

ON THE RIGHT TRACK

Over the last 70 years the privately owned Rhomberg Sersa Rail Group – based in both Austria and Switzerland – has become known for delivering excellence in rail track technology, project management, and construction services.

THOMAS BACHHOFNER / CEO Rhomberg Sersa

In August, 2018 Rhomberg Sersa appointed a new CEO – Thomas Bachhofner – who previously spent 20 years at Austrian plant engineering group Andritz. He successfully boosted his former company's profits and made it more consumer-focused, so he was a natural fit: "I was attracted to the fact that Rhomberg Sersa is privately-owned and looking for long-term success with continuous growth and a high reinvestment rate of its own profits," Thomas says. "My international experience over the last three decades is really helping me in my role as CEO."

The company's history stretches back to 1886, when master builder Cornelius Rhomb-

erg established a construction company in Bregenz, Austria, which was successfully continued by Walter and Walter-Heinz Rhomberg. Today, the Rhomberg Group is led by fourth-generation master builder Hubert Rhomberg and enjoys a global presence in the railway industry. SERSA – which stands for "Soudage électrique des rails S.A." – was formed in 1948 and purchased by Arnold Schnyder in 1979. From the point the management was taken over by his son Konrad Schnyder in 1986, SERSA developed into the internationally active and highly respected railway specialist it is today.

As a full railway engineering service pro- ➔





Rhomberg Sersa's portfolio covers track construction and the overhaul of railway tunnels

vider, Rhomberg Sersa offers a complete range of services in railway construction, infrastructure, and machinery for new and existing projects. Its portfolio covers track construction, renewal, and maintenance, and the overhaul of railway tunnels through to electromechanical and technical infrastructure. Rhomberg Sersa also offers innovative products such as slab track construction systems and the SLS Sersa Second Life System®.

The company focuses on customer-oriented and tailor-made solutions for main line railways, public transportation, and industrial (private) railways, acting as a prime and general contractor in Austria, Switzerland, Germany, Canada, the UK, Ireland, and Australia.

The company employs around 2,200 members of staff. During the 2018/19 business year, it achieved a turnover of half a billion euros in seven countries on three continents.

Thomas explains that during his budding

tenure at Rhomberg Sersa, the group has already started to concentrate on three to five aspects in each company in search of excellence.

As a driven and passionate leader, he is constantly trying to find solutions, improve quality, and reduce costs: "In five to seven years we want to double our volume through both or-

“ Our employees are the most important part of the organisation. They are even more important than our customers, who we treat like royalty “

ganic and inorganic growth – although organic is preferable. We're also looking to diversify and grow our portfolio.”

One of the biggest challenges Rhomberg Sersa faces is hiring qualified people with the right attributes in the markets in which the company operates. Thomas says that building a reliable, dynamic workforce is no easy task, especially as his company plans to increase it by 60%. Add this to the fact that rail track construction, designing and planning track networks, maintenance solutions, and implementing complex railway projects require a high level of specialisation, and Rhomberg Sersa's task of hiring and developing the right people becomes even harder.

Trusted workforce

Finding skilled people to employ in science, technology, engineering, and maths (STEM) is not only difficult in Austria and Switzer- →



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land. For example, the UK is currently suffering a STEM workforce dearth, with a current shortfall of 173,000 workers, resulting in 89% of businesses struggling to recruit. This shortage of qualified workers may be alarming but Thomas is confident that the faith Rhomberg Sersa puts in its employees will always help the company to attract the right people. "Our employees are the most important part of the organisation," he says. "They are even more important than our customers, who we treat like royalty."

The full works

Aside from investing in human resources, Rhomberg Sersa is also pumping a lot of money into research – up to €30 million to be more precise. "Innovation is vital if we are to continue developing brilliant technology, including machinery, so we can benefit our customers, generate profits, and fuel progress," Thomas says. This investment in research and development is paying off – the company's patented SLS Sersa Second Life System® can extend the

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service life of rail track by up to a decade.

"Something else that sets us apart is the fact that we are one of the only players in the industry that has a complete portfolio, from planning and logistics capabilities, all the way to project execution and building capacity,"

Thomas says. "There is no company in our market with the same complete competence that we have in the rail industry."

