



STRONG TIES

BRUGG's CEO doesn't only make sure his company manufactures the world's strongest cables, he's also busy building lasting relationships with customers and suppliers.

Dr. Stephan Wartmann

CEO @ BRUGG

While it's no longer fashionable to work one's way up through a company, this "old school" career approach certainly pays dividends, particularly when it comes to specialised knowledge and niche sector experience.

After 22 years with infrastructure pioneer BRUGG, CEO Dr. Stephan Wartmann has these attributes in spades, plus a unique outlook that comes from having spent a career developing within an international business.

Stephan says: "I began working for BRUGG in the US, followed by two years in Japan where I built a new factory and established a Japanese

market. After several years between the US and Japan I returned to the company HQ in Switzerland. It was a challenge to be part of an international group as a young engineer, but I was moving around and experiencing different cultures, areas, and business segments, so it was a great learning adventure."

Sector giant

First founded as a cable manufacturer in 1896, BRUGG has since diversified and now makes loading cables for e-mobility, special cables for wind power, and process control solutions for water, power, and gas supply. The company also produces pipe systems for district →



Going deep: BRUGG's products keep workers safe

heating and liquid gas applications, and ropes for aerial ropeways, structures, and elevators, not to mention protection netting solutions against natural hazards.

Active in four business sectors over 22 production sites with 16 sales segments and some 1,600 employees, BRUGG is a giant in its sector. “We see ourselves as a global niche player with a very strong market position,” continues Stephan. “In our niches we are number one, sometimes number two, rarely number three. We have production sites in Australia and Chile and started producing in Africa this year. There are two factories in China, three in the US, and

several all over Europe – we operate globally and manufacture close to our customers – something that certainly marks us out from the competition. Manufacturing competence is of the utmost importance, and as a niche player with a high level of quality and specialised production knowledge, we also engineer and build some of our own machinery.”

Lofty heights

BRUGG products are manufactured to the most advanced technical and quality standards, appearing in iconic builds and events; its elevator ropes feature in the highest building

in the world, Dubai’s Burj Khalifa, as well in the Pearl Tower Shanghai. Its rope structures include the famous Maracanã Stadium in Rio de Janeiro and the new Raiders Stadium in Las Vegas.

“They are something of a BRUGG speciality,” confirms Stephan, “but at GEOBRUGG (subsidiary) we also make strong meshes and high-performance netting solutions used for mining and rockfall/avalanche protection, as well as visitor protection at racetracks. We’ve produced these security fences for Formula 1 in Vietnam, Austin in the US, Mexico City’s Autódromo Hermanos Rodríguez, Circuit →



de Spa in Belgium, Red Bull Ring in Austria...in fact, most new race tracks use our product.”

Another BRUGG difference is the company’s belief that service is not just selling a solution or a product. “We think it starts much earlier with problem analysis and ends in the complete cycle of client support, including installation, after sales service and maintenance,” says Stephan. “We always look for sustainable long-term solutions for our clients and provide the whole package if needed – we are here to help and we support continuously.”

Ideas factory

Family-owned, debt-free, and totally independent with a turnover of around \$500 million, BRUGG is well-placed for innovating into the future. The company is looking to grow by at least 30% in the next few, which means an extra turnover of \$150 million.

“Most of our growth comes from open innovation,” says Stephan. “For us, this translates into focusing on energy transitioning, sustainability, and security and includes suppliers, clients, and partners. Innovation needs to be managed, and as CEO this is one area on which I’m focussing my time.”

While good ideas have never been in short supply at BRUGG, Stephan admits that the company has, in the past, sometimes “lacked process competence and strategic focus,” something that has completely changed under his management: “Competence in innovation is essentially project management, I’m pleased to say we are now very strong in this area. Something we’ve learned is that you cannot do everything by yourself as a company. We see ourselves as the nucleus in our core markets and we work with good partners; we innovate and constantly improve together, we provide better projects and better solutions before rolling them out on our global distribution chan-

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Building bridges: BRUGG's cables are trusted worldwide

nels, either directly through our subsidiaries or through our partner organisations.”

Strong relationships across the board are key at BRUGG, where even customers are viewed as partners. However, these values that were put to the test during the recent pandemic.

“In times of crisis, you can see where you stand for others and who will stand up for you,” remarks Stephan. “With the support of our suppliers, we have managed to continue production through the pandemic. Naturally, we experienced a few shortages in April, especially on the logistics side, but ultimately we escaped unscathed thanks to our long-term relationships.”

The notion of an organisation being greater than the sum of its parts is clearly important to Stephan. As he puts it: “We live in a volatile, complex, uncertain, and ambiguous world.


One can only be as good as the entire team, one man alone is nothing – and a happy team spirit takes a company a long way.”

As such, empowering employees is a task taken very seriously at BRUGG. A modern CEO should be a “Chief Enabling Officer.”

“There has been an ongoing mindset shift from power to empowerment over the past few

years here,” adds Stephan. “We’ve gone from telling people what they have to do to now encouraging them to ask questions. It’s so refreshing to see both young and old talent positively explode and bring in some fresh energy. There is so much power to be found within.”

Perhaps what Stephan is most passionate about is the benefit of diversity within an organisation; he’s proud that a refreshing mix of gender, race, age, religion, and culture flourish at BRUGG, something “many clients love to see too.”

He says: “Diversity for us is a positive mixture between young talent that cannot sit still and experienced engineers. It means all races working together, it’s about a mixture of different cultures – that’s what the future of business looks like.” 

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