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# Premium Paint Professionals

Renaulac has kept a strong hold on its core set of family values and sustainable practices while experiencing substantial growth in the professional and do-it-yourself paint markets.

Images by Patrick Chatelan

Paint manufacturer Renaulac has a long history, dating back to the nineteenth century. In fact, it is the second-oldest paint brand to ever exist in France. It was originally founded in 1827 by Charles Renault and has grown from strength to strength to become a well-known name in the industry for its complete range of products. Renaulac is based in Cestas, near Bordeaux, and operates in the professional as well as the do-it-yourself (DIY) paint market in France and Southern Europe. As a brand and own-brand manufacturer, Renaulac's offerings include films, coatings, proofing, roughcasting, and traditional decorating paints for exterior, interior, decorative, and industrial applications.

In December 2012, Renaulac was acquired by J.W. Ostendorf, a family-run business with a reputation of being one of the leading paint producers in Europe. J.W. Ostendorf has more than 800 staff in Germany and abroad, with an integrated production and logistics facility in Coesfeld, Germany. Both companies are working together to achieve a greater level of profitable growth, diversification, and internationalisation.

Jens Ostendorf, a third-generation family member of J.W. Ostendorf, was appointed as president of Renaulac in January. Jens and his wife, Britta Ostendorf, joined Renaulac two years ago to work together on the integration. While still relatively new to the role as

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CEO, Jens has a plan for the company to set it on the right course for growth and to encourage the future-oriented alignment of manufacturing plants. He has been working closely with the former owner of Renaulac, Philippe Bonnarme, to ensure the right strategies and the new leadership team are being implemented to give the business the best possible shot at success and therefore prepare it for growth.

"Our middle-management team has changed, nearly entirely, due to the retirement of many of our colleagues within the past two years," Jens says. "To compensate this loss we put into place a very young, dynamic and highly motivated team which is helping us >





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to manage this growth and future success. Internally, our major strategic focus in the next couple of years is to further integrate the two businesses and that means that we can both benefit from each other's capabilities. The French paint market in general is one of the most innovative markets in Europe and quality-wise sets the benchmark. To benefit from that market's know-how as a whole group is a huge opportunity for us. Externally, we will increase our brand DNA. What that means is that we will continue to provide our clients with innovative products and concepts, increase our presence on the professional and DIY markets, and show our product's quality to our clients through in-store demonstrations."

Having lived abroad since he completed his bachelor studies, Jens's professional background is very international. He graduated with a degree in international management, and a major in business reporting, auditing, and executive management, in Dortmund, Germany. He then attended the Grenoble Graduate School of Business in France and finished with a Master of Science in Finance. During his years studying, he gained extensive professional experience by interning at various places in Paris and Hong Kong before landing his first job at PricewaterhouseCoopers in Zurich, Switzerland. There he worked in the assurance department, providing an auditing service to the trade, industries, and services sector in Europe and the US. At the same time, he finished his chartered accounting degree (ACCA). All of this study and experience prepared him well for his current role with Renaulac.

Jens says the company's past has shaped the way in which it functions today. "We have an excellent customer base and our customer portfolio ranges from multinational groups to sole traders," he explains. "We distinguish ourselves by high customer and end-consumer acceptance. The key for Renaulac is reactivity, flexibility, and the power to innovate."

A successful highlight in Renaulac's history was just after the Second World War when an innovative new product, le Bonalo—a powder concentrate which turns into an interior paint when it is mixed with water—was launched onto the market. "This created a lot of value for the company at the time," Jens says. "Today, Renaulac is well known for its professional, high quality products, especially in the masonry segment. Renaulac is, for example, one of the few suppliers in France to offer its customers special insurances for masonry paintworks, the so-called 'bonne-tenu' guarantee."

