

In conversation with...

Petra Bots, General Manager OilDoc GmbH



You have been the general manager at OilDoc Academy since 2013 but how did your journey into the lubricants world begin?

I think the world of lubricants has always been in my blood given I was born into a lubrication family. When I was a child, my father Peter Weismann worked as an international lubricants salesman for Optimol, traveling the whole world for more than nine months a year.

In 1991, when Optimol restructured, he and my mum, Barbara Weismann decided that Europe was ready for the first independent high-class laboratory for lubricant analysis in Europe and founded WEARCHECK GmbH (now OELCHECK GmbH). They started their business in my home-village Brannenburg.

For my younger brother Paul and I, this meant we were able to regularly supplement our pocket money by doing odd jobs in the laboratory. We accompanied our parents to business meetings and trade shows around the world and saw how difficult it was, especially in the early years, to convince lubricant users of the many benefits of lubricant analysis. Therefore, the world of lubricants was something that was a natural and familiar route for me.

Is it fair to say your parents were visionaries, in particular your mother; as a woman in a man's world, she was quite a pioneer – how does this resonate with you working in the industry today?

My parents are my personal heroes; especially my mother. She is indeed a strong and independent woman. For her, gender issues played no role at all. She gave me the self-belief and self-image that there is basically nothing you cannot achieve as a woman. However, what's always important is perseverance, an open mind and a real interest in innovations and fellow human beings – that also helps when you work in a male-dominated industry.

So it was familiar territory, but did you ever consider a career in a different sector?

When I left school, at first I didn't want to have anything to do with lubricants. Originally, I started training and working as a media designer at an advertising agency in Munich. But on the sidelines I was busy creating advertising flyers and working on presentations for OELCHECK or programming and maintaining the company website. In 2013, this changed, I decided to create my own division of the family business, OilDoc Academy. I have been the managing director of OilDoc Academy ever since, an independent OELCHECK spin-off.

What are OilDoc Academy's aims and how would you describe its value to industry members?

Our declared goal is to impart knowledge on all aspects of lubricants, lubrication, condition monitoring and proactive maintenance – and to do so in a practical and understandable way. We organise roughly 50 seminars and workshops every year (pre-COVID obviously!) and bi-annually the OilDoc Conference & Exhibition takes place with approximately 450 participants. In addition, we produce video training materials, we form part of the editorial department of the magazine "Schmierstoff+Schmierung" and support our customers through coaching, tutorial courses and lubricant-related trouble-shooting.

Currently, my focus is to manage and oversee OilDoc Academy, the conception of new course outlines, the Academy's content and general marketing of our services and products.

What are the biggest challenges OilDoc has faced during the COVID pandemic and the biggest learning messages you will take away from this experience?

The COVID pandemic has forced us to change our business focus from one day to the next. On-site

seminars were not feasible at all for a long time. In addition, many companies had other challenges and issues to focus on rather than promoting the training of their employees. We realised we needed to adapt and quickly switched our program to live webinars and video training - fortunately for us we have years of experience in this area and our instructors are trained Virtual Classroom Teachers.

Moving forward, we will continue to offer our seminars and conferences as hybrid events – making sure they are as flexible and safe for our participants as possible. In addition, we are increasingly expanding our range of web-based, interactive online courses. For example, we have now produced more than 20 hours of video material, tests and presentations for our new English-language MLA/MLT I certificate course “Lubrication & Oil Analysis”.

OilDoc '21 has now been moved to take place from 17th – 19th November. What can we expect? How will it differ from previous meetings?

This year's OilDoc Conference in November will essentially be the same as always, but with a few different touches taking into account the ongoing challenges of COVID. As always, there is an excellent presentation programme with leading industry speakers, and companies will be able to showcase their brands in the international exhibition space at the venue in Rosenheim. Of course, the event has been arranged to take all health and safety aspects into consideration. We have had to find a new location for our traditional Bavarian Evening – but it's a good one! And for the first time, on Day 3 we will offer different excursions and practical-oriented workshops for all who wish to participate.

For our virtual participants the whole event and all presentations will be streamed live in our event App. They will get the chance to ask questions and interact with the other participants.

We are very excited about this new format and are keeping our fingers crossed in the hope we can welcome as many participants as possible in-person! We look forward to seeing you there!

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www.conference.oildoc.com