

Era of opportunity for IS machine specialist

GPS Glasproduktions-Service has recently strengthened its position as a leading supplier of IS machines and components by appointing Rolf Themann as General Manager. Mr Themann spoke exclusively to *Glass Worldwide* about the opportunity to take the company to the next level.



Rolf Themann, recently appointed General Manager of GPS.



Klaus Rudolph, Executive Chairman of GPS.



GPS plans to strengthen its position as a leading supplier of IS machines and components.

For more than 90 years, GPS Glasproduktions-Service has been developing and manufacturing machines and installations for producing glass containers. Based in Essen, Germany, the GPS team of 85 technicians, engineers, specialists and consultants was joined recently by Rolf Themann, a well-known figure in the glass container industry.

Having been active in the sector for 11 years, Mr Themann arrived at GPS with a strong reputation for being an innovator in glass container production. "My extensive experience means I have a deep understanding of container glass, especially in design, innovation and R&D of IS machines, feeders, conveyors, lehrs and stackers" comments the GPS General Manager. "Many existing and potential customers of GPS know that I have been a driving force in this area for many years and recognise what I can offer in terms of expertise and knowhow."

With a relaunch at the start of 2014 that Klaus Rudolph, Executive Chairman of GPS said "set a clear signal for an innovative culture", Rolf Themann has joined a company that is already renowned as a strong partner for IS machine solutions,

spare parts and services. "Already, I am really impressed with the people here, especially their flexibility and expertise" Mr Themann enthuses. "There are many members of the team that have worked here for 20, 30 or 40 years; they really are experts that show great attention to detail and precision. Combined with new levels of innovation, we can offer an extremely interesting package that will foster growth and new market opportunities."

The company's close co-operation with Saint-Gobain Oberland AG in Germany and the worldwide Verallia group helped attract Rolf Themann to GPS. "Access to the Verallia plants provides the chance for R&D and production to be very closely linked. We have excellent opportunities to get quick, reliable and detailed feedback from Verallia plants. It's a perfect situation to further improve existing products and install knowhow into new products. I am very keen to bring new ideas to GPS; we have very good IS machines but the trend towards servo mechanisms provides us with an excellent opportunity to launch innovative new products. In the near future, improvements to our portfolio will be very visible in the market."

While acknowledging the importance to GPS of its work with Verallia, Rolf Themann sees many possibilities to expand the customer base outside the group, which already includes installations in Asia, Europe and South America. "The clear focus is to increase our stake in other plants worldwide, while maintaining our important base



Rolf Themann (right) with sales colleague Sandy Howells.

of work in Verallia plants. There is a great opportunity for GPS to be considered as a partner to more and more plants outside the Verallia group by being even more efficient, customer-focused and innovative. We are well-prepared and ready to go to the next level."

CONSULTANCY BUSINESS

Having already left his previous position as Technical Director and Executive Director of a medium-size company known for innovations in this sector, Rolf Themann launched the T&T (Themann and Technologies) company in Turnov, Czech Republic in November 2014 as a specialist R&D, project management and consultancy business, dedicated to the glass container industry. With T&T expected to boast a team of 10 industry experts by the end of 2015, Mr Themann will continue in his role as General Manager, in addition to his new responsibilities at GPS. "Having been responsible for many years for the development of IS machines in terms of ergonomics, design and introducing state-of-the-art technology, I founded T&T to continue to offer my support in engineering in this sector. Many glass plants do not have their own R&D resources to implement improvements and modifications themselves. T&T can assist them with solutions that are 100% dedicated to the glass container sector."

Although not ruling out co-operation between T&T and other IS machine suppliers on a confidential project-by-project basis, Rolf Themann explains that there is no conflict of interest with his joint roles and that GPS will benefit from the offerings of T&T. "Certainly there will be co-operation between T&T and GPS with support in engineering, for example. Although it has great expertise, GPS has a small R&D team that has previously outsourced engineering projects to companies that are not necessarily experts in glass. So my role with T&T will be very beneficial to GPS and all parties see the benefits of working together."

EXPERTISE

Rolf Themann states that the high level of competence and reliability in the GPS organisation will allow him to focus on R&D and sales – two areas of the business that he feels are intrinsically linked. "I became competent in sales because I have the technical advantage of understanding the products and the customers' needs" he explains. "I believe in longstanding partnerships with customers and have built many relationships based on confidence that bear fruit in the short, medium and long terms." To this end, Mr Themann will work closely with the GPS sales team, which includes longstanding and well-known members such as Sandy Howells.

"We plan to reorganise to best utilise the extensive skills of our team, so that we are more available to our customers. In addition to developing our portfolio, we will be offering even better service and support and

will further improve communication with customers, so they are completely aware of our solutions and knowhow" Rolf Themann concludes. ■

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