

## Crushing the future



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ELKO — The Italians do a few things very well: sports cars, food, wine and flirtation.

New to the list is specialty construction equipment, except, not in terms of the machines themselves, which belong to the likes of Sweden's Volvo and Japan's Komatsu.

What the Italians have done is managed to replace the normal bucket on an excavator with a crusher.

But not just any crusher; a crusher that makes variable-sized gravel and, with a sorting attachment, can make laying gravel down a quick and painless endeavor, especially when in remote areas, MB America CEO Miriano Ravazzolo said.

### Another garage story

The Italian who invented the excavator extension worked as a contractor and wondered why no such crusher existed.

Commercial crushers cost hundreds of thousands of dollars, cost tens of thousands of dollars to transport, and days to set up and take down.

In other words, nothing practical for small, short or otherwise curtailed or mobile use existed, Ravazzolo said.

"He produced the first one for himself" 11 years ago, Ravazzolo said. "His buddies said, 'I want this.'"

Today, the current crushers are far more streamlined than the first prototype.

"After 11 years, they've been simplified and simplified and simplified," he said.

Ravazzolo sought for a quote, and finally paraphrased Mark Twain when he said, “If I had more time, I’d write shorter.”

At 10 years, the crusher has had that extra time and it shows in the increased simplicity of the machine, he said.

### **Kind of a big deal (in Europe)**

Since the crusher was introduced into the market, it’s sold 7,600 models in Europe, Ravazzolo said.

In America, on the other hand, the company has only sold a few hundred units.

Ravazzolo based the American arm in Reno, partially because of its proximity to mining and to its proximity to the rest of the American West.

The crusher’s European success is evident in its share of the market it created 11 years ago: 92 percent.

The company, based in Italy, has branches all across Europe and is especially useful for pioneer trails, he said.

Pioneer trails or roads, those which are being built or built up far from a ready source of gravel and base, often cost much more than normal roads because the gravel has to be trucked in, with associated manpower and diesel costs.

The crusher, brought on to a site with the excavator, eliminates the need to truck in gravel or base for new roads.

“You can pick up material wherever you are and make your own gravel,” he said. “You can crush whatever you want.”

The crusher, often with a screener in tow, makes gravel or base that’s up to code for roads, with gravel sizes ranging from 5 inches to a single inch.

Those pesky rocks become the new gravel to travel on.

The whole gamut — from road contractors to utility companies — has been snapping up the crushing buckets in Europe, he said.

### **Moving on up to the West Side**

A water district in California bought its own crusher to help recycle old cement.

The district, in the middle of nowhere, had to dig up and replace old cement water conduits. Before the epiphany of the crusher, they broke up the old pipes and trucked them to the dump.

Now the crews break up the pipes, just as before, but crush them and turn them into the new base for their new pipe system.

The town sees nothing wasted, little trucked in and money saved in fuel costs many times over.

Ravazzolo said the crusher is not for established mines; for those kinds of operations, a dedicated crusher is the most cost effective and efficient solution.

Prospectors, on the other hand, have been paying Ravazzolo extra special attention at the Elko Mining Expo.

Miners aren't the only market for a crusher; cement companies, looking to reduce their physical footprints and reduce costs, take heed.

Many cement mixing companies use the crushers to process their washout, he said.

The washout, the extra cement that's been washed out of the cement mixing cylinders, is dropped on the ground and hardens.

With the crusher, this refuse can be crushed and reused in the next batch of cement instead of trucking in that extra load of gravel.

"This is the real recycling," he said.

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