



Kössler Report

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Interview with Robert Schuhmayer, new CEO of Kössler GmbH

Robert Schuhmayer has been CEO of small hydro specialist Kössler, which is headquartered in St. Georgen, Austria, since March 1, 2018. After four months in the role, he talks about how things have been going so far, provides interesting insights into the company and looks to Kössler's 90-year anniversary this year.

Robert Schuhmayer has been the new CEO of Kössler since March 1, 2018



How did you get involved in hydropower, Mr. Schuhmayer?

Robert Schuhmayer: I first came across hydropower during my training, as one of my instructors was a Voith employee. This is where my passion for the field came from. I have been working with hydropower for 32 years now

since I first joined Voith.

What were your first months like in your new role at Kössler?

Schuhmayer: Kössler has been part of the Voith Group since 2008. At that time I was involved in the acquisition process and was also on the Kössler

Advisory Board, so I knew exactly what to expect. My previous impressions have now been confirmed: Kössler has an excellent team with a high level of technical expertise, so I feel very comfortable in my new environment. ▶

As CFO of Voith Hydro in Austria you have been involved primarily in large hydro projects in more recent times. What differences are you now encountering at Kössler, which specializes in small hydro?

Schuhmayer: The lead times are shorter at Kössler, so the cycle frequency is much higher. On the other hand, the fact that there are a lot of repeated processes gives us a broad database to draw on, which makes the work a lot easier. At Kössler I can also focus on the strategic issues: What are our challenges? How do we have to position ourselves to be able to continue to satisfy market demands? But there are also synergies in the technological development field: The hydraulic systems developed for large hydro can also be used in small hydro projects.

Which current issues does Kössler need to address?

Schuhmayer: We are currently seeing a significant revival in the small hydro sector, so we are working on increasing our capacities at the moment. We are also going to step up collaboration with other Units from the Voith Group. Moreover, Kössler has taken over responsibility for the North and South American markets and there have been some initial successes. We now have to pursue this course systematically.

What strengths does Kössler offer for tackling these challenges?

Schuhmayer: Kössler has a high level of technical expertise, an excellent cost structure and an experienced management team. But another factor contributing to our success is the size of the company. We are big enough to develop stable processes but still small enough to be able to make decisions quickly. And this matters, because implementation periods of 12 months are quite common for small hydro projects.

What are the current priorities in the markets?

Schuhmayer: In the emerging economies in South America or South-East Asia the focus is definitely on new plants, while in Europe, upgrading existing facilities is increasingly popular.

“Kössler has an excellent team with a high standard of technical expertise.”

How important is the service business for Kössler?

Schuhmayer: Hugely important. Successfully implemented service contracts strengthen our relationships with customers and result in follow-on projects. Kössler is already very successful in this area.

What do you see as the greatest challenges for the hydropower industry in the coming years?

Schuhmayer: The greatest challenge will definitely be the protracted approval processes for new plants. In this context much faster procedures need to be established so that existing hydropower potential can be developed much more economically. Another problematic issue at the moment is funding for alternative power sources, where hydro is competing with alternative energy sources that receive much more financial support.

Nevertheless, as a clean energy supply, hydropower will continue to be very important. Another aspect that favors small hydro is the trend towards distributed electricity generation. Small hydropower plants can help stabilize the grid, because the demands on the network are not as pronounced.

Kössler is celebrating its 90th birthday this year. How important is tradition to you and the company?

Schuhmayer: Tradition and continuity are what drive our success, given that our products have a lifetime of several decades. In this context, quality and reliability play a key role.

About Robert Schuhmayer

Robert Schuhmayer was born in 1966. Following training in mechanical engineering at the HTL (advanced technical and vocational college) in St. Pölten, he joined the Turbine Design Department at Voith Hydro in 1986 and continued to complete a degree in commerce and international trade from the University of Vienna. His most recent role at Voith was as CFO. Since March 1, 2018 he has been CEO of Kössler. Robert Schuhmayer is married with two sons and his hobbies include rock climbing and riding motorcycles.

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