



LOGICDATA Builds New Austrian HQ on Innovation

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By Rob Kirkbride







About 80 percent of the 200 people who work for Austrian height-adjustable component maker LOGICDATA have master's degrees. Another 23 percent of the company's employees are working on degrees. That is an impressive amount of brain power.

"We are really focused on highly educated people here," said Managing Director Walter Koch. "It is part of our culture. After all, we are looking for things that others do not see."

The company employs 85 research and development engineers, all of whom are pushing the limits on how to make height-adjustability easier to use, smaller and designed with the environment in mind. In short, LOGICDATA wants everyone to have the opportunity to buy and use a height-adjustable table.

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The company, which just built a stunning, new headquarters in the Austrian Alps, is better described, perhaps, as a company looking for the most innovative ways to help people work better and healthier. That certainly includes height-adjustable components, but it is branching out beyond that category.

LOGICDATA began working on what it calls "mechtronics" in 2013. It is the marriage of mechanics and electronics, something the company has always done, but only recently did it begin focusing on it. Mechanics has its limits, said Stefan Lukas, managing director of tech-

nology. Electronics has its limits, too, he said. But together, mechnronics is nearly limitless in terms of what the company can develop. "That was a big step forward for us," he said.

LOGICDATA always has thought about innovation. The company was the first to have a height-adjustable desk that could be controlled by phone — actually a PDA, since it was invented prior to the release of the first Apple iPhone. It was too early to catch on.

Its Synthesis idea is the embodiment of the way LOGICDATA thinks. There are other things in the office beyond the desk. Synthesis creates an interactive link between the desk, ergonomic work chair and other work tools. LOGICLink is the first product to come out of the Synthesis category.

The company wants to "open up the workplace" to LOGICDATA products, according to Lukas. "These products are intuitive and adjust to the way (workers) need them," he said. "We are trying to bring comfort and ergonomics together. Our assignment is to develop the building blocks that our customers need."

Because the culture revolves around learning and experimentation, Koch knows not every path LOGICDATA takes will lead to a new product. It is not a straightforward thing, he said. They might start out looking at developing a product one way and find it leads to something altogether different — or to nothing at all.

The idea for the new LOGICDATA campus came to Koch about two years ago. "This is more than just a building to me," Koch said. "It is a product. It is also our homeland."

The company has spent nearly 12 million Euros on the new campus. The atrium is the hub of the campus, open to all of its floors with a marble waterfall and a moss wall that acts as the focal point. The building is split into two distinct halves. When a visitor walks in, on the left is found what the company is doing today — work on existing products and projects. To the right is space for looking at what comes next — education areas, collaborative rooms, research and development. "When you enter the building," Koch said, "I want you to say, 'Wow! What's going on here?'"

The right side of the campus is anchored by a lecture hall. Again, it is key to LOGICDATA's drive to keep learning and exploring. There is a Cisco system that allows video conferencing with the company's global team. The auditorium can be opened up to the showroom.

Even break time is a chance to learn. Every Friday, the company holds what is called a "10 at 10," a 10-minute lecture at 10 a.m. that is usually presented by a fellow employee on a topic relevant to projects LOGICDATA is working on. All of the company's employees gather in the atrium of the headquarters to learn. After the presentation, cake is served.



SMART control box



Touch Display



Logicdrive

There are several collaboration rooms on the learning side of the building. The company is going to test using Haworth's Bluescape product and another from Adobe Creative Cloud to see which one fits its needs best. "What is important to me is that we not have a 'normal' meeting," Koch said.

The high tech is balanced by the company's "low tech" heating system, which is run by burning wood chips. Actually, it is high tech as it provides clean, efficient and environmentally

friendly heat to the whole campus. It is a place to go for workers to think.

If they are too tired to think, they will be able to go to the company's power napping room being built. LOGICDATA is designing and building its own power napping boxes. When complete this summer, it will have room for 10-12 nappers. Also under construction is an "adventure park" outside on the campus. The park will have a soccer field, basketball court, water feature and a speaker's corner where the



friendly heat to the whole campus.

