

Personal commitment pays off

PROFESSIONAL EXCHANGE | Johann Angres, Managing Director of Steinfurth Messsysteme in Essen, Germany, received a great honor in April of 2019. He is the first German ever to be elected to the board of the ISBT. Never heard of the ISBT? The International Society of Beverage Technologists is the MEBAK or EBC of the soft drink industry. And because we also were not familiar with the ISBT, we decided to visit Johann Angres in Bochum to find out more about the association, his appointment to the board and the changes currently taking place at his company.

Mr. Angres, first of all we would like to congratulate you on your appointment – how exciting! Can you give us a bit of background about the ISBT?

Johann Angres: The ISBT was founded as a professional organization in the mid-1950s in the United States. From its inception, the focus has been on expanding, promoting, developing and disseminating knowledge on the special nature and science of beverage production. The involvement of members from major beverage companies such as Coca-Cola, Pepsi Cola, Dr. Pepper and others, made the organization more international in scope and allowed it to gain widespread recognition in the industry. The ISBT pursues a similar objective for the soft drink industry, just as MEBAK or the EBC does for the brewing industry. Standards and procedures for all aspects of beverage production are developed on a voluntary basis. Presently, there are nine technical committees which work on various themes including quality, packaging and closures, process flows, hygiene, etc. Within these committees, subcommittees or working groups devote their efforts to the technical aspects of beverage production. The working groups explore, discuss and seek solutions to specific questions or problems. What is special about the ISBT is that membership is not extended to companies, but only to individuals, who bring all of their expertise to the table.

What exactly do you mean?

Angres: It is not a matter of representing corporate interests; the intention is rather to involve companies on a professional level and have them share their knowledge in the process. We respond to current challenges in our industry and discuss new ideas. As a group, we develop standard procedures together, thus creating comparable testing methods or recommendations (guidelines) which help us successfully master the challenges we encounter daily in beverage production. This benefits everyone involved as well as the companies behind them, particularly since prior to the founding of the ISBT, this type of organization dedicated to the soft drink industry did not exist.

How did you find out about the ISBT?

Angres: Through Coca-Cola, one of our customers. The employees there are very involved in the organization. I have been an ISBT member since 2006. I spent 2007 to 2010 establishing the Steinfurth office in the USA. I came to realize what a good network ISBT has and how much you can achieve when you get involved. The Packaging Technical Committee was best suited to my personal interests and my experience at the time. But serving on other technical committees also helped expand my knowledge and experience in the industry.

Does the ISBT only have a presence in the USA?

Angres: No, not at all. The organization does have its roots there, so that is where the annual meeting is held (with a steadily growing number of international participants). There are now ISBT sections in Europe, Canada and Latin America. The most recent addition is the section in India with one for the Asia-Pacific region in planning. The sections also organize a regional meeting once a year. In total, there are about 700 members. The board of directors consists of nine persons. Each year, three of these board positions are newly appointed and a new president is elected. Since its founding, only US-Americans served as president

Martin Falkenstein and Johann Angres (right) manage the company today



until 2018 which saw Briton Gary Robson of Unisensor take the office. He was succeeded by an Irishman, Manus Mitchell of Pepsi Co.

The ISBT is a very democratic organization. It's not about companies, nationalities or company affiliation but about people and their abilities. It is colleagues talking to each other and discussing practices and methods that will benefit the industry as a whole. And what I consider one of the highlights is the social commitment of the ISBT. For example, it offers financial support to students in the USA, where the tuition fees are quite high, and in doing so, ensures that young talent is promoted.

Another very interesting development at the ISBT is the interest in collaborating with other international organizations – most recently with the European CETIE to standardize common packaging-oriented guidelines and procedures.

Are breweries completely out of the picture?

Angres: Previously, they were not involved. After all, MEBAK and the EBC have developed a comprehensive set of methods and analyses for the brewing industry. But that's changing. On one hand, craft brewers are interested in the concept of voluntary guidelines and on the other, the issues and challenges facing the beverage industry are becoming increasingly global and are valid in every area and for all kinds of beverages.

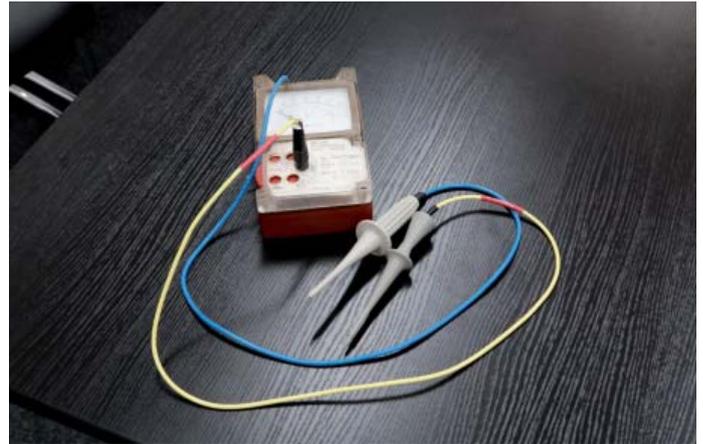
Furthermore, new challenges are emerging that also affect the brewing industry: new materials, new closures, new finishes. The emphasis is on reducing the amount of packaging and lowering costs while retaining function.

