

TPS Technitube Röhrenwerke: The secret of quality



TPS Technitube Röhrenwerke is a leading producer of cold-finished stainless steel tubes with perfect surface quality. Currently, the Germany-based company is investing in increasing its capacity, especially in bright-annealing and cold pilgering. "Being a small, privately-owned company, we have been forced to stay ahead of the competition since the very first day," says Managing Director Dietmar Weides. "This means that quality and service are key factors for us." Supported by a huge stock, modern logistics, and a special projects department, the company has constantly been growing over the last thirty-six years.

By Frank Wöbbeking

TPS Technitube Röhrenwerke consists of various departments, e.g. an OCTG mill and a TPS INOS stainless steel mill. TPS INOS produces seamless cold-finished tubes in stainless steel grades, nickel alloys, and titanium. The size of the tubes ranges from OD 5.0 up to 42.00 mm. The mill specializes in the production of heat-exchanger tubes and hydraulic tubing. The products are used in such industries as the oil & gas, chemicals & petrochemicals, and the automotive and semi-conductor industries, all over the world. What is the secret of TPS' success? "We produce tubes with a perfectly smooth surface," says Managing Director Dietmar Weides. "To accomplish this we have, therefore, developed a special bright-annealing technique. The details of which naturally remain top-secret - the production of



Managing Directors Horst Nelles and Dietmar Weides

the tubes being based on cold-pilger rolling and cold drawing of the tubes to the required dimensions." Moreover, orders for U-tubes can be realized at short notice by making use of the

company's special bending facility. "Nevertheless, having achieved these quality standards gives us no reason to sit back on our laurels," states Mr. Weides. "We are always looking for further methods by which we can further improve our service."

Investments

This year the bright-annealing capacity within the company will be doubled by taking into production a second furnace. In addition to this, the cold drawing facilities will be increased. "We have continuously invested in our production facilities, even during the recession of the last two years," continues Mr. Weides. "In 2007, TPS took a state-of-the-art cold-pilger mill into operation. Furthermore, we installed Europe's most modern tube cutting and deburring facility. In 2009, our capacity for stock



was raised, and next year the seventh cold-pilger mill will be installed. The mill has already been ordered and we will carry out some adjustments to suit our special needs before it will be taken into operation," Mr. Weides explains.

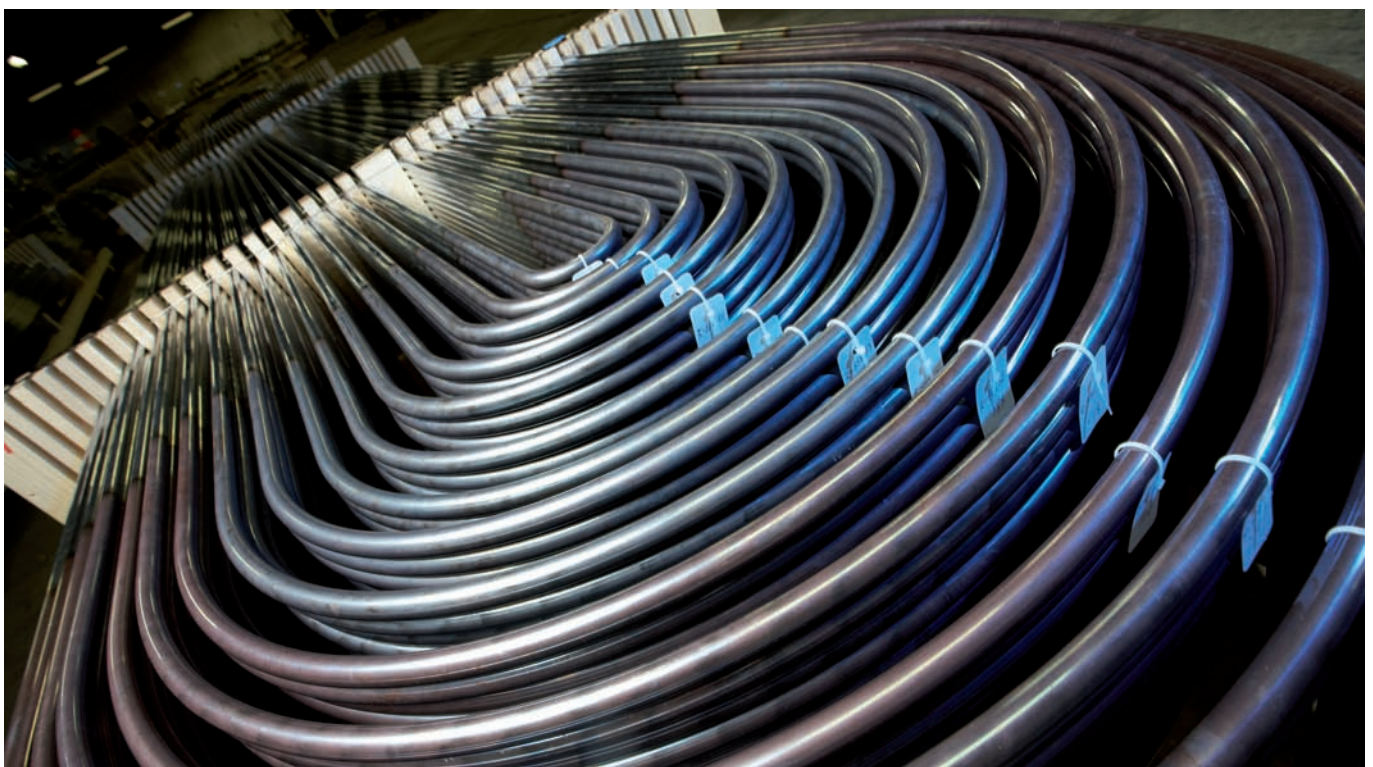
To ensure that the company manages to maintain its high level of quality, it constantly controls its products and its raw materials. In every department there is a team responsible for maintaining