While Jens's transition into the executive seat has been relatively smooth, it hasn't come without any challenges. "For me, since working at Renaulac, I have faced significant challenges in a personal way as well as in a professional way. Personally, I have improved my French significantly so I am now able to drive negotiations in French. I had to further

understand the French culture to enhance my knowledge of the French paint market. Furthermore, at my young age, I've been noticed as a leader who is confident and a team player who is doing everything to bring this great company forward, so professionally I had to reassure the Renaulac team that Renaulac will act autonomously in the French and southern European markets.

"The Renaulac structure was at a limit in terms of size and a change process was needed to face the opportunities of growth. Our investment of more than €2 million per year being put into the Renaulac site, and all of the changes we made since the acquisition, reassured the whole team. We actually doubled production capacity, improved workplace conditions significantly and, therefore, also health and safety standards. We improved processes, IT infrastructure and optimised our warehouses. We are in the process of developing



Renaulac from follower to leader and with the new management team, supported by the broad experience of the J.W. Ostendorf group—their professionalism, their internationality, and not least the regular exchange with my parents, my brother, and the group management team—we have set a great basis to speed up the continuous success story of Renaulac."

Renaulac's key parts that give the business its point of difference in a >

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competitive marketplace are that it has a longstanding commitment to look after its customers, continue to take an innovative approach, and focus on best-in-class infrastructure.

“Renaulac, and also Renaulac Peinture Bâtiment, which is our professional services brand, are very customer focused and well-accepted brands after existing for almost 190 years,” Jens says. “Being a family-owned business that has fast decision-making processes makes us very efficient, reliable, and sustainable. Our willingness to meet the changing market demands regarding customer approach, brand management, and the requirements of the professional painter is a huge point of difference.”

“Our extensive network of partners in different industries helps us to



continuously generate innovation—that’s a great advantage. Our European infrastructure, using the know-how of J.W. Ostendorf, which has Europe’s most modern manufacturing plant, will develop the Renaulac plant further. With more than 60 years experience in environmentally friendly technology, our group is indeed perfectly set for future success.

Last but not least, one of the greatest advantages is the cultural mix in our companies by combining the strengths of the German and French ways of working. This gives us a massive competitive advantage.”

Renaulac has a production capacity of 45,000 tonnes per year and exports its range to international

*“For more than 20 years Jokey has been a solid partner of BB Fabrication. Together we have launched the first 16-litre bucket with IML on the market. Both our plants are located close together which simplifies our partnership and helps us to develop new products.” - Jean Philippe Lanier, Area Sales Manager (France West), Jokey*



markets in Algeria, Belgium, Guadeloupe, Madagascar, Martinique, Poland, Spain, and Tahiti. It has 150 employees and 19 of those work in the laboratory in a research and development capacity. Jens believes Renaulac is “writing an amazing story” and encourages talents out in the job market to consider joining the team. All staff members are

dedicated to providing a great service to customers and share the same vision as Jens and the business as a whole.

“We love our customers, and we say what we do and we do what we say. Serving the customer and justifying the trust that he or she places in us and in our products are our key values. Together with my

colleagues, I’m keen on producing success and I believe that the best way to do that is by giving our employees the possibility to take part in the growth and success of the group. Our company stands for professionalism in all business processes. It has a high brand affinity, brand loyalty, and brand promise. Through our transparent way of working we stand for high customer trust and customer loyalty.

“Another key value that we support is sustainability. We offer the latest technology to the customer, and, where possible, the more environmentally friendly product and application alternative to everything else on the market. That means water-based coating systems, renewable raw materials, packaging from recycled materials, and so on. That is also in the DNA of the J.W. Ostendorf group. Our focus is on water-based, future-oriented technologies that are eco-efficient and very economically and ecologically friendly. >

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- Jens Ostendorf

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Furthermore, the group is cost leader through its unrivalled and award-winning production and SCM processes which underline our sustainable functioning.

“When we hire new people we present our values and judge whether those people fit into our family. We value their willingness to take ownership, to innovate and therefore to create success. This was how we chose the new management team at Renaulac and how we have instructed them to build their teams also.”

