les Préfa Bressuirais for Redi-Rock.

World in Concrete Ways.” There are still open Redi-Rock territories available for manufacturers that want to do more with their concrete. ■

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Les Préfa Bressuirais
7 Allée de la Maltière - BP 90052
79302 Bressuire Cedex, France
T +33 54965 8649, F +33 54965 8654
pb@prefa-bressuirais.com, www.prefa-bressuirais-79.com

REDI-ROCK®

Redi-Rock International
2940 Parkview Drive, Petoskey, MI 49770, USA
T +1 866 222 8400, F +1 231 237 9521
andrew@redi-rock.com, makeredi-rock.com