standards. The quality of the products is not only tangible but is guaranteed by the certification standards to which the company works (see the section of "Certificates").

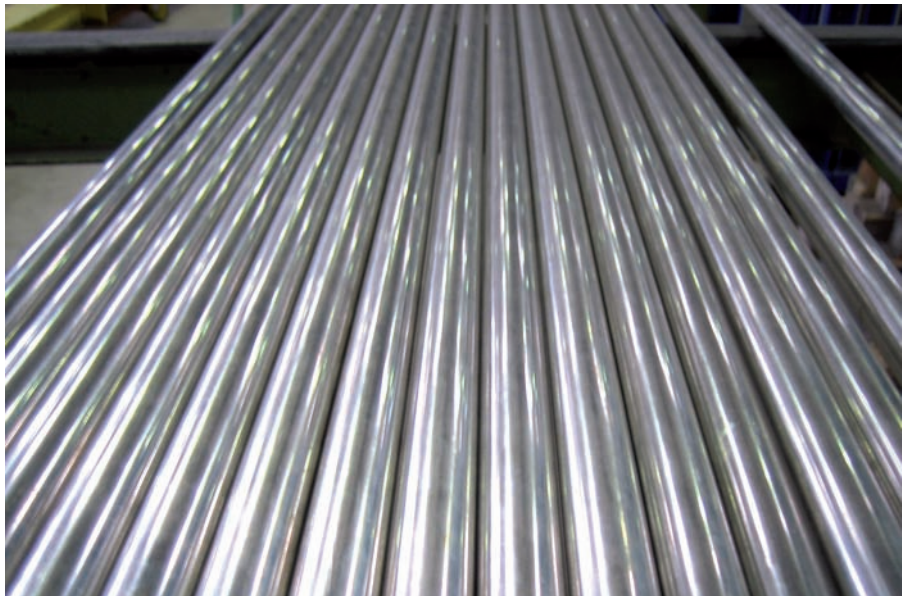
Service attitude

Another important factor leading to the success of the company is its service attitude. This means, for instance, extremely short delivery times. With the

new furnace, production times will be cut in half. Mr. Weides continues to explain: "We have invented a shut-down service for the oil & gas industry. This means that we have a telephone line which can be used in cases of emergencies on which our customers can call us day and night." The company delivers from stock within twenty-four hours during the week and within forty-eight hours during the



weekend. On top of this, TPS produces high-quality tubes at very short notice for emergency situations. "A few weeks ago we manufactured six tons of titanium tubes for an exploration platform in the North Sea within a period of four weeks, in spite of having considerable workload of other orders at the mill," says Mr. Weides. A requirement for this service is that TPS has a huge stock of raw materials. Because of the new storage facility, which was built in 2009, TPS is also able to stock ready-to-send products like heat exchangers and condenser tubes. Apart from stocking, this department also organizes testing, cutting, bending, packing and the dispatch of the tubes. Besides a fast delivery service, the company also specializes in the production of complicated orders. "We work on queries from clients that other



companies would not even answer," Mr. Weides says. "We automatically accept every order that requires extra efforts to realize, whether this may involve factors in their production or processing, or

involve complicated specifications and material grades. We regard ourselves as troubleshooters for our clients. The size of the order does not matter." He continues, "We fulfill orders of 500 kilograms as well as 500 tons." TPS produces tubes in austenitic, ferritic, duplex, super-duplex and super-austenitic grades, as well as in titanium, nickel, and other special alloys. An integrated part of the service philosophy is the logistics department. Regardless if the ordered materials are sent by truck, rail, airplane or vessel, every order is accompanied by detailed documentation. Cooperation with efficient partners enables a quick delivery to any destination worldwide.

