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The human factor

The electronics industry is booming, and the need for new and skilled staff has become an urgent issue to be tackled by VIVBER Kft., the Hungarian specialist for the manufacture and distribution of electrical switch-gears, metal structures, cable assemblies and surface treatment solutions to an international customer base. In the coming years, staff recruitment will become a dominating factor for continued success in the European market.

Today, about 95% of VIVBER’s customers are from Western Europe, among them large multinationals from the energy production and distribution industries, commercial and industrial facilities as well as the military and public sector, with the transport industry in particular gaining momentum. “The European and especially the German market have always had a close eye on quality and performance standards, and when we took our first international steps 20 years ago, we were well aware of the need for an electrical specialist executing Western European quality and safety standards. We had always wanted to operate in the Western market, and our expertise and adherence to quality have opened many doors back for us,” points out General Manager János Rákovics. “We still live up to the ideal of our founders of providing quality products to a demanding customer base.”

Due to its perseverance of becoming a well-respected partner to Western European companies that is able to bundle all required skills and competences under one roof, VIVBER has developed into a partner of choice when it comes to the provision of electrical installations.
We have been supplying the Western European market with its high quality demands for more than 20 years.

The rail transport sector in Europe offers interesting long-term opportunities for us.

The only solution is skilled training of our staff to prevent migration to Western Europe.” VIVBER’s production site is located in a highly developed region with many large industrial cities as well as Budapest in close vicinity. This does not facilitate the lack of skilled labour, and even higher salaries are not a long-term solution. “Many workers can currently pick and choose where to work,” adds Mr. Rákovich. “We listen to the needs of our staff and provide a high level of flexibility with regard to working times, holidays and even private problems. In the coming years, we will employ new staff to meet our company’s growth. Here, our competitiveness and the implementation of innovations, for instance automation and robot technology, will help attract new customers. The rail sector in particular is of great importance to our future development. Excellent staffing will help to boost our performance in this market.” New markets, new staff and new technologies – this is where VIVBER sees its future.

One production line focuses on the manufacture of electrical cabinets.

The in-house coating division guarantees the consistent quality of the coated products.

According to Western European standards. Over the years, VIVBER has experienced continuous growth, and it now employs workforce of 180 people, generating a turnover between 2.3 and 3.5 billion HUF.

“Our success is partly based on our experienced staff with a fund of knowledge and expertise to move forward in line with technological progress,” says Mr. Rákovich. “In order to remain a reliable partner to our customers, we have to ensure that we are constantly updating our skills and that we can offer the latest technological innovations in our areas of expertise. This is why a strong focus on finding new staff and the constant training of all our staff members are vital for our future development. However, we struggle to find suitable staff members at all levels, and we know that other companies are facing the same challenges.”
Interview with Aleksander Lamacz, General Manager of Kubala Sp. z o.o.

Tools you can trust

Whether completing a small DIY project or a larger commercial endeavour, having the right tools makes the work go smoother, faster and easier. Put your time, money and trust behind a company that is known for its high-quality products and its family atmosphere. A family business, Kubala Sp. z o.o. is headquartered in Poland and has been making exceptional tools for the construction and gardening sectors for 30 years. You can be confident when working with Kubala and its tools that the work will be done right the first time.

The tools the company offers in the construction line are numerous and include popular items such as putty knives, trowels, floats and stirrers. Many of these products are made from stainless steel, rubber and plastic, so no matter what the job, Kubala has the right tool. “We also have specialized tools in this category, like masonry and plastering tools and glazing tools,” says Aleksander Lamacz, General Manager. “One of our more innovative products is a scrubber for Styrofoam.” Similarly, custom items are available, including shovels, gypsum sets and more. The firm has displays ready as well to help its business clients catch the eye of the end customer. Kubala is constantly working on expanding its range, focusing on tools and painting products at this time. “We want to become the natural choice for the target group with an ever-growing selection of tools and products for interested parties,” adds Mr. Lamacz. In all, Kubala has patented over 50 different designs.

