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MOON POWER Interview: 'eMobility has gone mainstream.'

Company: MOON POWER GmbH
Interviewee: Robert Steinböck
Position: Head of MOON R&D

In this interview we speak with Robert Steinböck, Head of R&D at MOON POWER GmbH. Focused on eMobility, the company is a subsidiary of Porsche Holding Salzburg and part of the Volkswagen Group. Steinböck reveals why auto manufacturers convincing the public is key to eMobility achieving unstoppable momentum – and why now is the time for radical change with respect to energy sources as we work to fight climate change.

htb: Tell us about your role at MOON POWER GmbH.

RS: The first time I seriously engaged with the climate change issue was at the end of 2014. When the diesel scandal shook our group a year later, it was clear something had to change. Together with my boss at the time and my colleague Thomas Reitsammer, we founded MOON as a brand specifically developed to deal with EV Charging infrastructure. Now I'm responsible for products and innovation at the company. I'm the resident networker and I guess you could call me the one that drives MOON.

htb: What was your mission when you founded the company? And whom do your EV Charging services target?

RS: As 'sustainable energy systems architects' we wanted to contribute to energy transformation. Specifically, the move away from fossil fuels and towards clean electricity.

htb: Let's start by talking about the way things currently are in the automotive sector. What are some of the challenges tied up with the mobility revolution?

RS: The biggest challenge for manufacturers is building new factories and/or assembly lines. So their focus is currently on developing the infrastructure needed for producing vehicles. Battery systems are the critical element in the sector's ongoing success – and despite constant changes to the EU regulations regarding the banning of combustion engines, we can assume that at least 30 percent of all new vehicles produced by 2030 could be eVehicles. Having invested €52 billion in eMobility, the Volkswagen Group is undoubtedly one of the manufacturers most committed to climate neutrality. It's important that battery cell production is moved to Europe. Volkswagen wants to build its own factories for that purpose. The company has set itself some serious goals with regard to climate neutrality by 2050.

htb: So, is eMobility already feasible for the everyday driver?

RS: Anybody who has driven an eCar for longer than a week knows that eMobility is already able to meet the needs of the average motorist. The demand for eCars is huge, while skepticism is declining. What's certain is that winning further clients will depend on 'persuasion' – and that driving combustion vehicles in the future will have negative financial consequences. However, the development of publicly accessible charging stations needs to get a push in line with the rising number of eVehicles. Over the last three years, I've been able to observe the increase in charging station occupancy at close quarters. Last summer, you really needed to strike it lucky to find an available charge point right away.

htb: So, from your perspective it's already quite clear how mobility will look in the future?

RS: Yes, and I think we're already seeing a clear picture emerge. It's most definitely electric...and autonomy will also play a role in the future. That's going to change mobility in a massive way!

htb: What do you see as the real drivers of electric transformation in the automotive sector? Who is responsible for developing the charging infrastructure?

RS: If we want to get global warming under control, our energy sources need to change radically. Those that emit greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide have to be replaced by clean energy in the next few years. We've got to increase the worldwide proportion of clean energy to 50% by 2050, a rise of around 20% from the current figure. Along with that, we need energy-saving measures and have to modernize our energy systems. Given that it's responsible for around a quarter of all greenhouse gas emissions, mobility has a decisive role to play in the transformation. Who exactly is responsible for building up the charging infrastructure is a great question! That's a bit chicken-and-egg.

We recognized this early on at MOON, which is why we've been supporting dealers in setting up public 'fuel stations' for eVehicles.

htb: What challenges do dealers face when it comes to installing a charging infrastructure at their premises?

RS: Most of them are located on the urban periphery. And the grid connections available aren't usually sufficient to add public charging stations. Among the profitable solutions to that are smart ecosystems such as PV and battery storage, ideally using former vehicle batteries along with an innovative load management system. Publicly accessible charge points, in turn, require innovative, intelligent payment systems. It's ideal if this has a direct link to the electric load management system.

htb: Where are people choosing to charge – at home, at work or on the road?

RS: All of the above! But it's strongly dependent on the user. For private individuals, they'll definitely charge on the road and – if they have the option – at home. Company vehicle drivers, on the other hand, will strongly favor the infrastructure available at their workplace, but will of course charge on the road and at home too. So, we see providing billing systems that can handle all three use cases as a necessity. For example, drivers 'refueling' at home is still the cheapest option for employers to charge

company cars. But the employees won't want to use their own electricity for that, of course! So that's a case where you need a smart billing system that can refund the costs of home charging as part of the employee's monthly pay, in compliance with tax requirements. Ideally, this process would be fully automated.

htb: It's quite noticeable that the mobility sector is strengthening partnerships with other industries, as well as with competitors, in order to spur on both infrastructures and technologies. How do you assess the situation in that regard? Are collaborations an essential ingredient in the recipe for success, or simply 'nice to have'?

RS: I believe partnerships are a necessity, and that ultimately means networking. This has basically always been the case. Nobody can be the complete specialist in any given field – rather, you're an expert in your field and somebody else is an expert in theirs. So, it's obvious that the best solution for all is to get everyone together. On top of that, innovation and development happen faster as a result of such pooling. I see wanting to do everything 'alone' as fundamentally wrong, and it won't help the industry as a whole progress either. It's always been my goal to bring the right players together at the right place and time.

htb: What are your primary tasks over the next few weeks and months?

RS: We've already made a lot of plans for the next few years. But along with our massive growth and expansion into new countries, I think we can sum up MOON's next major steps in four key points. Let's begin with managing our dealers' charging infrastructures. Through efficient charge point management and enabling public access, we can offer added value for both our dealers and customers. But the billing system is a key concept – it needs to cover those three use cases: charging at work, at home and on the road. That delivers real value for everybody involved.

Beyond that, we'll focus on our role as energy ecosystem specialists, since we've been dedicated to building PV installations from the very beginning.

"For the first time in automotive history, there's a simple way to produce your own fuel."

As far as sustainability is concerned, however, we'd like to take things a step further. We're working on a 'second life' concept for batteries that actually makes sense. Using our close ties with the manufacturers within our group, we want to find other uses for returned batteries. For example, many of these are highly suitable as fixed storage units at our dealer locations, where they can minimize electricity usage spikes. Or they can store energy from PV installations in private homes. And our final big focus area is increasing our efforts with regard to 'Community Charging', where we'll try to simplify people's lives through intelligent billing processes and smart energy management.

htb: What kinds of headlines would you like to be seeing in the specialist media going forward?

RS:

“As a Europe-wide sustainable energy systems architect, MOON is making a decisive contribution to climate action through innovative products as well as developing publicly accessible fast-charging stations with fair billing processes.”

htb: What are the first three words that come to mind when you think about future mobility?

RS: Fun, electric and autonomous.

This interview was conducted by Sabrina Wurzer, PR & Marketing Manager at has-to-be gmbh on 19th January 2022

About MOON POWER GmbH

MOON POWER GmbH: eMobility ambassador and systems provider

[MOON POWER GmbH](#) is a Porsche Holding Salzburg brand, which brings brand-independent charging infrastructure and energy management solutions onto the market. If battery-based eMobility is to truly make a breakthrough, the charging infrastructure needs to be sufficiently widespread. This is why Porsche Holding founded MOON. This business year, MOON is pushing on with its internationalization strategy. It's currently present in two countries and commercially active in 18 others through associations.

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 120 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.

Contact

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