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## Exclusive Interview:

**Chris O'Connor, Precisa and Richard Sharpe,  
Intelligent Weighing Technology**



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# Precisa Expands Presence in North America with Distribution Partnership

*This Exclusive Interview delves into the specifics of a distribution partnership between Intelligent Weighing Technology and Techcomp Europe for Precisa Balances*

**By David Mathieu**

*Publisher*

When I got the call from Richard Sharpe, Intelligent Weighing Technology Inc, asking me if I'd like to do an exclusive interview on some exciting news that was going to be a "game changer" within the Scale Industry I was more than ready to do it. This Industry needs some great news, especially the scale dealers and lab equipment dealers.

The following questions were then formatted by me and posed to Chris O'Connor, CEO of Techcomp Europe Ltd, a company in which he's responsible for Froilabo, Edinburgh Instruments, Dynamica and Precisa. These companies, under the Techcomp umbrella, manufacture everything from UV-Vis spectrophotometers, gas chromatography systems, ion chromatography systems, atomic absorption spectrophotometers and centrifuges. And of course, what we're focused on in this interview, which is high-end balances, by Precisa Gravimetries AG.

Precisa was founded in 1935 in Zurich, Switzerland, and it manufactured mechanical calculators during those early years. In 1978 Precisa developed one of the first electronic weighing balances, and shortly after that innovation, up until today, has really focused itself as a gravimetric business developing products for the lab and scale industry.

The other participant in the interview is Richard Sharpe, President of Intelligent Weighing Technology, Inc., which he and his wife, Paula Sharpe, Vice President and General Manager, started back in 2002.

Today the company is a very successful manufacturing and distribution business serving the North American and Western hemisphere dealer markets for scales and balances. Through their 8000 square feet facility in Camarillo, California, they are known for having a wide range of products and customer service that's "above and beyond" great. Some of the products they handle include; moisture balances, counting scales, checkweighing scales, floor scales, load cells, heavy duty load monitoring and crane scales. And now, to be added to that list, a range of high-end balances from Precisa.



Chris O'Connor puts the Executive Pro through its paces.

Below is the transcript of the interview that took place with Richard Sharpe and Chris O'Connor. For the purpose of keeping this informal, I used only their first names in the responses.

## **Tell us how Intelligent Weighing Technology and Precisa got together on this adventure.**

**Richard:** Well, we have been expanding our reach for the last few years, and while we were at Pittcon Expo & Conference in Chicago earlier this year, we met Octavio Cruz-Aedo, who actually runs Techcomp Americas. He came to our booth, and we talked about the future of the market. It was interesting how we saw the same things happening—two companies were aligned in their view of how the market in North America was going to move over the next few years. And from that discussion grew a plan that would say, "Okay, now is the time to challenge this market." We have the infrastructure, we have the equipment, we have the marketing in line, now we can start the adventure.

World leaders in balance and scale manufacture have trusted **Intelligent Weighing Technology** to be their exclusive distribution partner in North America.

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## Precisa Expands Presence . . .

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**Chris:** We spoke to several organizations, and without a doubt, we felt the best fit between our organizations and the way we approach the technical support and the applications support for the balance industry, was with Intelligent Weighing Technology, so we're extremely happy to have found them, and we're really excited about this launch and working together in the future.

### **Precisa Balances have been very successful around the world, so why has there not been that same success in North America?**

**Chris:** Techcomp acquired Precisa at the end of 2009, and before that it was a private company which wasn't as big as some of the other global premium balance manufacturers. As a result, resources were not available to the degree that we see in some of these larger competitors. Precisa appreciated—that to be a successful balance business you have to have the technical and applications support very close to where your dealers and your customers are based. Since the investment back in 2009, Precisa has been concentrating on developing the European and Asian markets. At the beginning of 2014, Techcomp invested in offices in North and South America and we now feel we're in a good position to support Intelligent Weighing Technology in the USA market.

