

Karl Ochsner jr.

In this section of the expert interviews series we talked to Mr. Karl Ochsner jr., Member of the management of OCHSNER Wärmepumpen GmbH.

OCHSNER Wärmepumpen GmbH has started the industrial production of heat pumps as one of the first European manufacturers. OCHSNER is a technology leader and one of the best known European manufacturers in the industry. At Haag, up to 8,000 heat pumps are currently being produced every year.

How do you assess the status and development of Austrian heat pump technology in general and OCHSNER GmbH in particular?

As regards the status of Austrian heat pump technology, it can be said that the use of heat pumps has become established both in the new building sector - and here above all in the federal states of Vorarlberg, Upper Austria, Lower Austria and Burgenland - as well as in the sanitation sector. In the refurbishment area, this is due to the now higher possible flow temperatures but also to the increased awareness of energy costs at the end customer. OCHSNER accounts for almost half of its sales through the use of heat pumps in the context of building refurbishments.

I see the development of the heat pump in Austria and the development of the company OCHSNER continue to be positive. This is due to a high export quota. At Ochsner, this is over 60%, with the most important foreign market being Germany. Despite this, the Austrian market is still very important. Despite the economic crisis, he has also developed well and stable this year.

How do you assess the public perception of the heat pump?

30 years ago, the technology had to be explained to the end customer and a lot of persuasive work was necessary. Today the technology in Austria is well-known in the construction industry and also the knowledge in the population is now very high. In other markets this know-how is not yet available to this extent. OCHSNER tries to create awareness for this technology by means of trained installation partners and a comprehensive web presence.

Where do you see the Austrian heat pump industry in an international comparison?

The domestic heat pump technology, as well as Austrian environmental technology in general, is internationally recognized. The "made in Austria" brand is an international quality mark, and the industry is technology leader (biomass, solar thermal, heat pump) in many areas.

In the heat pump sector, for example, Austria is very well positioned in the area of efficient

direct evaporation. However, this technology is not yet widely used internationally. Furthermore, domestic companies are strongly positioned internationally in air / water heat pumps. For example, there are corresponding systems from OCHSNER, which are also excellent in Minsk at -20 ° C. In addition to its technological leadership, Austria is also an international leader in the field of architects and planners. The awareness of the use of heat pumps is solidified here.

At the same time, efforts must be made to maintain this international advantage. Competition situations with Asian manufacturers such as in the photovoltaic industry, for example, must be prevented.



How do you assess the economic and legal requirements for the installation of heat pumps in Austria?

The heat pump has the advantage of being the most cost-effective system. Depending on the plant, 2/3 to 3/4 of the useful energy comes from the environment. Thus the foreseeable increase in electricity costs has only a small effect on the energy costs of heat pump systems.

In Austria, it must be borne in mind in the context of subsidies that, in order to promote other (alternative) energy technologies, the heat pump also has to be subsidized, as otherwise a market distortion occurs. This equality is not given in all the Länder.

At European level, the heat pump is seen very positively. It has been recognized that this can make a significant contribution to the achievement of climate change. This is particularly important with regard to the directives, norms and laws which have their origin in the EU bodies.

Where do you currently see the biggest challenges for your company?

The biggest challenge is that competition in the heat pump sector is increasing massively. The market has evolved from a niche market to a mass market, which makes the technology interesting for many companies. This includes not only sectors such as the classic heating technology companies, but also the air conditioning industry. The competition from the Far East is also clearly visible. The challenge now is to emphasize the existing differences in quality (efficiency, service life, operational safety, etc.) and to communicate it to the end customer accordingly.

How intensive is research on heat pump technology at OCHSNER and in Austria?



The domestic heat pump industry is characterized by

intensive in-house research; however, there are also extensive cooperations with universities and technical colleges as well as non-university research facilities.

In the future, smart grids and the integration of heat pumps into this system will be major research fields in the field of heat pumps. A heat pump is operated with "excess flow", which in turn heats a water reservoir and stores the energy for later use. Furthermore, research on large heat pumps is becoming increasingly important for industrial applications. Here, efficiency increases and the availability of high temperatures are in the foreground.

OCHSNER itself invests a great deal in research and development to meet the challenges already mentioned. This makes it possible to maintain and further expand the existing technology leadership.

In which areas of application do you see the greatest growth prospects for heat pump technology, where are innovative new applications?

In addition to the already mentioned use in the building renovation, an increasingly important application area of heat pumps is the commercial area. The conviction that systems that have proved to be efficient in the private residential sector can also be sustained by an industrial scale is becoming more and more popular.

Another important segment that will gain in importance in the future is the domestic hot water pump, ie a heat pump system only for hot water treatment. In many cases, this is operated in combination with biomass or oil / gas firing.

OCHSNER is concerned with the still relatively unknown field of heat recovery from waste water, since there is very high potential here. This energy can be used particularly in large cities by means of special heat exchangers. Studies show that up to 10% of the cities could be heated with their waste water. This would result in enormous cost savings for the population. Here, cities and municipalities are required to implement pilot projects and to establish the technology thereby.

What challenges do you see for the future of OCHSNER heat pumps? What are your goals?

We have set ourselves the goal of opening up new export markets as well as growing continuously in existing markets and defending our current market share. In our opinion, a major new market is in the UK, because of the climatic conditions heat pump systems are very good. Other future markets are the Czech Republic, Poland, Belarus, Ukraine and Russia. A challenge in these markets is that investments in highly efficient heating systems can not be presented to the end customer in many cases.

Also, China is a very large market. The heat pump technology is there on the state of Austria 10 years ago. The Chinese government is promoting heat pump technology, as the potential has been recognized. The market will be particularly interesting for domestic component suppliers.

In addition to opening up new markets, OCHSNER intends to maintain and further expand the technology leadership in the high-end heat pump segment. The focus is on the production of efficient, cost-effective, durable and high-quality devices.

Karl Ochsner jr.



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