

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE RATINGS

by Nick Needs

In the future social media will become more and more important for car wash operators. Nick Needs finds out why this is on a visit to Christ Wash Systems' HQ in Germany.



Marco Macic, Sales Director for Christ Wash Systems, Nick Needs & Otto Christ.

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- Marco Maričić, International Sales Director, Christ Wash Systems

With turnover up by 45 million euros over the last five years and represented in 60 countries around the world, Christ Wash Systems is one of the global leaders in car wash technology, manufacturing roll-overs, wash tunnels, self-service wash bays, commercial washes, polishing units and water recycling systems, plus a range of accessories.

Whilst the company has actually been trading for 140 years, founded originally as a crafts business by Anton Christ in 1879, it was family descendent Franz Christ who actually built the first car wash in 1963, next to his parents' business. In our series of articles on the key movers and shakers in the international car wash sector, the erpecnews team made the journey to Memmingen, Germany, to get some more insight into what's ticking the boxes for Christ Wash Systems.

CEO of the business Otto Christ told me, "The main ingredient for a successful market in the car wash business is high employment and regions where people have good jobs and expensive cars. As such, France, Germany, Italy and Scandinavia are classic markets for us, however the UK is an exception, mainly because hand washing on the street is still allowed and also there has been a huge growth of commercial hand wash outlets, capturing 60% of the market in less than 10 years".

With all things being considered, Christ Wash Systems feel that attended service is not the future for the car wash industry and pointed us towards Scandinavia where modern sophisticated unmanned operations are driving the market forwards. "We think automation has to be the future", Otto Christ said. "It offers increased efficiency,

speed and is much more environmentally friendly."

Social media & having fun

But it's not just about equipment technology. New International Sales Director for Christ Wash Systems, Marco Maričić, told me that in the future, social media will play a major role in the success of a car wash business. He said "Like hotels, restaurants and other establishments frequented by the public, car washes in the coming years will be rated along with everything else and good ratings are good for business. Then there is data and artificial intelligence, which if managed pro-actively may lead to generating more traffic during the quieter periods through incentivised promotions and loyalty schemes. Generally speaking though, this is a huge challenge for the car wash sector but as equipment manufacturers, we feel we share in the responsibility with our operators, to get them the tools they need in order to benefit from this digital innovation as much as possible."

Making a car wash more fun, is another initiative that Christ Wash Systems, along with other equipment manufacturers of late, has taken up in recent times, with coloured foams and accessories aimed at heightening children's enjoyment. I remember the excitement going into a car wash when I was a boy and not much has changed.

Innovation

Christ Wash Systems has in recent years put a great deal of effort behind bringing new develop-

ments to market. As examples of this, its rollover wash unit Aquatus Prime, allows customers the option to clean vehicles in a touchless mode, using only a chemical and high pressure cleaning system or with conventional textile brush technology. In the self-service wash bay sector, its new foam lance pistol XXL – Bubblegun, is an innovative concept in which a single pistol can run three different wash programmes saving on fresh water, washing chemicals and energy in the process. In addition, with its payment station Vendor and its new mobile car wash app, Christ has been able to complement its range of machine technology with state of the art payment systems and digital communication tools that enable the operator and the end customer to use its car wash systems without the need for personnel.

The business - it's family

When I asked Otto Christ about his undoubted passion for the company, he said "I came into the company when I was 30. Before that I studied and took several apprenticeships, adamant that like many young people involved in a family business, you fight for a bit and say that you want nothing to do with it. In the end though I realised that the company was part of me and ultimately I gave in. From an early age, I understood a lot about the business as I had listened to my father for many years when he would come home from work and tell me about various happenings. This gave me a good foundation in the operations and ethics of the company, which still stand true today."