Union Engineering: A CEO, a mission and a vision

A portrait of Union Engineering's CEO Kim Christian Dalum

Kim Christian Dalum was appointed CEO for Union Engineering May 1 - 2014

How would you describe CEO Kim Dalum?

I am an ambitious senior executive who takes pleasure in creating a clear vision and pursuing it to success. As a leader known for delivering results, I am also a passionate team player striving to transform organizations into high performing, world-class leaders. This is why the job as CEO with a market leader like Union Engineering suits me really well.

And the private person Kim Dalum?

Privately, I’m first of all a family man, but to me, there is no clear line between my work and my private life, because my job is demanding and it is after family my main interest. When I get a chance, I like to go bike-riding or skiing with the family, and I am fascinated by great architecture.

It is now approximately six months since you became CEO for Union Engineering – how do you see the company?

People are our asset. I’m impressed with the knowledge Union employees have of CO₂ technology, process design and how to engineer, build and service our CO₂ plants. It is outstanding to have a company where every single employee focus entirely on improving customer experience, processes, plant designs and cost on CO₂ purification and liquefaction plants.

I see individual employees who strive, day after day, to improve the competitiveness of our customers and reduce environmental impact through innovative solutions and thereby make our tagline ‘World Leader in CO₂ technology’ even bolder.

The fact that Union is a global organisation – what challenges does that present?

Yes – we’re a global organisation, and we need to focus on improving our cross-border knowledge sharing and networking skills and consolidate the company. In that way we can allocate the best expert to a specific job much faster.

I find that people at Union Engineering are reliable and persistent. They think globally, are customer-oriented, safety-conscious and act responsibly towards all our stakeholders, each other and the environment.

This is how I would describe Union Engineering after six months.

Union Engineering’s branding or tagline is ‘World Leader in CO₂ technology’. What is the history behind the words?

There’s no doubt in my mind that we have become a world leader because of our focus and determination to obtain the position, and because of a clear vision and strategy supported by a small stable group of passionate owners either in or very close to the company.

It’s been an impressive but also a challenging and sometimes costly journey up the learning curve, because CO₂ plants are complex, and the development of products and processes has to be based on comprehensive know-how, science and simulations. Tests are always full-scale and carried out in cooperation with customers, and there is no escape, even if it becomes difficult and costly to meet specifications. But we have had the courage and the focus to keep climbing, also on stormy days.

What do you think it takes to maintain the leading position?

We intend to continue strengthening our position, and to fulfill our vision we aim to remain innovative and continue to be a technology leader in all segments, have the strongest brand, the best and most satisfied employees in the industry and lead by volume and income.

I think we will do well when sticking to our mission: “Through our process knowledge and innovation we provide engineered solutions and services that contribute to our customers’ competitiveness and reduce environmental impact.”

What do you consider the main drivers in developing the company?

Our company mission drives the processes, the vision shows the way – and it is crucial for people to know the direction, to know what they’re aiming for and to have success. When you know the different KPIs and achieve them, it becomes a driving force for employee satisfaction and for energy and joy in your working life.

An old Japanese proverb said: Vision without action is a day dream; action without vision is a nightmare.

Many of Union Engineering’s customers are global, multinational companies like Linde, AirLiquide, Coca-Cola and Pepsi… what does it take to supply customers of that size? And what are the challenges?

It is true that almost all our customers are much larger than Union Engineering, and that places heavy demands on us. However, we employ more CO₂ specialists than any of our customers, which makes us an interesting consultant and expert in our specific area. This status provides us a network, keeps us on our toes and gives us customer insight, but it’s also very challenging, and it’s a prime requirement to recruit, develop and keep the best talents in all areas.

We have invested heavily in people, and Union Engineering has been very successful in that regard. We deal with many complex contracts, with processes, raw gas analyses, technological solutions and documentation to mention a few aspects. This takes knowledge and skills, but it has moved us forward, and we’ve become better and stronger.

Finally, we’ve learned that large global customers prefer suppliers who can sell and deliver a set of products and services to many locations; suppliers who can quickly solve problems in different locations, and who can work closely with customer teams to improve products and processes. We aim to be on top of this and improve on a daily basis.

Looking ahead, how do you see the future for Union Engineering?

Well, we have many initiatives and exciting things ahead of us. Our priority is to grow with existing customers and do what we’re best at, but last year Union Engineering established a good foothold in North America by acquiring Wittemann Co. We certainly have the ambition to grow our company there, and with its demand for CO₂ technology, the Oil & Gas segment looks interesting for growth as well.

We also experience that a growing number of projects demand solution implementation where we take over the turn-key part of the project. We’re equipped to do that and will also focus on that in the future.

I’m convinced that we’ll stay alert, agile and loyal to our values, and we trust this will lead us to success and growth in both existing and new customer and geographic segments. This means that we’ll strive to stay close to our customers in order to develop new and more competitive solutions and hereby further penetrate existing markets and enter and penetrate new markets.

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