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# “We can now act in an even more structured way and with strong backing!”

**OLBRICH GmbH has recently become part of Matthews International Corporation. The C2 team visited the company on-site at its headquarters in Bocholt, Germany, to learn more about the reorganisation. Interview partners: managing director Esa-Matti Aalto and sales director Josef Döing**

**C2: Mr Aalto, Mr Döing, in summer we received the news that Borgers Group had sold its mechanical engineering division to Matthews International ...**

**Esa-Matti Aalto:** We started the actual process for the sale of the group of companies at the beginning of the year and it has now been completed with great success – and for us also with great relief. As a result of its restructuring, Borgers Group is in the hands of

several syndicate banks and wants to concentrate on the automotive sector in the future. As mechanical engineering division, there were no longer any long-term prospects for us in this automotive-driven environment. In the past nine months we have been in contact with many companies that were very interested in us.

With Matthews and the Saueressig Group we have now found a very strong partner – a group that speaks our language and shares our mentality!



New Energies are a core segment in Olbrich's future activities under the umbrella of Matthews International



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Saueressig understands mechanical engineering and comes from the same region as the Olbrich parent company. There are just 30km between Bocholt and Vreden, which is a huge asset when merging companies.

**C2: What was the relationship between Olbrich and Saueressig like before the merger?**

**Josef Döing:** In fact, we already knew each other very well: Saueressig and its subsidiaries have traditionally supplied the (process) rollers that were installed in our plants. This means that we are building on decades of business relations here.

Moreover, Saueressig had also only competed with us to a very limited extent. Besides our core competence in coating and drying technology, we also offer various calendaring and embossing processes; this is probably the only direct overlap with the Saueressig portfolio.

**E.-M. Aalto:** I would like to add that we have already served joint customers in the recent

past. In these projects for New Energies, we are “following one another” in the process chain, so fantastic synergies have been created here.

An important reason for the Matthews Group to choose OLBRICH is certainly our activities in the battery and fuel cell segment. We can offer technologies there that are not yet available anywhere else on the market – real unique selling points for our group of companies!

On the one hand, we – Saueressig and Olbrich – are Münsterlanders, on the other hand, we now work in an international group that has made about 76 acquisitions in the last 15 years. We experience a highly professional environment here in which we can now act in an even more structured way and with strong backing. Our locations in Hamburg, Switzerland, the USA and China are also being professionally integrated and are part of the overall package in the merger.

**C2: Olbrich Group has only recently strengthened itself with the addition of Polytype Converting. To what extent will**

**the structures established in the process now also be retained under the Matthews umbrella?**

**J. Döing:** We have common interests – and we will join forces. This also means that we will continue to pursue our previous activities. We will not be completely exiting business areas anywhere, but we are currently developing a new strategy according to which we will realign ourselves accordingly. Especially in the area of new energies – batteries, fuel cells – there will be intensive cooperation, with the organisational changes that this will certainly entail. This new strategy will clearly benefit our customers and should also increase our internal efficiency.

**E.-M. Aalto:** With this new strategy, which will be defined in the first 30 days, we will continue our business as before, but change the focus. It is already apparent that this focus will be on new energies. In our current core business, we will focus on those markets that have been the strongest in the past. With this determination, we will create the free capacities for the new energies that we currently need.



Friendly welcome in Bocholt: Helena Schwers (first on the left), Esa-Matti Aalto (second from right) and Josef Döing (first on the right) with Nina Pirchmoser and Martin Hirschmann from the C2 team

**J. Döing:** The integration of Olbrich into the Matthews Group coincides with major changes in the industrial landscape and geographical markets: Olbrich has traditionally been very strong in Eastern Europe; we realise that major difficulties are to be expected there for the foreseeable future. Of course, we continue to support our customers who are active there – sometimes also Western European investors who are involved in Eastern Europe, but obviously massive difficulties are to be expected there, over which we have only very limited influence.

**C2: So can we call it a reorientation towards Western Europe and the USA?**

**J. Döing:** We are global and remain so. We would never say that we only want to focus on one hemisphere. We definitely want to seize this opportunity that the energy transition brings with it. The relevant investors are often found in Europe and the United States. Often the Asian markets are well stocked with simpler machines. With the new developments

for more complex products, on the other hand, we are highly involved!

**E.-M. Aalto:** We continue to see a good order situation in Asia in recent years. It is still relatively difficult to go to China at the moment – even though the situation is slowly improving now. Especially from China, we have strong demand in New Energies.

In view of the new energy legislation in the USA, we expect to build up a correspondingly large footprint for our new energies there. Latin America is also doing very well for us. Overall, the focus has shifted from Eastern Europe to America and Asia.