### **How do you think this distribution marriage will alter the landscape of the Scale Industry here in North America?**

**Richard:** The landscape is already in the process of changing, I think we all recognize that. This marriage is an excellent one, because it helps both organizations to move in the direction we both want to go. We both appreciate excellence—we want to stay at the top-end of the market. That's very important to us as business in North America changes. I think it will make a lot of people sit up and look around and say, "Wow, things really are changing." I think purely that because Precisa is entering this market at this time it's going to apply pressure to existing manufacturers. We welcome that challenge.

### **Why have you decided to make this distribution change now?**

**Chris:** I think we have the resources now to support a North American project. And I can also mention that we feel, after having met and worked with Intelligent Weighing Technology, that we have the right partner. Our model in other markets around the world is to work with experts, balance and metrology specialists, so working with Intelligent Weighing Technology and their dealer network is the way that we'd like to go to market—rather than through generic laboratory distributors or "box shippers" if I can use that phrase.

**"Paula and I decided several years ago that the future of the Weighing Industry in North America was going to radically change and that the off-shore flight of manufacturing would, coupled with the rise of the Internet, mean we'd have to get smarter with our offerings"**

Richard Sharpe

**Richard:** Okay, why now—well, I think that we both feel that the economic conditions are now right. The recession is now behind us to a great extent. We see that in our increase in business over the last six to 12 months. Also, I think that the climate is right within the US for investment in infrastructure within laboratories. Everybody is making profits, but

people are still keeping their teams lean, and that means less people, so more automation. This line brings us into that arena quite nicely. So from our point of view it's an excellent time to be addressing the market with the equipment that it needs.

### **How do you think Precisa's partnership with Intelligent Weighing Technology will benefit the brand?**

**Richard:** Paula and I decided several years ago that the future of the Weighing Industry in North America was going to radically change and that the off-shore flight of manufacturing would, coupled with the rise of the internet, mean we'd have to get smarter with our offerings. There would be less widget making and more research and development. We saw that the Industry would be demanding ever more sophisticated equipment and as manufacturing left these shores it would leave research and development and only high-end manufacturing such as aerospace, pharma and electronic communications. So Precisa fills in the top end of our offering with the most sophisticated equipment that I've seen. And they specialize in flexibility in communicating the results of the balance-to-data collection equipment. They have modules for Bluetooth, for Wi-Fi, and they can be wired or wireless or USB. We're not just

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a company asking you to deal with RS232. So, I think it fits in very well with our range; it cements us at the top end of the market.

### What separates Precisa from the competition?

**Chris:** Very much, I think, we have a hand in place to support customers and dealers on a wide variety of technical applications, and one of our reasons for wanting to work with Intelligent Weighing Technology is that we have a very similar approach in this regard to supporting what the dealers and customers in the field need. Our products are designed from the ground up to be serviced, calibrated and supported in the field by experienced balance technicians, we have a 100 percent focus on this market and this customer.

**Richard:** One little point I think we should mention is that although they are perhaps the most sophisticated balances around, they're still serviceable by a qualified dealer. You can take these balances to pieces and rebuild them, which is something you can't do with other balances. The dealer can now retain his servicing revenue and sell the most sophisticated balances around. That's one of the most important points I think we want to make. I've done it myself, I took one to pieces right down to flexures and coil and rebuilt it. And I did it within an hour. You can tell that it's a sophisticated machine when you take the lid off.

**Chris:** This repairable design and technology, coupled with the technical support and training that's offered to the local dealer empowers that dealer to be able to support, service, and repair the product in the field, rather than having to constantly defer back to the manufacturer. Most repairs can be completed with inexpensive spare parts rather than needing to buy large, expensive sub-assemblies – that means the value and income of the service or repair stays with the local dealer rather than going back to the manufacturer.

**What about price in the range of balances being offered, if indeed these are some of the best balances in the world, would you consider Precisa to be a Rolls Royce of**

**balances? And is price going to be a factor since these are such great balances?**

**Richard:** I think that yes—they'll take the high-end in terms of a pricing position. That is not a bad thing, because they also serve the top end of the market. They're very sophisticated.

**Chris:** And the only other thing I would add to that question about the Rolls Royce analogy is that Precisa definitely operates in the premium market sector of balances, but because Precisa is a dedicated metrology business, I think we offer some of those Rolls Royce touches are in the application software and communication features that are tailored very much to specific industry problems.

