



“It’s about best technologies, highest throughput and lowest losses”

For industries that require expensive raw materials such as silicon and sapphire, production efficiency and process stability are key to operating cost-efficient production lines. Peter Pauli, CEO of Meyer Burger AG, explains how this major provider of slicing systems to solar-cell manufacturers helps its clients achieve “lowest cost of ownership” while maximising production capacity

PES: Can you explain a little about your company and what part you play in the renewable energy industry?

Peter Pauli: Meyer Burger is a global leading provider of precision-slicing technology, predominantly to the solar industry. We provide sophisticated machinery incorporating wire saws, band saws and ID/OD slicing systems for cutting hard and brittle materials such as silicon, sapphire or other crystals into wafers, prisms and other forms.

We are fully committed to ecological, social and financial sustainability. Approximately 75% of our net sales generated during fiscal year 2006 were attributable to customers in the solar industry. We are directly involved in the value chain of solar-cell production. As such, its machines and services are closely linked to the ecological benefits of solar cells as a source of electricity and energy.

PES: Aside from solar, your organisation feeds a number of industries – how do you manage to meet all their needs?

PP: For our other two major markets – semiconductor and optical – we also supply leading technologies for cutting hard and brittle, but costly materials. All of our target industries expect best technologies, highest throughput and lowest loss of valuable raw material. Our goal is to provide the most economical solution and to support our clients in increasing production efficiency and process stability to handle large volumes while achieving lowest “cost of ownership”.

PES: It seems to us that a factor that has been key to your company’s success has been constant evolution. From watch jewel manufacturing to band saws, Meyer Burger has never stood still. Would you agree with this statement?

PP: Yes, very much so. It is part of our corporate strategy to grow with the markets and foster new opportunities and technologies in our industry. We strive to become a leading global supplier of fully integrated wafer production lines in the solar industry and to maintain the technological

leadership in the semiconductor and optical industries.

PES: Meyer Burger has just won its biggest ever contract for the supply of wire saws to the solar industry – can you tell us what it’s worth and what enabled your company to secure the deal?

PP: To gain the trust of a leading Chinese producer of silicon wafers is a big deal for Meyer Burger. We maintain a long-term partnership with Glory Silicon Energy for joint development, and have been working with the partners involved in this recently established company for some years now. This relationship, good past performance and a strong product range of the highest technological standards were key to winning the contract.

PES: 2006 was an excellent trading year for your company – what are your plans for the future?

PP: We will continue in our efforts to achieve a leading global market position in terms of technology, performance and

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reliability and we will expand our offering in the solar industry to become an integrated provider of systems for wafer manufacturing. On a mid-term basis, we want to increase our EBIT (earnings before interest and taxes) from 9-11% in 2007 to 12-14% in 2008 and 2009. Our net sales are expected to increase by more than 30% in 2007.

PES: How will global warming affect your business?

PP: As the world becomes more and more sensitive to global warming, we expect new initiatives for renewable energy to be launched in different industries and markets. We are confident that the practice of using solar radiation as a renewable source of energy will continue to gain momentum in the years to come and we want to play a role in this development.

PES: We note that your company will be represented at a number of exhibitions this year – do you find this exposure beneficial?

PP: Exhibitions are important platforms for a globally active company such as Meyer Burger. We profit from liaising with customers and industry partners from all over the world. And, from a corporate communications point of view, we gain strength by presenting Meyer Burger as a truly professional, independent Swiss company with an extensive global network.

PES: R&D is obviously a vital aspect of your operation – is your investment in this arena reaping rewards?

PP: Absolutely, as we continually introduce new technologies and solutions to the markets to increase the productivity and efficiency of our clients.

PES: How important is product quality to your business?

PP: We position Meyer Burger as a leading provider of reliable, high-precision Swiss-made slicing systems. We are the only independent global equipment manufacturer addressing the needs of our three main markets – photovoltaic, semiconductor and optics – to have headquarters in Switzerland. Our clients expect consistently high standards; hence product quality is and always will be key to Meyer Burger.

PES: Can you explain what challenges you face when trying to get your corporate message out to prospective clients?

PP: Our corporate message to prospective clients is received very well and the success of Meyer Burger is confirmation that we understand the needs of our clients and target markets. In the long term, the plan is to continue in our efforts to become the preferred partner for fully integrated wafer production lines.

PES: What single piece of information would you most like to share with our readers?

PP: Whatever market we refer to, raw materials such as silicon, sapphire or other crystals remain valuable. Through our expertise and solutions we want to limit the amount of wastage involved in production and manufacturing processes, which will benefit entire supply chains financially in the long term.

PES: Solar power is in itself an environmentally friendly form of energy, but what measures do you take to reduce

the impact of your manufacturing plant on the environment?

PP: The production site of Meyer Burger was relocated during the second half of 2006 from Steffisburg to Thun. Production at the new location began in February 2007. There is now more than 7,000 m² of available production space in Thun, which enables Meyer Burger to optimise its production and logistics processes to meet increased demand. In light of the vastly higher number of manufactured machines and components, energy use has risen by 56% to 1,979.5 MWh. However, the number of machines delivered has increased by 78% compared to the previous year. For waste disposal, Meyer Burger has issued strict guidelines that specify a clear separation of waste. We distinguish between three categories of waste: waste materials that can be recycled; waste that can be dumped or burned; and waste that requires specialist treatment.

PES: Europe is obviously a huge growth market for your business, are you actively pursuing opportunities in the region?

PP: Europe is our second biggest market accounting for around 32% of net sales, with Asia representing 65% of net sales. Our corporate message is particularly important in Europe where the automation for fully integrated wafer production lines is key to remaining competitive. ■

More than 3,500 machines and systems from Meyer Burger are in use worldwide. For more information on precision-cutting technology for a range of industries visit www.meyerburger.ch or email mbinfo@meyerburger.ch