

be-connected exclusive interviews  
1on1 with visionary business leaders

Company: has-to-be gmbh  
Interview Partner: Martin Klässner  
Position: CEO

## The industry as a whole needs to work together to carve out its market niche.

Considering how much work is involved in a launch, we're extra-pleased that our own Martin Klässner has taken a little time out to be the first of our exclusive be-connected interviewees. This is number one in a new series in which we'll talk with leading mobility sector visionaries and stakeholders. Here the CEO of has-to-be gmbh (founded in 2013) talks not just about the genesis of the be-connected concept and the thinking behind this interview series – a first in this market – but also the challenges he expects the mobility sector to face over the next few years.

**htb: Martin, tell us what be-connected is all about and how this interview series came to life!**

**MK:** We've always seen it as one of our responsibilities to connect all the influential players in the sector. As you'll already guess from the name, this has primarily taken the form of a networking platform built around our be-connected conference. In this context, it's all about focusing on the industry as a whole – has-to-be gmbh deliberately stays in the background. And that's worked really well so far. Even before COVID-19, but now more than ever, the need for face-to-face networking goes far beyond a single annual event. For us it was clear that we needed to look past physical events and provide another neutral platform for networking and knowledge transfer.

Until now, our efforts in this regard have been channeled towards the German-speaking community under the be-connected banner. Now we'd like to bring the entire European market together and thus drive sustainable mobility for the whole continent. At the end of the day, the basic principle we're following is to support the entire industry in getting to where it needs to be. Doing that will drive success for all concerned.

**htb: What can we look forward to in this series? Who will be the first interviewees?**

**MK:** We've already seen a great response to our interview requests, which serves only to confirm once more that our industry is crying out for an opportunity to come together and share insights. We'll publish one interview per month at first, but we're prepared to adapt if it makes sense to do so. I don't want to give away too much about the interviewees we've got lined up, but I'll let one of them slip – we'll shortly be publishing our Q&A with Claes Lindgren of IKEA Ingka Group, in which he talks about the electrification of the 'last mile'.

**htb:** Is there still another be-connected conference in the pipeline?

**MK:** Of course! Networks are built on personal contact – something which is difficult to replicate online. So we're definitely going to stage the conference once again – just as soon as it's possible to plan with a little more certainty. Until then, we'll be relying on other top-class formats – for example, our 'executive talks'. This is where we put a small, select group of industry decision-makers around a table and let them debate some of the biggest questions they currently face.

**htb:** Let's talk about mobility now. Can you tell us about the vision you had when you were founding has-to-be gmbh?

**MK:** Back then, quite honestly, we weren't even sure if EV Charging was really going to gain any traction. From the start, we knew we wanted to drive regenerative, green mobility and make carbon-neutral mobility possible. But hydrogen fuel or other alternatives could have grabbed the initiative. I'm pleased, of course, that EV Charging turned out to be the one getting the headlines! I'm also thrilled that we're now seeing it make its breakthrough in city centers. When it comes to intermodal transport, we need to stay patient a little longer, and see how things develop in the next five to ten years.

*"In urban areas, we've reached the point where there's no turning back." (Martin Klässner)*

**htb:** So how much of your early vision has become reality today?

**MK:** EV Charging is now a commodity. In recent years, electric driving was essentially only for an elite test group with plenty of patience and a high tolerance for hassle. Now, it's realistic for anybody – and that change has come within the last five years. A completely new market has grown up, and it's accessible to everyone. By means of a huge improvement right across the market in terms of technology, hardware and standardization, we've been able to break down the barriers that previously existed. We hadn't seen anything like that in such a short space of time before.

**htb:** And in the future? What will be the biggest issues in EV Charging over the next three years?

**MK:** With the biggest hurdles now out of the way, I believe there are now three major challenges. The first is optimizing price. Charging has to make economic sense to remain attractive in the long term. All the costs need to be looked at, whether they be for electricity, infrastructure, hardware or the network. As growth continues, we need to reduce them all – otherwise the market won't be viable. The second thing is system reliability. All too often, we're still seeing charging stations that are unavailable or don't work – I can't ever recall a fuel pump at a gas station not working! That's a big issue we have to address in the next one to three years. And the third of these challenges is load management. Growing market penetration means we need intelligent operation systems in order to even out electricity spikes and support regenerative energy models. Electricity should be consumed where it's produced, not sent all over Europe to meet local demand. In my opinion, those are the big issues we need to tackle in the next three years.

htb: What's the kind of headline you'd like to see when the mainstream press reports on mobility?

MK: If I had to really boil it down, I'd say it should probably be one underlining that EV Charging is now being thought about in a holistic, borderless way. Something like this:

*EV Charging no longer stops at international borders.*

*Austrian MSPs have now embraced roaming and a functional, standardized European system to manage it.*

htb: To end off, what are the first three things that come to mind when you hear the phrase 'future mobility'?

MK: Carbon-neutral. Borderless. Sharing.

htb: Thanks so much for your time!

This interview was conducted by Sabrina Wurzer (has-to-be gmbh) on May 14<sup>th</sup> 2021.

#### About has-to-be gmbh

has-to-be paves the way for sustainable mobility. With its comprehensive EV charging solution and innovative services, has-to-be provides everything companies require to enjoy success in the field of EV charging: from the scalable operation of charging infrastructure to the end-to-end management of worldwide mobility solutions.

More than 100 employees from ten nations work at the headquarters of has-to-be gmbh in the federal province of Salzburg and its offices in Munich and Vienna. Since 2019, the Volkswagen Group has been a strong strategic partner of has-to-be.

#### Contact

has-to-be gmbh

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