Promoting advances in packaging technology

Fees must be paid to use the MEBAK or EBC methods. How is the ISBT organized?

Angres: You can become a member for USD 350 a year, giving you access to all of the combined knowledge of the organization. This is an excellent value for the money, and outside of the USA, it also includes the registration fees to attend the regional meeting. Incidentally, the latest ISBT event in Europe was the 16th Bevtech Europe Meeting. It was held September 25th – 26th 2019 at the Anton Paar company in Graz, Austria. Together with an international team, I have been responsible for the program. The main

Designed for the mining industry: the first explosion-proof multimeter



theme was “Technology and sustainability in the beverage industry”.

From your perspective, which topics are relevant for the present and for the future? What would you like to accomplish in your role as an ISBT board member?

Angres: One recent issue we've been working on has been the question of microbiological safety in using ice cubes from vending machines. There were problems with contaminants some time ago, and we were able to help resolve this problem by providing hygiene rules and recommendations. A well-known project from the past is the 1881 bottle finish or “Short Finish”. We were involved in this project every step of the way, from development to launch. For the future, in addition to the points I have already mentioned, tethered closures, essentially one-piece bottle caps, is on the agenda. They will help reduce the flood of plastic waste.



One of the first automatic CO₂ shakers

Personally, I would like to see the ISBT become even more international in character. I see international cooperation among experts as the key for solving future challenges and opening new possibilities and untapped potential.

Your strong commitment has also been a boon to your company, Steinfurth Messsysteme. Before we go into that – can you give us a brief overview of the history of the company?

Angres: The company was founded in 1934 by Theodor Steinfurth. A former Siemens engineer, he had lost his job in the turmoil of the Great Depression and then became self-employed. He was an ingenious designer and entrepreneur, developing specific coal mine safety systems such as locomotive pantographs, railcar couplers and explosion-proof power lines. This was a secure business base located in the developing Ruhr area of Germany. In the 1960s, Steinfurth built the first explosion-proof multimeter, which I can show you. He went on to develop control systems and the original measuring systems.

In the early 1960s, Steinfurth's nephew Rolf assumed management of the company. During this time, the first requests came in from the nearby Coca-Cola Global Development Center in Essen – mainly for the development of special measuring systems. The first automatic Steinfurth CO₂ shaker was the result of one such project. It was developed as a replacement for manual CO₂ measurement. Through this work with Coca-Cola, our devices became known around the world. Even today, the CO₂ shaker remains one of our bestsellers – now in its modern form as a solution for measuring CO₂ in packaged beverages. Our old shakers are so sturdy that even some devices manufactured in the 1970s



Non-destructive, in-package CO₂ measurement becomes mobile

are still in use today in some beverage companies.

■ From project to product

I joined the company in 1992 as a young electrical engineer, as did my colleague Martin Falkenstein. Eventually, the company began going through a period of upheaval because there was no viable future in mining. This ultimately led to us founding Steinfurth Messsysteme in 1999 together with Rolf Steinfurth. He left the company to go into retirement soon thereafter as planned, having achieved his goal of passing on the company name. Our focus was no longer on mining but on quality control of beverages and beverage packaging. In this

new role, customers from the soft drinks and brewing industry, universities and training institutions or various packaging manufacturers view us as their partners in development. When a customer approaches us with an idea, we work on it together to find a solution. If we are researching new technologies or solutions, the result may be only the fabrication of a single piece. For special solutions, the result could be a series of 10 to 20 systems per year. Our standard solutions are manufactured in quantities of 100 to 200 per year.

So there is no large-scale production of equipment for filling lines at giant breweries?

Angres: No, we are absolute specialists. Our approach typically follows the same sequence: someone comes to us with a question and we develop a suitable device within a short period, often utilizing pre-existing sensor modules from our portfolio. This has allowed us to construct more than 50 different products that remain one-off solutions, or if the device is of interest to other customers, we can adapt it to their needs. With a total of 20 employees, we generate annual sales in the range of 5 million Euros by providing tailored solutions to customers in over 75 countries. At the moment, we are developing a mobile, non-destructive, handheld device for measuring CO₂ in the package. Very exciting, both from the technical standpoint and due to the many possible applications!

Last but not least, our involvement with ISBT has helped us to significantly advance our technology, and the contacts we make at the events and knowledge shared among colleagues are a great help. That is the reason I was really thrilled to be elected to the board of directors.

Mr. Angres, thank you very much for the interview!

The interview was conducted by Dr. Lydia Junkersfeld, BRAUWELT International editor-in-chief.