Kubala is all about developing new products for the industries it serves. “From the beginning, Mr. Kubala invented the majority of the tools we sold,” explains Mr. Lamacz. This entrepreneurial spirit is still alive and well within the company. Clients recognize this and contract the business to create private label tools for their brands. Kubala does this by making slight modifications to products that it sells under its own brand name and adapting them to the specific needs of each customer. Furthermore, the company offers training workshops directly for the end users of the products. This gives invaluable insight into what works and what does not. “We take this information and change products where necessary or invent entirely new ones,” adds Mr. Lamacz. Staying plugged in to the industries it serves helps the company to change with the times, which keeps existing customers coming back and entices new customers to place orders.

Lately, there has been a push into new markets. Kubala has seen the need for its products increasing in areas such as the Middle East, Africa and Asia. “We are very focused on exports,” states Mr. Lamacz. “Our goal is to develop Kubala into a strong brand both

The Kubala family takes pride in making sure the company remains true to its roots while never compromising on quality

The company produces the majority of its construction tools on site using its extensive machine park
within Europe and worldwide. A real advantage is that we are able to adapt and produce dedicated products very quickly to meet requirements in new markets.” The business is able to remain flexible partially thanks to its machine park. This includes welding tool preparation, plastic injection, steelworks with its presses, mounting, a recently improved warehouse and a powder painting shop. Having the freedom to change its product portfolio quickly allows the company to meet different countries’ requirements regarding tool shape, size and more. Other future goals revolve around developing the Kubala brand further, maintaining close relationships with its distributors and moving production to allow for more growth within the company.
If you water it, it will grow

If you are in Poland and watering the garden with a hose or sprinkler, then it is highly likely that the equipment you are using was made by Cellfast. The Polish plastics processing company is a leading manufacturer of hoses, garden accessories, garden tools, gutter systems and soffits in this part of Europe. It enjoys the top position in its domestic market and has strong exports to the rest of Europe and the world. Its success can be attributed to significant investment in its manufacturing capacity and modern technology as well as its human capital.

Founded in 1990 in the post-communism rush to embrace capitalism, Cellfast is one of the success stories of Poland’s rebirth as a free market economy. Still family-owned, it ranks as one of the biggest players in the lawn irrigation market in Poland and beyond, offering a comprehensive range of water hoses and accessories. “Garden hoses and connectors are our traditional area of expertise, but we have expanded far beyond our initial specialism,” says Export Director Western Europe Mariusz Niepokój. “We also make metal garden tools at our second manufacturing site in Krosno.”

Krosno is still where the company is officially headquartered, but its biggest manufacturing facility is located in Stalowa Wola. Purpose-built in 2001, it boasts 50,000 m² of space. A third factory is home to the company’s research and development activities. “We focus on developing products with an ergonomic and attractive design,” says Mr. Niepokój. “Our ERGO LINE watering system, for example, was singled out for the prestigious Red Dot Award 2015 for outstanding design.” ERGO is the company’s premium line while its IDEAL LINE and ECONOMIC line serve the mid-price and entry-level price segments. New products are continually being added to the range in response to demand from the market.

This was also the reason behind the expansion of the product range to include garden tools. This product area was launched in 2016 and is part of Cellfast’s ambitious growth plans for the coming years. “This is a new area for us and has been the focus of a great deal of effort aimed at developing products with our signature good handling and high quality,” says Mr. Niepokój. “We believe we have succeeded in creating a line of tools that is modern and easy to use, and whose design will appeal to customers.” International recognition from the design world has already been forthcoming. Cellfast’s entire range of splitting and universal axes received the iF Design Award 2017 thanks to their sturdy and attractive design.

The award is all the confirmation needed that the risk taken in opening a new factory to manufacture tools was the right one. “Every company reaches the point where diversification is necessary for growth,” says Mr. Niepokój. “For us, that point arrived a few years ago, and the response of the...
company has been typical of the owner’s approach to the business so far.” Having built Cellfast into a leading player in the garden hose and sprinkler market, it has taken the logical step to build on its successful brands with a range of garden tools.

