

# "PERSONAL CONTACT IS IMPORTANT TO US"

## Interview with Joachim Gunkel, Beerbev

*Anyone who knows Joachim Gunkel will know that he was never one for subtle undertones and halfhearted compromises. Gunkel pursues goals he believes in with dogged tenacity and conviction. Since he left the Ziemann Group as Managing Director over two years ago, not a lot has been heard of him in the public arena. This will make it all the more interesting for our readers to hear what Joachim Gunkel has been up to for the past almost three years and what services he and his team have to offer the international brewing and beverage industry in the meantime. We met Joachim Gunkel for this exclusive interview in his hometown Heilbronn, Germany.*

### **BREWING AND BEVERAGE INDUSTRY INTERNATIONAL:**

*Mr Gunkel, since you left your last employer almost three years ago we have heard very little of you officially. What have you been doing in the meantime and what are you up to currently?*

**Joachim Gunkel:** It was a short break but nice, to be exact two weeks, at which point I received the first phone call ... By job is my hobby, a passion ... it's not something you give up easily. An idea grew, the inquiries I received proved that the idea could become something more, and so we created Beerbev – neutral engineering worldwide, innovative, and internationally available. We offer sustainable consultancy services ranging from feasibility studies, through detail

engineering to project realisation and continuous performance measurement. We have created new ideas and built up a new business segment with our concept.

**BBII:** *Are you offering your services worldwide or have you specialised in certain regions?*

**Gunkel:** We work all over the world but initially we were mainly receiving inquiries from Latin America and the USA. Our services are interesting to the large market leaders as well as small so-called 'rising stars,' for example in the area of craft brewing. We're in demand wherever expansion, the creation of synergies, and growth are on the table.

**BBII:** *How many are in your team at present?*

**Gunkel:** We have a team of more than 20 at the moment, all experts in their field with many years of experience. Our formula is creating highly efficient and committed teams of specialists and keeping administration costs to a minimum; this is the only way to give our customers value for money in the form of high quality added value. You only pay for our extensive know-how and not for some huge administrative apparatus. That's definitely an advantage in this industry. Our 'joint-teaming' approach also pays off here.

**BBII:** *What are the strengths of your team?*

**Gunkel:** We have a highly qualified, young team, which comes mainly from the brewery supply industry. This experience from 'the other side of the table' is very useful for our clients because we know and understand the way suppliers think and act and can give our clients valuable strategic advice for dealing with suppliers with regard to engineering, tendering, bid comparison, total-cost-of-ownership evaluation and project management. We know the industry and what really matters.

**BBII:** *Which qualifications and special knowledge do your team members have?*

**Gunkel:** Members of our team cover the whole spectrum of



*Joachim Gunkel (right) talked to Managing Director Wolfgang Burkart, Publishing house W. Sachon, about the strategies of Beerbev.*

end-to-end engineering. We have brewing and process engineers, architects, project managers, electrical engineers as well as software engineers with all the relevant process experience. This last point is very important for creating programmes, installing equipment, and later putting it into operation.

We have the best man for the job in Martin Friz, who takes care of this business segment extremely well. Our people have spent many years gathering experience all over the world working on projects of all kinds from craft breweries with 20-hl brewhouses to mega-breweries with an annual capacity of 20 million hl.

**BBII:** *Today, how do you deal with expanding an existing brewery project?*

**Gunkel:** First we have intensive talks with the client to get a detailed idea of what is needed, and what concerns and goals the client has – it's very important for us to fully understand the client's requirements because it's the only way to achieve optimum results. After this we look at the installed capacity of the brewery and, taking into account the different beer types and market shares, create a quite complex analysis of the various process facilities and the free installed capacity.

In this way numerous CAPEX costs can often be avoided just by optimising processes. One example I can name is the Grupo Modelo Brewery in Zacatecas, Mexico, where we were able to increase the annual capacity from 21 million hl to 24 million by optimising processes in conjunction with a small amount of CAPEX.

**BBII:** *Why did you choose to locate your business in the USA?*

**Gunkel:** To be close to our clients – as I said, initially most of our clients were from the USA and Latin America so our location is very central for our main clients. I'm not fond of 'remote control.' Personal contact is what counts. That's important to us.

**BBII:** *Are you and your team exclusively specialised in breweries or do you offer your services to everyone in the beverage industry?*

**Gunkel:** We offer our services in various areas. As you may know, due to my family background, I grew up in the fruit juice business and this includes the production of cider – another 'rising star' in the industry. Incidentally we have just received an engineering commission in this field. Other areas are the wine industry, dairies and soft drink manufacturers.

**BBII:** *The competition among beverage manufacturers, machine suppliers and I assume also consulting service companies is tougher than ever today. What special qualifications, knowledge, and experience do you have to offer clients that they won't find elsewhere?*

**Gunkel:** Definitely our independent status and neutrality compared to plant construction companies. We offer our clients 'best in class selection' and Beerbev as an integrator of the various installation sections. For example, our engineering is not linked to products or services. We plan on the basis of "what is best for the client?" This also includes making construction drawings as part of the engineering plan.

These can be used directly to have the equipment manufactured locally. This means that assembly costs are much lower, for example in Asia or the USA, and it's also possible to save transportation costs and import duties. With our extensive knowledge of the market

we're able to offer clients a specifically tailored and yet diverse range of services. This is the only way to realise hitherto unheard of CAPEX savings potential, without loss of quality or performance.

Given our years of experience with so-called greenfield projects and expansion projects of various dimensions, with our project management approach we are in a position to coordinate the most complex projects and realise them on-time and in-budget, regardless of the suppliers chosen and the country. As I said, another significant advantage is that we have a broad knowledge of software. This puts us in a position to integrate and harmonise the whole control system, whichever suppliers are involved.

**BBII:** *What are your goals for the next few years?*

**Gunkel:** Innovation coupled with growth is our motto – whether we're dealing with a 'rising star' or a 'global player.' We want to make sure that we can offer the best solutions for our discerning clientele, today and in the future. Our services provide added value for both strategies.

**BBII:** *Will we be seeing you at the drinktec in Munich?*

**Gunkel:** Of course. We'll be in Hall B2, Stand 350.

**BBII:** *Mr Gunkel, thank you very much for this interview.* □