



Bochua

developed for sputtering targets, used to form thin coatings on glass and other materials.

Gradel's progress highlights the opportunities that can be generated by a strong commitment to investing in R&D and an ability to apply knowledge and expertise gained in one area to create further innovation in another. Its move into the neutron generator field may be comparatively recent, but it has already established a firm niche in the global sphere with strong sales and interest from North and South America, Korea, South Africa and the UAE as well as its traditional European markets. At the same time, it is looking to expand nuclear plant maintenance equipment sales into Russia, India and China. ♦

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INNOVATION BY DEMAND

In the course of only 40 years, one small, family-run electronics supplier has grown into a multi-platform, high technology provider of systems for the entire production process. From switchgears and mechanical engineering to renewable energy, intralogistics and complex automated systems, innovation is key for KÖHL, a company whose customer-centred strategy generates sales all over the world.



Our Luxembourg base has enabled us to expand our international business.

Now based in Wecker, Luxembourg, and with a staff of over 630, KÖHL has developed into a major international provider of products and logistical solutions in areas including energy, construction, tobacco, automation, workflow, packaging and warehouse management.

According to Wilfried Köhl, company founder and CEO, the expansion from the company's early roots has been driven by two principal factors. One is market awareness; listening to customers, spotting potential and adopting a highly responsive, innovative approach to steering the business forward. The other is a targeted investment strategy, focusing on people, ideas and technology. As Mr Köhl sums up, "the secret of our success has been our motivated, technically competent staff, our focus on key industries and the strong synergy between our business units."

With safety in mind

This approach yields positive results throughout KÖHL's business, particularly in the energy field, where it specialises in arc protection technology.

Arcing – a spontaneous electrical discharge – can be a particular problem in the manufacturing process, one that KÖHL has resolved by fitting its switching units with Arcon®, which generates a short circuit that stops the arc. The company's emphasis on safety and stability is a major plus factor for energy distributors, processing plants and building management companies of all sizes.

Rising energy prices worldwide are driving customer demand for cost-effective solutions, especially in the areas of damage prevention and power supply reliability. KÖHL's innovative answer is ModuCon, the only ISO-compliant low-voltage switchgear system to have passed stringent accidental arcing testing. These systems are fitted with a temperature-monitoring and communications device, TOR (Thermo Observation RFID), which prevents accidental damage to the unit. This device won KÖHL the Fedil – Business Federation Luxembourg Innovation Prize in 2012; as Mr Köhl says, "This is a prestigious award which places our innovative strength as a medium-sized company firmly in the public eye."

Tailor-made products

KÖHL's use of innovation and attention to detail apply equally to its made-to-order automation systems and complex intralogistical solutions. Before a client commits to an investment, the proposed solution is tested using material flow simulation. "If you know it costs about five times as much to acquire a new customer as to keep an existing one, you'll understand why we always offer more than the customer expects."

KÖHL is also expert in applying innovative solutions developed for one industry to other fields. "Our electrical, power and mechanical engineering areas interlink via our automation applications, creating seamless customer solutions," says Mr Köhl. The company is further committed to energy efficiency and sustainability and was one of the first companies to bring economical wind turbines to the market. Similar principles are applied in the provision of modular control centres for biogas plants, while KÖHL has also ventured into e-mobility with its e-charging station, and has included electric cars in its own fleet.

KÖHL moved its HQ to Luxembourg because of its central location, neutrality, easy access to the Benelux markets and high number of skilled foreign workers. The company tells *FOCUS*: "Our Luxembourg base has enabled us to expand our international business. Its performance has been exactly in line with our business ethos – professional, customer-focused and very quick to respond to the market." ♦



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