The move is not so much about protecting current market share but about aggressive expansion into other competitive markets. Cellfast has ambitious plans for where it sees itself in the next five years. “We are already known as one of the leading manufacturers of garden hoses and connecting systems,” says Mr. Niepokój. “Our goal for the next three years is to become one of the leading manufacturers of garden tools in Europe.” This is an important distinction, as many European brands are actually produced in the Far East. “We are not worried about having to compete with Asian producers,” says Mr. Niepokój. “By building our own factory, we are able to keep costs down, and by keeping everything in house, we have complete control of the value chain.”

Cellfast has done well to expand so successfully. Its new factory has been designed to be flexible and efficient. Production takes place in very large series to profit from economies of scale. “We are also benefitting from rapid changes in the market,” explains Mr. Niepokój. “Around half of our products are distributed via traditional channels such as garden centers and wholesalers. However, the other half is now sold through DIY stores, grocery stores and discount supermarkets. The success of their business model and their changing weekly offers has benefited us hugely.” It has also turned what was once a seasonal business into an all-year trade. “Every day is a challenge and brings with it new projects,” says Mr. Niepokój. “Before diversification, we had a three-month season while now it is all year round.” Nevertheless, the biggest season for watering products is from February to May before everything goes into stores. Advertising campaigns are coordinated for around this time too. Around 50% of production is exported to the EU, Eastern and Central Europe, Russia, and Africa. This figure is set to grow as Cellfast works towards achieving its ambitious targets.
International transport at its best

The international transport sector in Europe is facing serious challenges. Finding excellent drivers is an issue for any company focussing on road transport. On top of that, the European Commission is undertaking actions to make mobility safer and cleaner, leading to new regulations and a CO₂ emissions standard for heavy-duty vehicles that will affect every transport company from a cost perspective. KOIMEX S.A. is based in Świebodzin in Poland and specializes in international road transports along the axis France – Germany – Poland. The company is well equipped to meet the new European regulations.

“At this point in time, we have 191 trucks of our own and we work with subcontractors who jointly have another 30 trucks,” says Robert Kaluzynski, Operations Director at KOIMEX S.A. “We only have megatrailers, so we can load much more for our clients. In addition, the roofs can be lifted to ease loading and unloading.” Another aspect that makes KOIMEX stand out is that the company is closely involved with its clients and their plans, and has invested in special trailers to optimize logistics and international transport for them and to build strong partnerships. For instance, KOIMEX has lighter trailers for clients in the steel industry, and trailers that permit horizontal transport of paper. Its clients are companies trading for instance in paper and paper waste, woodwork for gardening, chemicals and hazardous goods, industrial and agricultural machines, white goods and food. In addition, KOIMEX works for major freight forwarding and logistics companies.

Asked about developments in their market of international road transport, Mr. Kaluzynski observes that it is a challenge in any country to find enough drivers, which is even more of an issue because of the fact that many current drivers are nearing retirement age. In general, the Polish transport market is large enough to employ another 100,000 drivers. “We completed 21,000 orders in 2017 and are very content to have enough excellent drivers, even enough to be able to grow,” he notes. “We have a mix of drivers from Poland, Ukraine and Belarus. All our drivers are well-trained and are assessed based on monthly KPIs.” The company is investing heavily in social and medical benefits for its 320 employees, and is planning a building in Świebodzin where drivers can relax and socialize.

Another challenge is posed by European regulations imposed on the transport sector in order to make it safer and cleaner. Its Mobility Packages require transport companies to invest in their fleet and operations. An important asset for KOIMEX is that the company invested in an advanced IT system for order management and telematics. It started using Trimble in 2011, investing in computers and scanners in all trucks for order handling and communication with the drivers. The driver has access to all important information about the order and the best route to the client, as well as extra information about easy loading and unloading at the destination. All signed transport documents are available for our customers in electronic form.

The heart of our operations is providing high quality, supported by our advanced IT systems, megatrailers and expert employees who speak local languages.
format within ten minutes after unloading. By 2015 the company had developed its own TMS system (Transport Management System) on top of that to fine tune all operations. “In terms of IT and telematics we are well prepared to meet the new European regulations. Such investments are costly, so we do expect that transport rates will rise in coming months,” Mr. Kaluzynski notes.