**"The technical support and training that's offered to the local dealer empowers that dealer to be able to support, service, and repair the product in the field, rather than having to constantly defer back to the manufacturer"**

Chris O'Connor

**Share with us your thoughts on why the Precisa brand is so well known in other parts of the world as a range of high-end balances.**

**Chris:** I think, key to that over the years is the connotation of "Swiss quality", but it is also due to the engineering and the manufacturing knowhow that we have in our plant in Zurich. Precisa from a brand and product offering standpoint has always offered a premium balance, very rich with applications and functionality but always fitting within a customer's budget.

Within Switzerland, there is access to a broad range and depth of precision engineering specialists and metrology technology. And to give you an example, we have a very long standing strategic development program with the University of Zurich, where we have several PHD students undertaking projects in the company and we use a lot of the Zurich University resources to help with our own R&D as well. In Switzerland, the availability of this rich pool of specialists, along with a great supply chain—offers a platform for quality and affordable mechanical and electronic components. This gives us the advantage in the balance market.

**What's the biggest selling point on this new product line of high-end balances from Precisa?**

**Richard:** I think there are two points and they work together. As I've said before; communications for handling the data produced by the

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balances and again, providing the dealer with balances that challenge the very best available today. There are, as you know, many changes in the balance market, and we feel that we'll be able to supply dealers with equipment that they weren't previously able to offer. We find that key.

### What's ahead in the next few years for Techcomp in regards to the Precisa range of balances?

**Chris:** Techcomp and Precisa are committed to research and innovation, and we've increased the investment in these areas since the acquisition. So we have an exciting program of product launches planned for the next five years that will

have access, or have not had access to the highest end equipment. This will change the way all players in the game approach dealers in general.

### So it's going to be good for the dealers?

**Richard:** I think so, you know, competition is what this country is built on.

### What trade shows will you be visible at within the next year?

**Richard:** We'll certainly be attending all the ISWM regionals, probably for the next eighteen months, at least, with this product line. We want to touch every part—certainly of the US, and Canada as well. In November we'll be exhibiting at the Eastern Analytical Symposium in New Jersey. You'll also see us exhibiting at Pittcon in New Orleans, which takes place in March, as does the ISWM major show in Baltimore. So it's a pretty packed schedule.

The other interesting thing we will be doing—is we will organize and hold regional seminars, where we can pull dealers together and go through training and capabilities of the equipment. And that will be in the works as soon as Industrial Weigh & Measure gets mailed and word on the street gets out.

### How are you preparing for the launch of Precisa Balances?

**Richard:** At the moment we have just completed training for three of us within the company on servicing and capabilities of the range. That's going to be followed by another week of training for applications capabilities, which is a very important part of this line. That's going to take place in a few weeks. We will have all our inventory in California by the launch date.

### Final Thoughts?

**Richard:** We concentrate, still, on servicing the scale dealer and lab equipment dealer market in North America. We now have the infrastructure inside, such as an industrial chemist to talk applications with people, and a communications manager to handle our new found expertise in digital communication. So we are reasonably well placed to continue our expansion over the next 10 years.

IWM



The beautiful lobby at Intelligent Weighing Technology in Camarillo, California also serves as a showroom.

enhance existing models, but also extend the range as well, along with the things we're already offering, the best in communication options within our products and our balance software. We also feel that this area will be increasingly important in the future—so we'll stay innovative in the way the user interacts with the balance and the ease of exchanging data with the customer's networks and other systems.

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### What's the most tantalizing prospect of this "industry first" of offering Precisa balances in North America, would you say it's going to wake up the industry as well as create more competition?