**C2: In Germany, e-mobility is only now really taking off ...**

**J. Döing:** Here we see an emancipation from East Asian supply chains, which are increasingly being questioned. People want to become independent: This applies to all OEMs, but also to all suppliers for electromobility in particular. People are trying to create something of their

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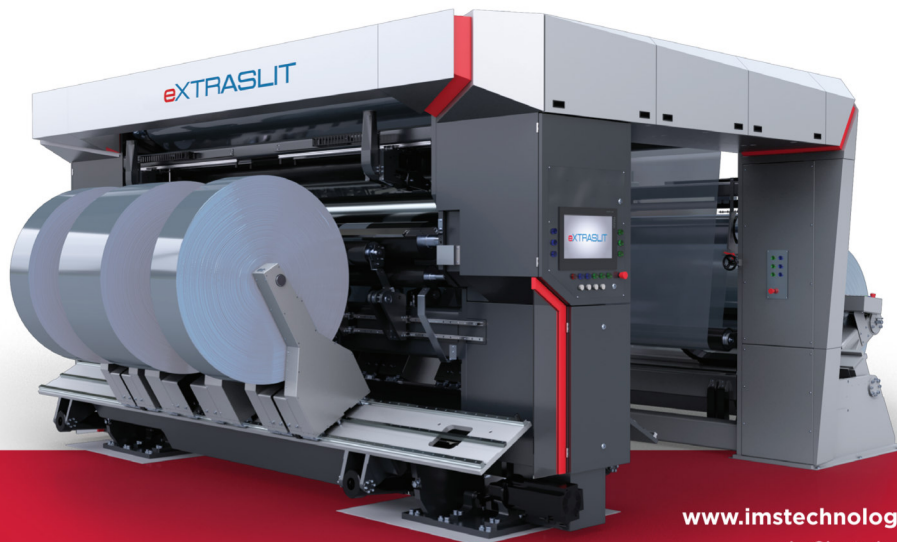
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own – an important time for us to be at the forefront.

**C2: Are New Energies also a new segment for Matthews?**

**J. Döing:** Basically yes, but they have a market leadership in calendaring technologies for certain lithium-ion batteries. This is also the starting point where we are working together.

**E.-M. Aalto:** New scopes and markets are opening up for all parties involved. We are expanding our portfolio and at the same time boosting our service business. Thanks to the locations Matthews and Saueressig have around the world, we can now serve our customers much better and are closer to them. We have always been close to our customers, but the much larger network is an important building block in our further development.

**C2: You are certainly intensifying the cooperation of the existing teams in the sub-companies now?**

**E.-M. Aalto:** Yes, we have already started with that. We have formed teams in all parts of the group that are already actively working on integration.

**J. Döing:** In concrete terms, we are already supporting each other in processing the orders we each have. Especially when it comes to resources that are needed immediately. Here we can already back each other up.

**E.-M. Aalto:** Keyword shortage of skilled workers: we can now pool our resources better and align them for the benefit of the customer.

**C2: You have obviously already progressed quite a bit in terms of service. How are things proceeding in the important area of R&D and engineering?**

**J. Döing:** In battery production we are dealing with processes that follow each other sequentially. We at Olbrich deal with the battery topic in a preliminary stage of the product before Matthews or Saueressig process the product further. Of course there is cooperation here, but the plants still function separately from each other. It is not a collaborative process at the moment, but we have a high level of experience that can be brought into the calendaring process.

**E.-M. Aalto:** We already see a number of synergies that we will continue to develop over time. In the field of fuel cells, we are uniquely positioned: we can already map the entire process chain. Here, too, we are very optimistic about the future!

**C2: What topics are in the foreground for you at the upcoming K 2022?**

**J. Döing:** A highly topical subject will be the changeover of the heating of our plants from gas to electric. Of course, you won't be able to run an Olbrich or Polytype plant on a battery – with the megawatt outputs that are

simply required for heating large industrial plants.

**E.-M. Aalto:** An important message: we will remain just as close to our traditional core markets and customers. We will remain a reliable partner for the more than 40 industries we serve. Even in the currently difficult market of Eastern Europe, we guarantee our customers operational reliability and service for their capital goods – as it is within our power to do.


**C2: Are you currently being approached by customers from Germany and Western Europe who are concerned about the security of gas supply?**

**J. Döing:** There is talk about it, but because of the material bottlenecks, especially with the electronic components, no one actually assumes that anything can be changed before winter.

**E.-M. Aalto:** We are in close exchange – the issues are obvious. We have worked out concepts in which there will be a concrete switch from gas to electric. We will also offer hybrid solutions, where you can work with biogas, for example. The topic of energy efficiency is also moving further into the foreground – for example through solutions based on artificial intelligence and smart automation. We are currently dealing with such topics on a daily basis – they are one of our most important tasks across all sectors. ■

*Image sources: Olbrich GmbH*

Third generation owners, the Petty family, with their Martin MCBWW automatic splicing unwind.



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