In 2016, KOIMEX built a new headquarters and a 6,000 m² warehouse for an e-commerce customer. Geographically located on the proverbial crossroads from east to west and north to south, the warehouse is ideally located to serve a client who is active in Poland and Germany. This relatively new activity is already successful and in the next few years the company is looking at new locations for other warehouses. “We will also develop services that make optimum use of the synergy between transport and warehousing,” the Operations Director enthuses. “In addition, we are planning to set up our own offices in France and Germany to be close to our customers.”
The healthy alternative to milk

Milk and dairy products are essential in a healthy and balanced diet. However, more and more people are suffering from lactose intolerance and do not tolerate cow’s milk. For those people, goat’s milk products provide a healthy alternative. Agro-Danmis Gramowscy Sp. J. with headquarters in Bukowiec, Poland, offers a broad range of dairy products made of goat’s milk.

The demand for goat’s milk products in the market has been growing steadily as more and more people have recognized the benefits and health aspects. “We want to benefit from this development and want to grow even further in the future,” says President and owner Maciej Gramowski. “We have modernized our production and developed a completely new marketing strategy with redefined target groups and a new brand identity.”

Agro-Danmis is the only dairy in Poland that is 100% focused on goat’s milk. The company was founded in 1993 and at the beginning, the business was focused on the goat herd and the sales of its milk. In 2006, the firm built its own factory to produce milk, semi-hard cheese, fresh cheese, yoghurts and other dairy products. In the course of the years, the factory was expanded and modernized with state-of-the-art equipment. “We recognized the potential of goat’s milk as an alternative to cow’s milk at an early stage,” states Maciej Gramowski. “The structure of proteins in goat’s milk is very similar to the structure of those in human milk. In addition, we have the technology to get rid of the characteristic goat aroma. The aroma and taste becomes very mild and similar to cow’s milk.” Owning the goats gives Agro-Danmis a big advantage over its competitors as the milk is absolutely fresh and processed directly. With more than 2,000 dairy goats, the company owns the biggest herd in Poland on 800 ha of ground, where the crops to feed the goats are grown directly. That is something you can taste in the products, which are available in supermarkets in Poland and the Czech Republic, the Ukraine and the Baltics. “We are constantly developing and moving forward,” points out the President and owner. “We plan to grow by expanding our market position. I still see a lot of potential.”

Goat’s milk in cartons is one of the best-sellers of Agro-Danmis.

We have seen the potential of goat’s milk as an alternative to cow’s milk already at an early stage.

Milk and dairy products are essential in a healthy and balanced diet. However, more and more people are suffering from lactose intolerance and do not tolerate cow’s milk. For those people, goat’s milk products provide a healthy alternative. Agro-Danmis Gramowscy Sp. J. with headquarters in Bukowiec, Poland, offers a broad range of dairy products made of goat’s milk.

Yoghurt in different flavours is also produced by the company.
Providing peace of mind

Security measures are often put in place at the factories of large multinationals, but many of these giant firms contract at least some of the assembly and manufacturing work out to third party contractors. In doing so, the businesses risk a security breach while their products are being processed in other locations. PCO-hlídací služba, s.r.o., located in the Czech Republic, understands this and keeps its client’s goods secure.

PCO helps keep its customers’ products safe by using a multi-layer approach. Firstly, there is a staffed reception desk and a locked gate that all visitors and vehicles have to get through. Then, the client can choose which of the other options fit their needs the best. “We have a centralized protection desk that offers 24-hour surveillance, the ability to remotely monitor the movement of people within the warehouse, a dedicated wireless network, a radio frequency network, CCTV and more,” explains Peter Bohinsky, Quality Manager and Owner.

If having a person watch over items is what the client prefers, then PCO is ready to supply highly-trained personnel to guard products according to the customer’s wishes. The firm uses the most modern Active Guard tracking system on the market, which allows for real-time data transfer. “We also offer insurance options to our clients, so that if damage does occur, it will be paid for,” adds Mr. Bohinsky.