The vital relationships the group has forged and developed with its suppliers are fundamental to their combined success. Such cooperation has spurred big advancements in machinery, technology, materials, and the overall quality of railways. "What we're doing now is starting to utilise the size of our international group, which will help us sell knowledge from our portfolio and specialised equipment," Thomas adds. "One of the direct results of having strategic supply chain relationships in place is that we can absorb new technology and improve. The benefit is that we acquire and develop state-of-the-art technology."

The group plans for the long-term and views railways from the point of view of its customers. It's dedicated to providing excellence and cost-efficiency, and always applies a holistic approach to its tasks. Rhomberg Sersa builds the future. [➔](#)

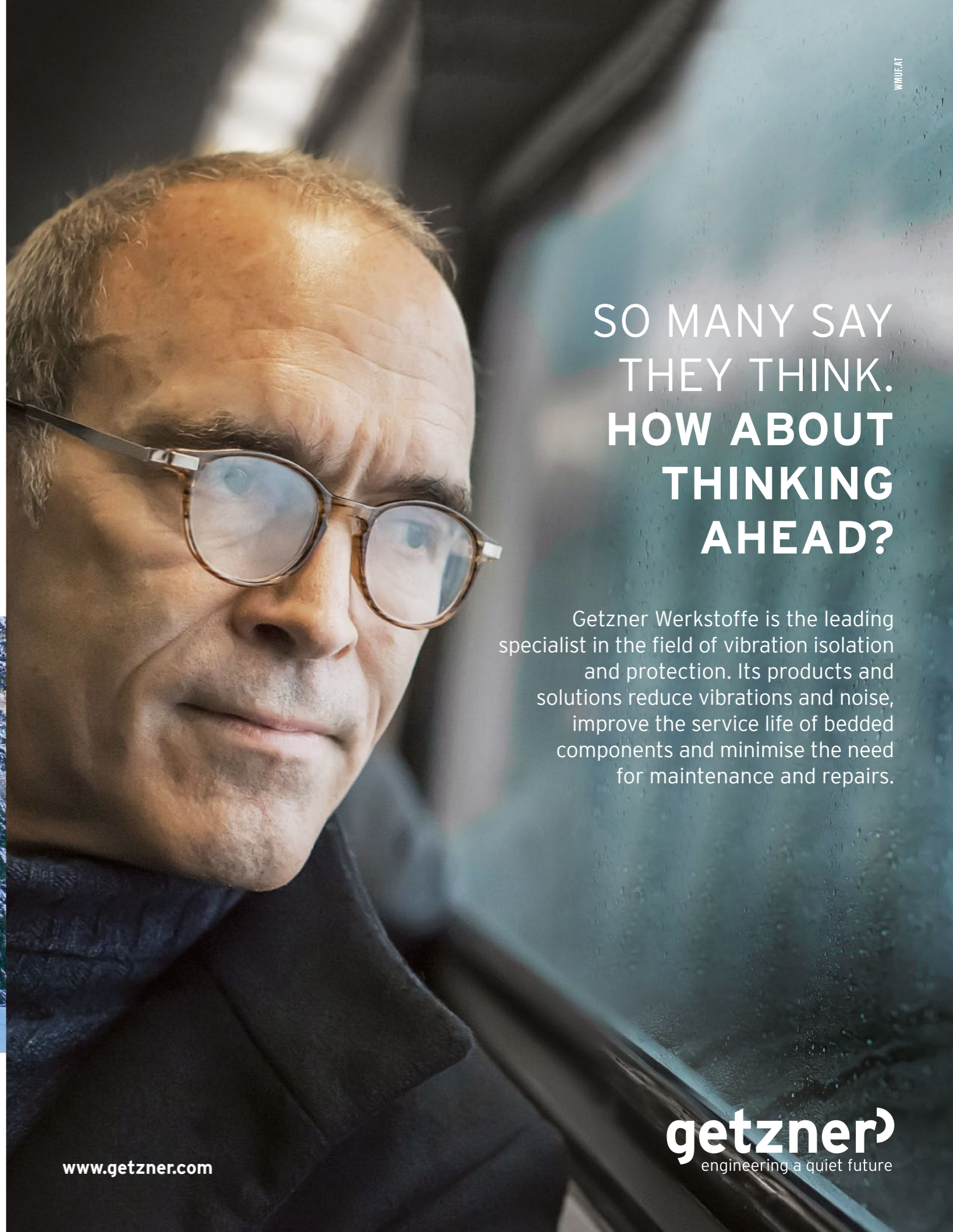


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