Projects

To meet the customer's need in the project business, TPS has its own Project Department. Due to the complex requirements of a piping project most customers prefer placing complete orders for supplies and service with one single source. "The philosophy of our project department is simple but efficient," says Mr. Weides. "We supply pipes and piping components, including all kinds of valves, in one package for projects according to customer's needs and specifications." This department is based on more than thirty years of experience. The projects, which have been executed, include renewable energy, power plants, petrochemical facilities, refineries, the oil & gas industry, shipbuilding, platform construction, tank storage, and desalination.



OCTG

TPS also specializes in Oil Country Tubular Goods (OCTG). Tubing, casing, drill and line pipes, pup and blast joints, and flow couplings are just a few examples of the production range. The company manufactures premium and API connections on several finishing lines according to international standards. Being active in this field for more than thirty years, the company has built up a lot of experience.

**New markets**

Thanks to this attitude, the company was not hit as hard as many other companies by the recent worldwide economic crisis. "Being a small and privately owned company, we just have to ensure that we stay ahead of the competition. Otherwise, we would have no chance amongst the major global players in our industry. This is the reason why we are used to thinking a few steps in advance. Moreover, our company is very flexible, not having a very hierarchical structure. This allows us to react very quickly to situations. When the global crisis came, we immediately started looking for new markets. Within a short time, we successfully found new clients," Mr. Weides recalls. And this has led to the fact that now, as the global economy is beginning to grow again, TPS INOS has emerged from the situation with a broader basis of clients than before. "In addition, we are less dependent on a small group of industries," claims Mr. Weides. An example of a new market for the company is the automotive industry. Since 2008 the company has been certified according to automotive standard ISO/TS 16949:2009. To stay calm in the middle of a global crisis like the one that took place between 2009 and 2010 has a lot to do with experience. The company was founded thirty-six years ago by General Manager Peter Lepper, who is still in charge. He began as a trader and exporter of tubular products. Just two years later, the first production facility was built. In 1983, the first stainless steel mill started production. Mr. Weides continues, "Since then we have built up a huge amount of knowledge and

experience. Many engineers who started out with us are still working for us. This knowledge base allows us to develop our machinery further according to the ever changing needs of the marketplace." Additionally, the company has always learnt by doing things in practice. "Because of this we always know exactly how to adapt to circumstances. Furthermore, everybody working in the marketplace is keen to look for further improvements. Our innovation power is one of our most important assets of our company." This also means that TPS trains the company's next-generation workforce within their own company. Being independent from others is a key factor of the company's philosophy. "We can buy our material wherever we want. Thanks to our quality assurance processes that we have in place, we know that we use perfect raw material," adds Mr. Weides. In the course of the last thirty-six years the company has constantly been growing. At this moment there is a workforce of more than two hundred

employees. So what are the challenges of the future? "One major challenge is how to deal with the rising costs for energy," says Mr. Weides. "Since we installed the second bright-annealing furnace our demand for energy has risen again. We have to find solutions to tackle this situation." Another challenge is to stay ahead of the competition despite the development of new companies in emerging countries. "This is what we are determined to do," claims Mr. Weides, "Just as we have always done! Reviewing the company's history, there is no doubt about them meeting this challenge."

Certificates

The quality of TPS' products is proven by a lot of certifications. ISO 9001:2008, ISO/TS 29001, DNV Approval, API Spec Q1, API 5CT, API 5DP, API 5L, ISO/TS 16949:2009KTA 3201.1, KTA 1401 AVS D 100/50, Report of tightness (TÜV), DGRL 97/23/EG (TÜV Rheinland).

Facts & Figures

Name company:	TPS Technitube Röhrenwerke GmbH
Headquarter:	Daun, Germany
Management:	Peter Lepper (Founder and General Manager), Dietmar Weides (Managing Director) and Horst Nelles (Managing Director)
Workforce:	200
Founded:	1975
Departments:	OCTG, INOS Stainless, INDT, Stock
Business fields:	Production, Stocking, Trading
Industries:	Oil and gas, automotive, refineries, chemical, petrochemical, power stations, semiconductors
Products:	OCTG, Heatexchanger, instrumentation and hydraulic tubes
Materials:	Alloy steel, stainless steel, nickel alloys, titanium, non-ferrous metals