Security is a huge part of the company’s business, but it is not everything. PCO does a good amount of assembly for a variety of industries, while simultaneously providing quality control and surveillance. “We do a lot of work for the automotive industry in particular, completing tasks like assembling plastic and metal parts by hand or machine,” says Mr. Bohinsky. Employees then do a quality control check by visually looking at, monitoring or measuring the product. If a visual check is not precise enough, clients can opt for a check to be performed with a microscope. Apart from the assembly, PCO is also able to provide injection molding of bespoke plastic parts for various sectors. Finally, storage is also available to customers. PCO has a 4,000 m² warehouse and clients can rent space by the pallet. “Since 2014 the assembly workshop represents our most important activity and we are certified by major companies like Bosch,” underlines Mr. Bohinsky.

Something that really makes PCO stand out is that 95% of its personnel have some form of physical disability. “Everyone can work, as long as activities line up with what each employee can do,” says Mr. Bohinsky. “Since this company was founded, we have strived to give handicapped individuals a good and safe place to work.” The company believes strongly in social responsibility and aims to hire 100 more people within the next five years. Other goals include branching out more into international markets, staying flexible in order to better serve its customers, and remaining a company people can trust. “At the end of the day, actions speak louder than words, so we show our customers that we are the best,” sums up Mr. Bohinsky.
Take a healthy mix of nature, tradition and technology

While advances in medical science and pharmaceuticals are undoubtedly improving and prolonging life, there is still a very clear and substantial role for natural, chemical-free medicines, which many people swear by as a cure for a wide range of complaints or to improve their general state of health. Natur-Drogeriet A/S, a Danish producer of herbal and plant-based remedies, has a long history and significant experience in developing natural cures and supplements. Today, the company combines traditional science with modern technology to offer customers a portfolio of health products with proven results.

The company was founded in 1945 by Dr. Axel Hansen, a medical doctor who explored the possibilities of using natural ingredients to heal certain conditions. He firmly believed that many of his patients would be better served by taking herb and plant-based medication to cure their ailments. He established Natur-Drogeriet and continued producing his natural remedies until his death in 1971. Two customers took over the business and developed a new product which would prove to be very significant to Natur-Drogeriet’s development. Urte Pensil, a herbal penicillin that has no side effects and helps fight off all kinds of infections, has proved to be one of the company’s most successful products. “My parents-in-law, Peer and Jonna Christiansen, acquired Natur-Drogeriet in 1976,” says today’s CEO Jan C. Rathcke. “They brought new life to the firm and led it for 40 years, until my wife and I took it over in 2015.” Today, Natur-Drogeriet offers a wide portfolio of natural products. Alongside Urte Pensil, another highlight is the food supplement TryptoNAT, which combines amino acid with minerals, vitamins and herbs to help you sleep through the night. TryptoNAT won the Healthcare Association Helsam’s Product of the Year in 2016 for its unique composition, great effect and customer feedback. “Food supplements is where we are anticipating the greatest growth in the coming years,” con-
Interview with Jan C. Rathcke, CEO of Natur-Drogeriet A/S

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The marketplace is moving to the Internet, and we see new opportunities in specialist health product webshops.

firms Mr. Rathcke. “Our secret to success is that we use nature exactly as it is. We have natural, effective products with no side effects. In Denmark, Natur-Drogeriet is the strongest brand in our sector, thanks to our products and our history.”

While the company’s product portfolio retains its focus on traditional, natural products, technology is adding a modern slant to its operations. “Today, Denmark is all about digitalization,” admits Mr. Rathcke. “This is our goal too. For us, this means more automation within our factory, leading to higher efficiency and a leaner organization. We installed a new ERP system in September last year, which will create many new opportunities. Our products are sold in health food shops and pharmacies. However, the marketplace is moving to the Internet, and we see new opportunities in specialist health product webshops. Social media is also developing into an important marketing tool.”

The development of its export market is also a high priority for Natur-Drogeriet. “At the moment, we sell our products mostly in Denmark, and we want to extend our sales in Norway and Sweden,” reveals the CEO. “Poland has huge potential too, and Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Belgium and France are also possible new markets, as is the UK depending on what Brexit brings.” Ultimately, Mr. Rathcke’s goal is to double the company’s 500,000 EUR turnover within the next three years. “I want to see our products in most countries in Europe,” he sums up.

