

PIK-AS Austria GmbH – Maker of True Masterpieces

Photos: PIK-AS



Interview with Christina Polster, DI(FH), CEO of PIK-AS Austria GmbH

ESD: PIK-AS is a family enterprise: can you tell us a little bit about how the company came to be, what have been its guiding principles, and how has it changed and grown over the last few years.

Polster: For almost 40 years PIK-AS Austria has been pursuing one strong, core principle: Support international industries with compact but robust products with the highest quality. When my father Franz Polster founded and settled the company's headquarters in Mariasdorf, Austria, he started with one employee who would stand by his side until retirement. Whilst growing continuously, PIK-AS established itself – mainly within Eastern Europe – as a trusted and exclusive sales partner for electromechanical products such as power relays, power connectors or special switches for the machine building and special-purpose indus-



Managing in the family: Franz and Christina Polster.

ries. To get to know the market and our clients better, PIK-AS established sales organisations in different countries, and it became increasingly clear that the defence industry is a strong match to our core principle.

The turn of the millennium was also a kick-off for Franz to change the business from being a strategic sales partner of manufacturers to a manufacturer itself. This contemporary and strategic change was even continuing in 2012, and at that time I decided to focus the leadership of PIK-AS and aim it strongly at the military market. My primary objective was to continue the successful story of PIK-AS, keeping the company growing, but nevertheless flexib-

le and manoeuvrable to suit the occasionally volatile market surroundings.

In 2015, the successful transition was completed, and since then I am head of the PIK-AS Group.

ESD: You supply specialised components (switches and relays and the like) for demanding but diverse markets. Is the military market the most challenging? Is there significant crossover of technology and basic principles between the sectors you supply? And given the very broad geographical markets to which PIK-AS delivers, do they offer specific technological challenges?

Polster: I have always had an interest in the company's business, and my father introduced me to different markets from a very young age. From those impressions, I was inspired to work in the military business! This market is totally fascinating and demanding: business partners need products that come in low(er) quantities, are of the highest quality, with long qualification and certification tests – and all while meeting their tight budgets!

Our products are developed to deliver, and certified according to various military standards. Let me give you an example... In all modesty, our LED interior lights are true masterpieces. They are specifically designed to meet EMC, temperature, shock and vibration requirements – and we even had the chance to successfully test them against blast!

We work worldwide, with different requirements and standards from our customers. It is important to know that most OEMs are struggling with budgets – and new technologies aren't cheap. We want to be sure to work according to the industry's needs, so we have to be as close as possible during the development process.

ESD: To what major factors do you attribute the success of PIK-AS over the years, particularly towards the military market?

Polster: We love to be a private, midsized and flexible company. Thus we have an important strength: We are adaptable, but always providing the highest quality and the most reliable products. PIK-AS works closely with several major OEMs of military vehicles but there is another exciting area we are perfectly trained in: we directly support armies in developing solutions where the requirements are coming right from the soldiers – it's they who need to work with the equipment and it is essential to respect their needs!

We live communication: We participate on a lot of local tradeshow, respecting the local economy and having native speakers in our company to best support the engineers. Our customers and suppliers appreciate that we

work in a trustful, responsible way with them: a handshake is enough. Every PIK-AS team member strives every day to provide the best service and support.

ESD: Looking ahead, radio frequency security is highly suspect in these increasingly "cyber-aware" times. Does this trend have any impact on your business?

Polster: We have to remain alert to any potential threats within RF-security, but in regards to our portfolio there is only a small range among our product portfolio involved – so far.

ESD: When will you next be looking back at your recent / short-term achievements? And what will those achievements be?

Polster: 2018 and the first half of 2019 were outstanding in terms of receiving high-volume OEM-contracts. Our target for 2020 is to focus on the Middle Eastern countries, where there is a clear demand for high quality parts, espe-



installed map-reading-light in a protected vehicle



PA293007 medical high-intensity light

cially when it comes to temperature sensitivity. So, local visits and participation at IDEX 2021 will be on our schedule, as well as Eurosatory 2020 in Paris.

We are also looking forward to new developments! I mentioned the LED interior lights where we just created a special version for military ambulances with white and blackout light including a stepless dimming possibility. We are able to provide best lighting conditions for medical treatment in the field.

Please stay tuned for a great release at the end of 2020, once we have finished our testing and qualification phase, with a special switching solution sector!

The interview was conducted by Stephen Barnard.