



Step by step

by Waldemar Schmitke

March 19, 2015 - We met: Christian Wagner, Managing Director

In Atlanta, GA, we met the new Managing Director and member of the Managing Board of MHT Mold & Hotrunner Technology AG (MHT from Germany) Christian Wagner.



F.I.t.r.: Christian Wagner, CEO MHT USA, Waldemar Schmitke, PETplanet, in the assembly hall in front of a cold half of a 144-cavity preform mould

Since 1996, the date of its foundation, MHT AG Germany provides customers worldwide PET moulds, hotrunner parts and onsite service (export rate 80%). The company employs 150 people and has 4 subsidiaries in: Luxembourg, China, Brazil and the USA.

The American subsidiary, MHT USA, LLC, located in Peachtree City, focusses on the market in North and Central America including Mexico.

Established in 2006, this subsidiary employs 5 people responsible for Sales, Service, Assembly and Accounting, with annual sales of US\$ 5 to 6m. In 2012 the company recorded sales of US\$10m, following a major order made up of a number of cold mould halves for 192-cavity preform moulds. A new sales manager, Rick Voges, joined the team recently. Here in the USA, the firm is structured to incorporate Assembly, Refurbishments, Sales and After Sales and

Start-up of 2-stage PET preform moulds. In addition, on-site there are 6 assembly bays with an assembly capacity of 12 complete moulds per year. 50% of the orders are made up of refurbishments and the other 50% of new cold mould halves and complete moulds, including hotrunners. The product-specific mould cavities and the ejector mechanism together with the slide bars are accommodated in the cold half of the mould. The hot side of the mould is where the hot runner with the nozzle tips and shut-off needle are to be found.

“Our philosophy in doing things this way,” said Christian Wagner, “is to manufacture all the so-called “know-how” parts in Germany at MHT and ship them to the USA.” Know-how parts are, e.g., all mould cavity inserts as well as guide bars with glide parts. Bought-in parts such as mould plates, suspensions, shut-off needles and nozzle tips, as well as the hot runner (engineering by MHT) are also manufactured in the USA on a case by case basis. In addition, we have devised a supplier structure for ourselves here. But as the US dollar is currently very strong against the Euro, the majority of parts come, for reasons of cost actually, from MHT Germany or are ordered directly from one of our European suppliers.”

The hot runner overhaul work consists, as a rule of an overhaul of the hot runner, hot cleaning of the mould, replacement of parts subject to wear and tear (O-rings, shut-off needles, nozzle tips and nozzle tip

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insulation), testing the heating system and thermal sensors. Afterwards the overhauled mould is re-commissioned at the customer's premises.

One section of the mould not only undergoes an overhaul but also improvements in terms of its performance, especially in the area of cooling (neck rings and gate insert) e.g. with the patented MHTpSTACK Components Technology or today's W-Cooling Standard Technology for neck ring cooling.

New mould halves generally come ready assembled from the parent company in Germany and are then commissioned at the customer's premises. According to Christian Wagner, there is also the option to ship only the know-how parts whilst all other parts are manufactured by local firms. Subsequent finishing off work is carried out here in Peachtree City, and commissioning takes place at the customer's premises.

Christian Wagner continued: "For the unloading system we offer a take-off plate (three or four step) for all popular makes of PET machines together with an MHT coolMax patented air cooling system.

Should we encounter personnel bottlenecks here in the USA, technicians from the parent company are constantly at the ready. Mould deliveries via preform system suppliers are handled via the parent company even if the customer is located here in this region. In such cases, customer support starts with the installation and commissioning on site."

The principal markets in the region are the USA and Mexico with 96-, 144- and 192-cavity moulds and a few 72-cavity broad neck designs. There are currently not too many smaller cavity mould sizes in the market. "Long term," says Christian Wagner, "the aim is definitely

to maintain premises in the USA since proximity to the customer is a crucial factor in obtaining a permanent foothold in North and Central America. In addition, we are looking to expand local manufacturing, independently of the dollar rate."

A further step is to strengthen the sales function through a network of agencies. One agent has already been signed up for Mexico, and talks are being held with other companies

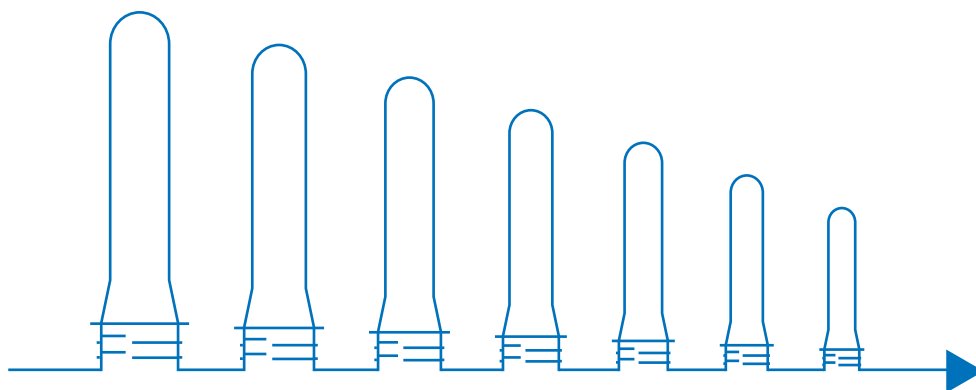
and persons. "In this way," Christian Wagner concluded, "we plan to build up the market for MHT here step by step."

We extend our thanks for the interview, wish our hosts every success and, following a visit to the assembly hall, continue on our way to our next destination.

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