Urte-Pensil is a herbal penicillin which helps fight off all kinds of infections

TryptoNAT, a prize-winning natural food supplement offering tremendous health benefits to help you sleep
Interview with Jukka Pennanen, Chief Customer Officer at KPA Unicon Oy

Partners for energy solutions

Based in Eastern Finland, KPA Unicon specializes in the delivery of responsible energy solutions through customized and modular boiler plant projects. Depending on its clients’ specifications, the company has the capacity to produce reliable energy sources using either biomass or fossil fuels. KPA Unicon is a reliable partner throughout the project lifecycle, from conception to long-term maintenance and operations. Its industry experts – present in Finland, France, Croatia, Russia and Chile – provide regular consulting in order to determine the optimal technical solution to any and all energy-related concerns.

Despite the company’s global presence as an industry forerunner, KPA Unicon retains its roots as a family enterprise. It was founded 28 years ago by Mr. Pekka Kovanen, who is still majority owner today. In one way or another, the whole Kovanen family remains active in the day-to-day operations of the business. For instance, Mr. Kovanen’s daughter, Jonna Kovanen, is responsible for certain aspects of KPA Unicon’s marketing and public relations, and son Jukka-Pekka Kovanen was a long-term CEO of the company and moved recently to the board.

Initially, the company primarily focused on delivery projects for oil and gas boilers, and maintenance of oil and gas boilers in Russia. More than 1,500 boilers have been delivered to date, forming the backbone of KPA Unicon for many years. By 2010, management decided to shift gears towards renewable biomass energy sources. “This strategic shift led to an acquisition in 2014, which expanded our portfolio to include biomass, specifically an innovative product called Biograte,” explains Jukka Pennanen, Chief Customer Officer at KPA Unicon. More than 70% of the company’s contracts in 2017 were for biomass technology and related services. “By continuously expanding our service offering, we have secured top market positions in Scandinavia as well as in Europe as a whole,” says Mr. Pennanen. Currently, more than 50% of all district heating plants in Finland were installed by KPA Unicon.

Although KPA Unicon’s primary products are boilers and boiler plants, a shift is occurring away from project-based contracts toward more service-based ones. “First, we try to understand the situation of our clients – their environment, their business model – and then we develop a tailor-made solution package,” says Mr. Pennanen and adds: “The world today is so full of technology and boiler types that our customers need guidance in terms of what the best option is for them moving forward.”

What sets KPA Unicon apart from its industry counterparts is its comprehensive approach to
ensuring longevity in the lifecycles of its plants. “Fundamentally, we are partners offering a wide range of technology and service capabilities, including incorporating cutting-edge developments where applicable,” elaborates Mr. Pennanen. Within the past few years, there has been a push toward digitization, utilizing big data and the Internet of Things to maximize efficiency. KPA Unicon has developed its own digital platform which allows for streamlined operation and maintenance of its power plants. “This aspect really differentiates us from our competitors – regardless of the environment, our clients are given the capacity to closely monitor, analyze and report production data in real-time,” emphasizes Mr. Pennanen.

With the integration of the company’s digital platform, KPA Unicon is able to monitor its plants in real-time as well as offer 24/7 support globally – a plant lifecycle service. “At the moment, we have more than 60 plants under our remote operation from our centralized service center. The plants under operation are located in Finland, Sweden, France, Russia and Croatia. Chile will be on our list very soon,” says Mr. Pennanen.

The majority of KPA Unicon’s clients are from the energy sector, processing plants, food industries and also breweries. These are all industries that require steam for their production process, and need a readily available and efficient way to produce it. Utilizing residues from other processes, KPA Unicon can produce reliable and cleaner sources of steam. A concrete example can be found in KPA Unicon’s steel mill projects, for which it developed an innovative solution to the mills’ polluting exhaust. The company created a system of burning the harmful gases of the coke oven in boilers, cleaning the flue gases that would otherwise pollute the air, and creating the steam necessary for utilization in the production processes of the steam mill.