**Richard:** I wouldn't say wake up, because I think the industry is very alert—the changes have been going on for the last three or four years. And it's been recovering from the recession, but I do think it's going to place in the hands of—won't say small to medium—but dealers who don't



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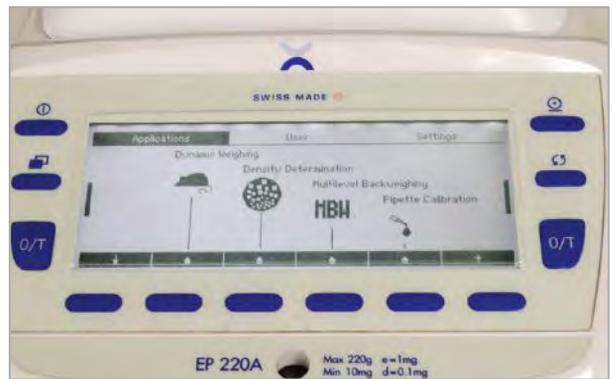
At Precisa, engineers have maintained close cooperation with universities, technical colleges, colleges of applied science and laboratory professionals the world over, to ensure that product innovations meet the latest technological requirements. Precisa instruments contain the features necessary to perform tests accurately and record results simply and efficiently.

The premium workmanship of the robust die-cast aluminum housing underlines the quality and durability of Precisa products. This construction offers a high degree of protection against mechanical and electrical interference.

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## Advanced Technology

Precisa's Executive Pro flagship series leaves virtually nothing to be desired and is impressively easy to operate, thanks to a multi-lingual graphic display. The start-up menu can be personalized with freely selectable display options. Twelve soft-keys, six of which are application configurable, allow intuitive, direct navigation. Additional information can be zoomed onto the main display and the useful Language Tool allows you to load your own language and characters onto



the balance display. The automatic draft shield for analytical and semi-micro balances operates hands free and effortlessly on either side via IR sensors. Other features include integrated applications for laboratory and quality assurance: pipette calibration, minimum sample weight, automatic buoyancy error suppression, density determination and many other applications.

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The force-compensating measuring cell developed by Precisa is characterized by outstanding precision and durability. The cell is manufactured by hand to meet the strict demands that automated cell production cannot fulfill. For disaster recovery, technicians can repair the balances on site at the customer's premises – a significant advantage over other types of cells. This speeds up response time and preserves service revenue for dealers.

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Precisa's new advanced insert technologies, featuring the slide-in module, provide a range of connection options using USB, Bluetooth,

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The self-calibrating system developed by Precisa, enables true automated balance calibration. The function features a programmable temperature and/or timer which ensures that your instrument is always calibrated precisely to comply with GLP requirements.

### New Standards in Moisture Analysis

Precisa is setting new standards in the demanding area of high-end moisture analyzers. Three levels of instruments are available for fast, error-free moisture analysis with outstanding performance and extremely precise measurement accuracy. Precisa's analyzers offer a choice of heating elements for versatility and an intuitive graphic user interface. With three place and four place offerings, this range covers all applications, including plastics.

Continuous investment in research and development, and manufacture in state-of-the-art Swiss production facilities allows Precisa to offer the best in the elite world of fine weighing. Swiss technology, Swiss precision, Swiss quality control. This is why leading specialists around the world place their trust in Precisa.

Precisa instruments are now available in North

America exclusively through Intelligent Weighing Technology, Inc. Dealers now have access to the very best weighing instruments available today.

### About Precisa Gravimetrics AG

Uncompromising quality standards in research, manufacturing, design and after-sales service have made Precisa one of the leading brands in weighing instruments world-wide. The result is a state-of-the-art product range, which fully reflects traditional Swiss characteristics such as precision, quality and reliability –along with a complete range of customer specific benefits. Precisa instruments contain the features necessary to perform tests accurately and record results simply and efficiently. Precisa, with distribution in more than 100 countries around the world, is a division of Techcomp Europe Group, a leading manufacturer and distributor of analytical instruments, life science equipment and laboratory instruments.

### About Intelligent Weighing Technology, Inc.

Intelligent Weighing Technology supplies a complete range of high-quality laboratory balances, industrial scales, load cells, and weighing accessories to the North American market. Its leadership team has more than 65 years' experience in the weighing and measurement business, both in the USA and worldwide. With its 8,000 square foot facility, Intelligent Weighing Technology offers increased product inventory for faster shipping. Built on a cornerstone of quality, precision, and service, Intelligent Weighing Technology provides its customers with the equipment they need, right on time.

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