

# No Limits

PRINOTH makes snow groomers, tracked vehicles, and vegetation management machines – all heavy duty and fully trusted. President Klaus Tonhäuser discusses sustainable success in a rapidly changing marketplace.

**KLAUS TONHÄUSER** / CEO @ PRINOTH



When ex-racing driver Ernst Prinoth opened a garage in Italy's mountainous province of South Tyrol in 1951, he wanted to transfer his knowledge of formula one racing to the pistes. His vision: to carve ski slopes as smooth as F1 race tracks.

In 1962 Ernst developed the first snow groomer prototype and two years later his innovative design was being mass produced. Driven by Ernst's ambition, over the next few decades PRINOTH catapulted into pole position as the world's technology leader in snow grooming manufacturing.

In 2009 the company branched out into other tracked machines and started making crawler carriers in Canada. Designed to reach challenging places, inaccessible to conventional heavy equipment, PRINOTH once again showed its expertise in this sector.

A few years later in 2011, the organisation added vegetation management machinery to its repertoire, which largely revolves around mulching.

After 60 years, Klaus was appointed PRINOTH's president in June 2020 and continued expanding the organisation. In October this year, PRINOTH announced its acquisition of US-based company Jarraff Industries – a specialist in right-of-way maintenance vehicles – giving PRINOTH a solid base Stateside. Klaus, who was previously CEO of firefighting vehicle maker Rosenbauer Germany, has valuable experience in machinery designed for challenging situations.

At the time of Klaus appointment, the COVID pandemic was gaining momentum and three months into his tenure national lockdowns put the brakes on supply chains and future planning, not to mention the closure of businesses that used PRINOTH's machines. →



**PRINOTH: Right on track**

“It was a difficult time,” Klaus says, “but we took the approach of trying to paint our own picture of what the future would look like, because at that moment that was all we could do. Of course, and this is very important, we also had to be flexible.”

Maintaining communication across supply chains during the pandemic was one example of this flexibility, particularly what Klaus describes as “procurement management.” Using video-conferencing technologies, PRINOTH held ongoing meetings with all its major supply chain partners so that problems were solved collectively – in fact, the health crisis helped PRINOTH and its partners forge closer ties.

The CEO explains: “This is important for us. Our suppliers are not only suppliers. They are partners. We work together and we adapt together.”

Building such high-spec machinery to exacting requirements means those called upon to provide components or other services must be trusted. Take PRINOTH’s “PANTHER T16,” a

crawler carrier with a 15,195 kg payload capacity or the 640 HP, 26 tonne “RAPTOR 500” – these vehicles need to be ultra-safe and reliable. What’s more, the company’s snow grooming machines are used in the most challenging conditions from freezing temperatures to extremely steep inclines, so safety is paramount.

**Clean Motion**

“Our hardware is adapted to the environments in which it operates, this is a very important point,” says Klaus. “It is vital to us that we do not compromise on our specifications. Any of our key suppliers must demonstrate state of the art technology, quality, and the willingness to enter into a partnership with us. We do not look for simple buyer and seller arrangements.”

Over the decades, PRINOTH has evolved not only to meet the needs of the markets but to follow its own ambitions and vision. For example, central to the company is its Clean Motion philosophy which focuses on sustainability through low-consumption, low-emission

vehicles, balancing efficiency with maximum performance. As a result, PRINOTH is paving the way forward for sustainable skiing. In December 2020 the company launched prototypes of the world’s first hydrogen-powered snow groomer the “LEITWOLF h<sub>2</sub>MOTION” and the fully electric “HUSKY eMOTION” snow groomer.

**Low-emission to zero-emission**

“Sustainability is something we consider from all sides,” Klaus explains. “We have embedded the concerns throughout our manufacturing process, particularly in terms of energy consumption, but also resource conservation and waste reduction.”

These models have moved from low-emission to zero-emission by utilising hydrogen-based and electric technology, which outlines PRINOTH’s commitment to carbon-neutral winter sports.

This would seem a sensible approach in a world where clean energy makes not only environmental sense, but also financial sense. Indeed, this perspective has proved vindicated: following the company’s stellar work at four previous Olympic Games, the 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing will use PRINOTH snow groomers exclusively. The company will supply 50 of its latest generation vehicles to the games’ organisers, along with fleet management services and snow depth measuring equipment.

While the prestige of the Olympic connection is a boost, PRINOTH also intends to focus on the other branches of its business.

“We will continue to use the technology we have developed for snow grooming within different applications in agriculture, construction and forestry. There are many interesting possibilities. We have a hunger for innovation,” Klaus adds. “And we are not easily satisfied.”



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