Even as a leader, there is always room for growth. For the coming years, Mr. Pennanen has outlined a number of key objectives for the company’s continued improvement. “KPA Unicon should be perceived as more of a partner than a supplier moving forward, this together with new business models and benchmarking will ensure that we maintain our competitive edge long-term,” he notes.

With this in mind, the company has its sights set on further developing a presence in central Europe, North and South America as well as China and South Africa. “We see the trends in Europe and internationally toward modern and instant service delivery – there is significant demand for upgrades in terms of plant automation and efficiency. This can be achieved with the right partners,” concludes Mr. Pennanen.
Biotechnology is defined as the application of scientific and engineering principles to the processing of material by biological agents to provide goods and services. Over the past decade, progress in biotechnology has accelerated rapidly. It is a complex and challenging scientific discipline – a discipline that is dominated by innovative and high-performing companies such as Greentech SA. The French company considers biotechnology as the source of beauty – a plethora of efficient cosmetic products illustrates that Greentech is right.

Established in 1992, Greentech has become a pioneer in plant technology. Based on sophisticated technology, the company develops and produces high-tech ingredients for the cosmetic, pharmaceutical and nutraceutical industry and operates ‘at the crossroads of the worlds’, as it claims. Over time, Greentech has discovered more than 300,000 biologically active molecules – originating from the deep mechanisms of plants, algae, micro-algae and micro-organisms drawn from across the world.

Today, internationally leading cosmetic companies cooperate with Greentech – and benefit from the company’s extraordinary innovative power. Greentech has come a long way to become a much sought-after partner of the international cosmetic and pharmaceutical industry. “Being a biologist, I worked in many different laboratories before I joined Greentech,” says Managing Director Jean-Yves Berthon. “Back in the early days, the market was pretty different. Biotechnology was not yet an established scientific discipline, and circumstances were quite difficult. Greentech’s success was far from certain at the outset. We were facing many serious challenges; it was hard to raise money for laboratories, equipment and projects. However, Greentech was ambitious and committed, and eventually we got in touch with INRA, Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique. INRA firmly believed in our ideas and visions and significantly supported our projects. Since then, the company has been growing steadily.”

However, using the latest technological equipment was not enough to successfully penetrate the market. Greentech needed to gain confidence and to make itself a name for its fundamental scientific know-how. “It was only when the press started focusing on our activities and published different articles that several cosmetic companies contacted us,” explains Mr. Berthon. “And even then, we first refused their

Greentech is a regular exhibitor at the In-Cosmetics trade fair

20 international fairs per year are perfect for meeting directly with potential customers
Greentech has always put research and innovation first. Today, 30% of employees are working in laboratories and 15% of sales are invested in research and development; furthermore, it collaborates with scientists and specialists in international research programs. This approach has significantly boosted the company’s expansion. Greentech has 180 employees today, annual sales of 31 million EUR and successful operations all around the globe. Over the past years, the company acquired selected companies such as Biovitis in 2000 and Greensea in 2005, and established subsidiaries in the United States, Germany and Brazil. Due to this international network, Greentech is in a position to constantly expand its portfolio, and to draw active ingredients from raw material from warm and cold climates, on land and in the oceans, from the most arid and the most humid regions of the world. “Greentech can rely on the most excellent experts in the fields of plant physiology, phytochemistry, microbiology, algology, biochemistry, chemistry, physics, cosmetics and nutrition, to launch innovative cosmetic active ingredients,” states Mr. Berthon. “So far, we have introduced around 100 active ingredients and about 4,000 different plant extracts. We have been able to maintain the spirit of a start-up-company. Everyone in the team is highly motivated and passionate. This is essential to develop outstanding products such as Reverskin, a cellular booster, or Soliberine, a global photo-protector that prevents skin ageing due to light radiation. We develop our own ingredients available for all trademarks and we often cooperate with well-known brands such as Johnson&Johnson or L’Oréal. To develop specific products for those global players, it is essential to listen to them and to react quickly. This is exactly what customers appreciate when working with us.”

