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Green, Smart, and Wireless

A recognised and expanding brand in the European, US, and Asian markets, EnOcean develops wireless 'energy harvesting' technology for building automation systems, as well as for applications in industry, transportation, and smart homes.

Images courtesy of EnOcean

EnOcean is the originator of patented 'energy harvesting' wireless technology, manufacturing maintenance-free wireless sensor solutions for use in buildings, smart home and industrial applications as well as in further application fields such as the Internet of Things. The technology frees switches and sensors from cable and batteries, using freely available ambient energy. The company, based in Germany, was founded in 2001 and helps businesses in a variety of different sectors to achieve savings of as much as 40 per cent in energy and operating costs.

Dr Wald Siskens, CEO of EnOcean, was appointed to the role in September last year. He has a strong vision for the company and has set about implementing three key strategic targets. The first has been to secure and expand the leadership in the existing business of building automation. "We want to make sure that we continue to realise that it's our loyal customers

who pay our paycheck," Wald explains. "That's at the heart of our company. It has been what has got us to where we are today and we should never forget that.

"Closely related to that, of course, we consistently need to assess where we can grow in and beyond our core market of building automation. One example is an opportunity in LED illumination in our North American market, complementing building automation control. In this field there is a lot of government support but also, at the same time, a lot of government pressure to improve the efficiency of buildings with new regulations on the illumination controls. With our technology we enable our customers and fixture makers to provide a total wireless control solution for the LED replacement opportunity.

"The second target is somewhat more internal but nevertheless relevant for our vision to spread the excitement that sensors can be powered with ambient energy:

driving a technology roadmap. The technology we produce is widely applicable to numerous industries and so we see very large potential, particularly in the Internet of Things market on both the professional and consumer side. We just need to make sure that we keep on innovating our core technology, our 'energy harvesting' technology, and that we keep expanding the application of that technology from the building automation sector where we are today, but also in the smart home and other Internet of Things markets.

"Last but not least—the team is my third focus. One core element of why I joined EnOcean was the team. Although it is an older start-up, about 14 years old, it still has the DNA and the passion of a very early start-up. For me, it is especially important to make sure that our team of about 50 people are aligned, excited, and moving in the same direction."

Wald initiated a quarterly methodology called OKR >

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- Wald Siskens





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(objectives and key results) to measure performance and project-relevant outcomes. He says this approach has provided room for employees to excel and to have freedom in their innovations while securing the knowledge of what's relevant and what's not to the business. Every few months they can then sit down and make the necessary course adjustments in an open environment.

Wald refers to EnOcean technology as 'magical technology'. "The first time you press an EnOcean switch and realise that a signal is created and sent only by the power of your finger is a magical moment. At the same time, it is so widely applicable that the company could easily get confused and go in too many multiple directions."

To address this, EnOcean has always been committed to excelling in the one market, that being professional buildings. "From day one, the company focused on that," Wald notes. EnOcean was later able to define its technology as the leader in wireless controls and building automation. Then in 2008, the EnOcean Alliance was formed to develop and promote self-powered wireless monitoring and control systems for sustainable buildings by formalising the interoperable wireless standard. Members include a core group of more than 350 customers who together make sure there is demand for the creation of new EnOcean technology while ensuring all of the products are interoperable.

"Today, we have more than 1,500 interoperable products," Wald says. "Together with our customers, we have equipped about 350,000 buildings worldwide with our technology. What our team has done really well, and not all start-ups do this, is stick to the strong focus that was initiated in the early days. Sure, it wasn't always easy, those first years were tough, but we have really been able to establish a brand because of that. What's exciting for me now is that we are at a time where we can start looking at additional markets for our technology."

"At the end of the day, we are not making the light bulbs, we are not making the smarter heating or air-conditioning systems. We are providing the controls that make those systems smart."

- Wald Siskens

EnOcean exists and has experienced success because its 'magical technology' is highly innovative. That core technology has then been applied, for example, to light switches, dimmers, blind controls, water sensors, heating valves, temperature gauges, and even bus stops. Wald says the company is always innovating and developing new concepts and ideas which will enhance and create a more environmentally friendly society.

"We have applied the smart harvesting technology to different products, but we have also continued to invest in the harvesting technology itself. Half of the company is innovating the technology, and the other half is selling it. There is no other company today that has a complete energy-harvesting platform of energy converters, wireless modules, energy management, and



ultra-low-power radio that can be integrated into products. EnOcean is clearly unique in what it offers."

In the future, Wald believes that LED illumination, smart heating, and air-conditioning will play a greater role as people seek 'greener' and more energy-efficient solutions. EnOcean's technology has the potential to have a significant impact in these areas. "It's a huge opportunity where we can contribute," Wald says. "At the end of the day, we are not making the light bulbs, we are not making the smarter heating or air-conditioning systems. We are providing the controls that make those systems smart."

There are studies predicting that by 2025 there will be roughly 10 trillion wireless sensors for the Internet of Things. "To put that in numbers, 10 trillion battery-powered sensors require a million tons of lithium," Wald explains. "This is basically 10 times the amount of lithium the world produces per year currently. So there is tremendous opportunity for us to go into these markets and replace the battery-operated technology."

"There is excitement around our technology and when we can get EnOcean technology into a higher percentage of switches and sensors then the better it would be for us, and, I think it's fair to say, the better it would be for the world." •