Working in an environmentally conscious way is a key aspect to Renaulac’s strategy to remain competitive in the future. Renaulac is classified as a ‘clean factory’. This means that there is zero discharge of industrial waste to the outside

world mostly due to its closed-circuit style of operations. Prior to J.W. Ostendorf acquiring Renaulac, the former owner Philippe Bonnarne aimed to produce predominantly eco-friendly, water-based systems. This has continued under the hands of its new owners. “This principle has not only been key to J.W. Ostendorf, but also to Renaulac in the past,” Jens notes. “We will continue to promote these systems with the know-how and production excellence of J.W. Ostendorf and we are in the process of upgrading Renaulac’s production facilities by closed-loop production lines to the highest environmental and health and safety standards. This will help us to be ahead of legislation requirements and to produce an environmentally friendly product consistently.”

To maintain its status of being a reputable paint manufacturer in the French and overseas marketplace, Renaulac relies on an efficient supply chain. The

business welcomes long-term relationships with suppliers and other partners to guarantee its future success. “For us, close partnerships are a common practice in each of the different sectors we operate in. For example, in raw material, packaging, or logistics. We can’t do everything on our own and therefore we use the expertise and the know-how of our partners to produce qualified growth.

“I’ll give you an example. In the process of a research assignment we bring together specialised institutes with suppliers in order to develop ways to meet the specific Renaulac requirements. Also, together with our partners we re-organise our logistics in a future-oriented way in order to realise shorter delivery times, higher flexibility, inventory optimisation and control, and a higher service level resulting in greater customer satisfaction. Our main goal is to create value for our customers through innovation

*“Together with J.W. Ostendorf we were the first to introduce plastic buckets made of 100-per-cent recycling material for the German DIY market. Through the international sales network of J.W. Ostendorf and Renaulac we have recently extended this business to more countries across Europe.” - Henrik Grossekaemper, Management Board, groku Kunststoffe GmbH*



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by the means of our local but also global network of partners.”

It is still early days for Jens at Renaulac but he has every intention to continue the company’s long legacy in the paint manufacturing industry. He says he proposes to facilitate further growth and expansion while still maintaining a high level of professionalism, customer care, and environmental practice. “We intend to grow. That’s why we bought Renaulac. Together with the J.W. Ostendorf group’s support, we are convinced to be able to cope with high-growth concepts, as we are innovation and marketing driven, and because of our close customer loyalty. This growth will be realised in due course in both the professional and the DIY sector in France. As Renaulac is responsible for the J.W. Ostendorf group’s growth in the

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- Jens Ostendorf

south of Europe, our main target markets are also Spain and Italy. For the French professional market, we intend to grow our network of wholly owned trade stores, as well as to increase our market share through independent distributors. In addition to that, we are in the process of relaunching our brand Renaulac Peinture Bâtiment. Inorganic growth will only be considered by opportunity and certainly by complementary competencies. Furthermore, we’ll considerably optimise our product portfolio in all our business segments—that’s besides white emulsion paint, coloured emulsions, trim, wood care, tinting, specialities, thermal insulation composite systems, and so on—through the know-how from the group in a reciprocal way. Our overall aim is to double our turnover internationally within the next five years.”

Jens recognises that France’s construction sector is currently in a crisis. This means that Renaulac’s professional side of business will need to offer better solutions in a more competitive price range. By focusing on this in the future Renaulac will remain a strong player despite these difficult times. “Our plan is to produce qualified growth through further developing existing customer relationships,” Jens explains. “In order to do this we will be constantly adapting our offer to the needs of the market and, of course, through winning new clients in France and in southern Europe. The driving force of growth will be innovation through easy-to-apply, result-oriented and ecologically friendly solutions. Furthermore, we will continue to strengthen our team here at Renaulac with recognised experts.”

