

A GE Energy executive interview with Dr. Walter Tenschert, Energie A

The GE Energy Executive Interview Series features top-level executives from the utility industry, speaking about industry and business challenges, and how their companies are successfully addressing these challenges with Smallworld* GIS solutions.

Q:

What actual measures have Energie AG Oberösterreich and Energie AG Oberösterreich Netz GmbH implemented to ensure continuous growth as well as a sustained provision of the electricity distribution network.

A:

Over the last few years, Energie AG has adopted a diversification strategy. Energie AG has changed from being solely an energy supplier to being an infrastructure group. Apart from power, gas and district heating we are expanding in the water and waste management sector in particular and not only in Austria but also in new target markets in Eastern Europe and Southern Germany. This diversification does, by the way, also apply to power generation. Today, we generate our power in equal parts through hydroelectric stations, thermal power stations and our interests in Danube and storage power stations. But let's talk about Netz GmbH. After the formation of Netzgesellschaft Energie AG Oberösterreich Netz GmbH as part of the unbundling process, various services, such as Tech Services GmbH (maintenance, modification and extension of network) or Data GmbH (network control systems, metering) were combined within a modular structure. The main task of Netz GmbH is the sustained provision of the electricity distribution network whilst producing the yields permitted by the regulating system.

Q:

What roles do IT and GIS (Geospatial Information System) actually play in achieving your corporate goals?

A:

Well in simple terms, we would no longer function without IT and GIS. The efficient utilization of our key processes such as customer care, asset management, network control and network management would be inconceivable without considerable integration of the supporting systems and their high availability. Furthermore, the GIS System, in regards to Smallworld as the data center is an indispensable-data supplier in regards to information, planning and asset management.

Q:

You mentioned the GIS System Smallworld as central data center. How did you decide on the Smallworld system?

A:

Well, it was not only a commercial decision but also a technical decision. We focused, in particular, on process support and the integration ability of the GIS. Compared to other systems we had analyzed, Smallworld provided the best support in regards to documentation, information, planning and mobile technical network processes.

Q:

Were there other important criteria affecting your decision?

A:

The system elements specific to our industry are very important for us and allowed us to quickly and successfully start the network documentation. Another decision criterion was having a competent local partner supporting us with services and developments in addition to the standard solutions. We found such a partner in Grintec GmbH. Grintec has, for instance, developed an additional mobile PDA solution for us. Generally, we consider the combination of local partners and global group to be of considerable benefit. We regard GE Energy predominantly as a technology supplier responsible for further product development.

Q:

Could you briefly describe Energie AG's introduction strategy for Smallworld GIS and the challenges associated therewith?

A:

The main aim of our introduction strategy was to quickly demonstrate the benefits of a GIS introduction and thus also maintain a high level of acceptance amongst users from the very first day. Our GIS Project Manager, Walter Obermair, and his team chose a large project – acquisition of the low voltage network data – which was initially captured with cadastral accuracy. The data to be integrated in the GIS had to be collated from numerous systems and formats, which clearly represented a major challenge. Apart from an already existing initial GIS, which was to be replaced, data had to be collated from various databases and spreadsheets. Together with our partner Grintec, our GIS Project Team managed to successfully meet these challenges.

Q:

Dr. Tenschert, you have commented on the benefits of the Smallworld GIS solution. Have you had any actual results confirming these benefits?

A:

The benefit immediately apparent was the fact that drawing boards were no longer required. The actual benefit is, however, far greater. By integrating the GIS with the ERP system, exact commercial

figures can, for instance, be made available for an efficient asset management. The detailed data from the GIS accelerate the entire planning process. In short: The Smallworld GIS solution allows us to provide more and a higher quality of output with fewer employees. The use of GIS as a data center is, however, also of great importance. It enables new processes, such as the exact valuation of assets and thus opens up additional future benefit potentials.

Q:

Can you provide further details of the benefits?

A:

Without divulging too many details we increased our planning effectiveness by approximately 30%. The speed of network documentation also increased by approximately 30%. As a result of the increased effectiveness, we were able to move our outsourced medium voltage routing back to Netz GmbH. In the first instance, this was made possible by a significant reduction of interfaces to the different existing systems and considerable increases in the efficiency of our planning process.

Q:

What future challenges for network companies are already foreseeable today and how will Netz GmbH meet them?

A:

The tasks of network companies will by and large remain the same. The underlying conditions, the focus and precision will, however, change. Companies will increasingly focus on maintaining their inventory of assets against the backdrop of increasingly detailed regulatory requirements. In particular the area of asset valuation requires the involvement of all employees and supporting them with respective planning tools. With its modular organization structure, Netz GmbH is well prepared for these challenges.

Dr. Tenschert is the Technical Managing Director of Energie AG Oberösterreich Netz GmbH. He studied at the University of Vienna from where he obtained a degree in Power Engineering. Dr. Tenschert has held various management positions at Energie AG since 1986.

About Energie AG

Energie AG is the leading infrastructure group in Upper Austria with considerable expansion activities. Through subsidiaries and equity interests, the group is represented in the energy (electricity, gas, heat), waste management and water sector. The companies markets are Austria, Southern Germany, the Czech Republic, Hungary and the neighboring CEE- countries. As a result of its continuous expansion activities, the company has become a leading player in Central Europe within a very short time.

The former OKA has been operating on the Upper Austrian power market under the name of Energie AG Oberösterreich since 1.1.1999. The majority shareholding in Energie AG Oberösterreich is held by the country of Upper Austria. Consolidated sales exceed 1 billion Euro. The group supplies more than 1.4 million domestic households with power, gas, district heating, water and wastewater services.

www.energieag.at

About GRINTEC

Gesellschaft für graphische Informationstechnologie mbH was founded in 1989 by employees of the Joanneum Research Center in Graz and is now looking back on nearly 20 years of experience in various fields of application concerning geographical information systems (GIS) and spatial databases. GRINTEC clients are organizations and companies working with spatial data, such as utility and building companies, local, regional and national government organizations; national and international companies. GRINTEC sells and supports the Smallworld GIS product family since 1995.

<http://www.grintec.com/>

About GE Energy

GE Energy is one of the world's leading suppliers of power generation and energy delivery technologies, with 2006 revenue of \$19 billion. Based in Atlanta, Georgia, GE Energy works in all areas of the energy industry including coal, oil, natural gas and nuclear energy; renewable resources such as water, wind, solar and biogas; and other alternative fuels. Numerous GE Energy products are certified under ecomagination, GE's corporate-wide initiative to aggressively bring to market new technologies that will help customers meet pressing environmental challenges.

GE Energy's geospatial software products and services deliver innovative network software solutions to the people who design, build and operate utility and telecommunications networks. Smallworld Core Spatial Technology is the foundation GIS product from GE Energy that supports industry focused application products for communications, utility and public systems organizations.

<http://www.ge.com/energy>



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