It is part of Greentech’s philosophy to think outside the box and to see the big picture. Every other year, the company organizes the Physiology International Meeting in Vichy where 200 experts from all over the world share their ideas and discuss the latest research results. 15,000 EUR are dedicated to sponsoring young scientists.
Interview with Thomas Edl, Managing Director of DELTA BLOC International GmbH

Protecting lives with proven safety technology

There is nothing more devastating than a head-on collision between two vehicles travelling at high speed. That is why the opposing lanes on motorway carriageways are separated by a central reservation and crash barriers. Protection is provided by metal guard rails or shaped concrete, or a combination of the two. It must also be provided temporarily when roadworks dictate the use of a contraflow. Using concrete to make roads safer has been the passion of DELTA BLOC International GmbH since 1995, and it is now a synonym for premium concrete barriers across Europe.

Besides its dominant position in the European market, DELTA-BLOC® also enjoys success worldwide with its precast and in-situ concrete safety barriers. “Over the past 20 years, we have expanded our activities to more than 30 countries around the world and in the last ten years have enjoyed annual growth of 30%,” says Managing Director Thomas Edl. “Our mission is to develop and create the best-performing range of concrete safety barriers in the world.”

What DELTABLOC® is exporting is its expertise and its systems. “Concrete can be made cheaply and easily virtually anywhere in the world,” says Mr. Edl. “What we offer is the technical and procedural know-how to create crash barriers that will conform to the relevant safety regulations. While concrete is cheap and plentiful, turning it into an effective safety barrier takes a great deal of prior research and development.”

DELTABLOC®’s safety barrier systems are a highly technical product. “The authorities responsible for highway infrastructure in every country only certify and authorize the use of barriers that best fulfil all of the necessary safety standards,” explains Mr. Edl. “Furthermore, these standards vary from one country to another. Our challenge is to create barriers that not only fulfil the safety parameters but that are also easy to produce and install.” One of the key measures of a crash barrier’s performance is its ability to withstand the impact of being hit by a 38-t lorry moving at high speed. This sets one of the key benchmarks to which DELTABLOC® designs its systems.

“Our systems are tested to ensure they will withstand impacts equivalent to or exceeding those in the benchmark,” says Mr. Edl. “Since 1995, we have carried out more
than 170 full-scale crash tests on our precast and in-situ concrete crash barriers.” Today, the range comprises flexible, semi-rigid and rigid options, providing the unyielding strength to prevent heavy goods vehicles breaking through to the opposite carriageway, along with the softness required to protect smaller vehicles from the forces generated by an impact. “As well as protecting traffic on the other carriageway, crash barriers are designed to dissipate and absorb some of the impact of the crash to reduce the chances of injury,” says Mr. Edl. “These are the goals of our safety barriers regardless of whether they are used in the middle or at the side of the road or on bridges.” With 30 international patents protecting its permanent and temporary solutions, DELTABLOC® is a proven leader in this sector.

In response to the need for temporary solutions for highway construction projects, DELTABLOC® also maintains a rental pool of over 300 km of precast concrete barriers: “Here, we offer a complete service from leasing and delivery to installation and removal using professional logistics for just-in-time delivery,” says Mr. Edl. Around 85% of DELTABLOC®’s turnover is generated abroad. Its crash barriers protect motorists on some of the busiest motorways in Europe, including the M6 and M25 in the UK and the A5 joining Vienna with the Czech Republic. The company cooperates with trusted partners in its overseas markets who provide DELTABLOC®’s service under licence and in accordance with its standards. “In emerging countries in particular, there are massive deficits regarding passive road safety infrastructure,” says Mr. Edl. “Motorway projects in places like South America, Africa and Asia will keep us busy for the foreseeable future. We will also have to address the implications of the move to driverless cars that is currently gathering pace. This will have consequences for road design as more self-driving cars take to the roads in the future.”

Hopefully, taking human drivers out of the equation will reduce the annual toll of deaths and injuries on the world’s highways. Until then, drivers will have to rely on luck and a thin ribbon of concrete.
Shopping when I think about it.