

CLIMATE CONTROLLER

After spending 29 years with the world's leading air conditioning company, Daikin, this year Martin Krutz assumed the role of CEO at that company's latest acquisition, AHT, a commercial refrigeration specialist. He aims to continue Daikin's vision of championing energy efficient technologies whilst reducing food waste around the globe.

MARTIN KRUTZ

CEO of AHT Cooling Systems

Based in Osaka, Japan, Daikin is a global leader in climate technology with over 75,000 employees based in more than 150 countries.

Martin Krutz has spent his working life at the company which, for a Japanese multinational corporation, is not unusual. Loyalty and long-term employment are part of Japanese philosophy, and Martin certainly subscribes to this point of view.

"I've grown up in a safe environment and I've always felt comfortable being close to employees, staff and customers – I like to be with people," he says.

Having spent nearly 30 years at Daikin, Martin has taken on a number of executive roles throughout the company. From MD in Poland, MD in Central Europe and MD in the UK, Martin's appointments have taken him and his

family all over Europe. However, as much as he has enjoyed the journey, he admits it has been harder for others than for him.

"I love meeting new people from different countries and cultures and engaging in their societies but, to be honest, when you move with your family, it can prove to be an emotional journey – especially for those close to you. My wife is the hero in this story, not me!"

Finally, and no doubt with great relief to his wife and children, Martin has returned home to Austria where, from March 1st this year, he has been the CEO of AHT.

AHT was acquired by Daikin in late 2018, in order to strengthen the company's commercial position in the refrigeration market. With a turnover of around 500 million euros, AHT, based in Styria, is the world's leading manufacturer of plug-in commercial refrigera- →





tion and freezing systems, supplying stores for over 35 years. This was an opportunity Martin admitted he could not turn down.

Dreams

“For me, it’s not so important where I am but who I am with. If my family is happy and I’m surrounded by friendly, motivated people – as we have in AHT, then I can work anywhere. Of course, as an Austrian myself, I am also proud that such a small country, with under nine million people, has produced such a competent and worthwhile company.”

Having only been in the role a few months, Martin admits to still being in the learning phase. This is obviously a significant departure from his other appointments at Daikin, but that hasn’t dampened his enthusiasm in the least,

and he has a host of visions and ideas ready to be put into action.

“I always have a dream that has been the same in all my positions. I want to develop AHT to become the friendliest and most professional, commercial, refrigeration company in this industry. With Daikin as the leading manufacturer of air conditioning systems and AHT as the leader in plug-in commercial refrigeration units, I want to combine the core competence of both companies. Then, ultimately, all Daikin refrigeration group companies will be able to provide all their customers with a complete air conditioning, refrigeration, heating and ventilation service, direct from one source.”

This may sound like a huge undertaking, but Daikin has all the capabilities in place and has been building to this scenario for some time, having been purchasing various companies to add to its portfolio, such as the Italian refrigeration company Zanotti, in 2016. The truth is that Daikin now boasts an enviable global presence with production bases in over 100 countries and an annual turnover of over 21 billion EUR (2018).

The refrigeration business has not always enjoyed a sterling reputation when it comes to the environment, but AHT has changed all that. Martin is adamant AHT will continue on this course of providing top quality products with the lowest impact on the world’s environment, and he speaks passionately about his company’s achievements in this area.

“AHT was the first company to introduce a completely green refrigerant which is now used in almost all our products (R290 Propane). It is a completely natural hydrocarbonate refrigerant, with a global warming potential of only 3.3 and an ozone depletion potential of zero. Some of our competitors still use refrigerants with a high global warming potential (GWP). With AHT offering a complete cooling service, we aim to ensure our customers guarantee their cold chain, which is so important in today’s food industry. The amount of food waste around the world is vast and desperately needs to be brought under control. We plan to implement remote monitoring and by doing this, via the internet of things, our customers will be able to control and monitor the performance of their equipment, which will give them an early warning should anything go wrong.”

AHT has made many other breakthroughs in



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the refrigeration industry as it was also the first company to introduce the full plug-in solution. This is a process where a specifically designed unit can be delivered, unpacked and placed in the store and simply plugged-in like a regular appliance. This has proved particularly useful for stores that want to change their layout or design more regularly. However, for all their innovations, it is AHT’s employees that Martin truly believes ensure the company stands out from the crowd.

“Our DNA is based on people-centred management (PCM). We have a strong belief in the natural goodness of people and are very lucky to have a skilled, loyal, motivated workforce who will go the extra mile. I always say that, if you have these kinds of people around you, you can do anything you put your mind to. We have

1600 employees worldwide at AHT and no one person in the company is more or less important, including myself. I recently learned, during my travels out to the factories, that we have blue-collar workers who have been with the company for over 30 years – that is incredible, and I’m very proud of that.”

As expected, AHT treats its suppliers with the same care that they treat both their customers and employees. With more than 800 suppliers, this is a considerable undertaking, and even though just 20 suppliers account for around 50% of their total spend, Martin believes each one is just as important as the other.

Trust

“Suppliers are part of a company’s success, and they should feel a member of the Daikin/AHT family. In Daikin, it is very common to not only have inter-company and customer events, but we also have supplier events and conferences. I don’t see these relationships as the standard supplier and customer relations. I see these kinds of interactions as a partnership that is based on professionalism, dynamism, friendship, experience and, above all, trust.”

These relationships include involving partners and suppliers in the research and design of new products, which Martin believes is the only way to keep pushing and developing new ideas.

“Two of our biggest suppliers are makers of compressors and glass, and these are essential to us. Visibility of products is an important feature for our customers, and this requires the use of more glass elements than ever before on our equipment. This has become a huge challenge for us, because glass is not an ideal temperature isolator. So, looking forward, we are working very closely with our partners on many new developments, as this is something we will solve together, as a team.”

Few would doubt Martin and the AHT team’s ability to find suitable solutions to this, and any other problems they may face. Martin is a man who is constantly looking to the future and how he can make it better. Not just for his staff, his customers, and his partners but everyone. He holds a strong belief in doing the right thing and being loyal to his friends, as well as to his environment. Martin’s stellar reputation at Daikin has already been confirmed, but it is his efforts as a champion of people and the environment that will, ultimately, prove his true legacy. ➔

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