The learning side of the campus also includes a fab lab — a small scale workshop where prototypes can be developed and built. Koch believes it is important to touch and feel a concept before it goes into further development. There are also sound and test labs, and an EMC lab is under development which will test the electromagnetic field produced by electric height-adjustable tables.

Koch took what he calls the best part of the building — the top floor, central location that links both sides of the building and has the best views — for a library. It is a contemplative space with warm, wood furniture, acoustical panels made from crushed and dried wildflowers, casual seating, bookshelves and a few

company can hold outdoor symposiums. It is a playful company. There is a gong in the middle of the atrium that is struck every time there is a major milestone in the company like a new customer or a major project. When the gong is struck, the entire company comes together to celebrate. Since the company has grown, it had to add a high tech element to the gong — a loudspeaker system to transmit the gong sound to the far flung parts of campus.

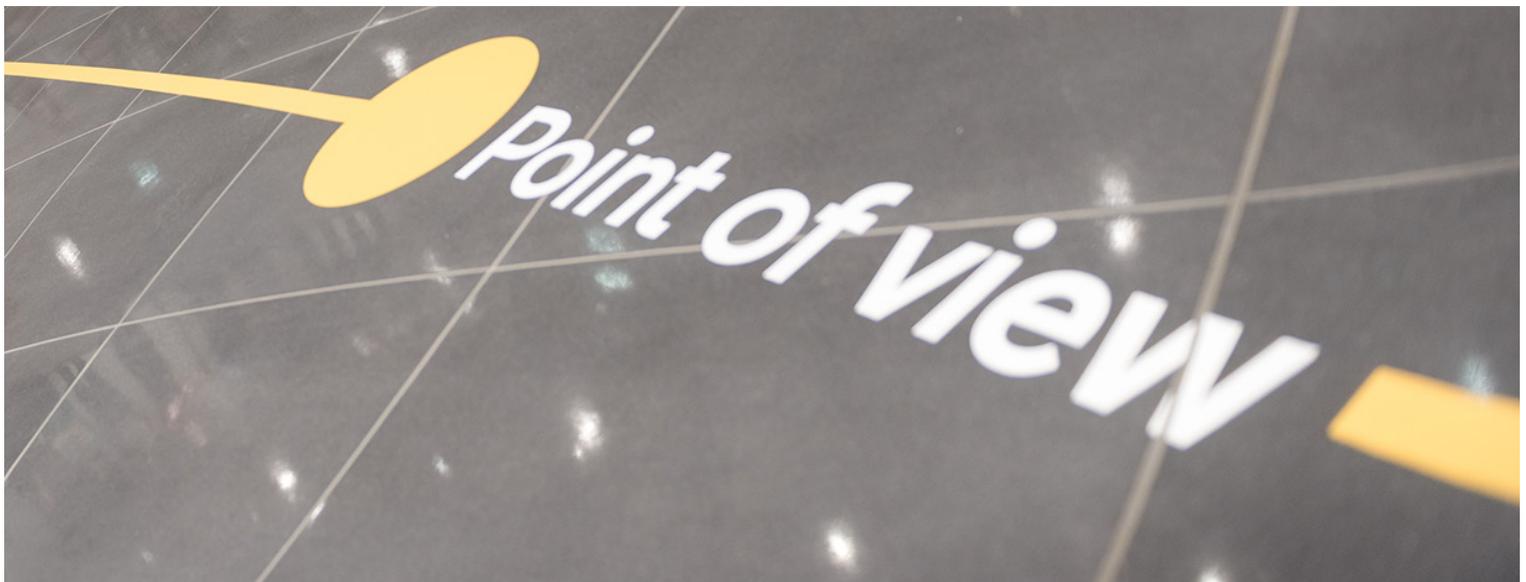
On the side of the building where current projects are worked on, there are offices that ring the floors with four to 10 employees working in each one. Collaboration space runs down the middle of the floors.

Almost all the employees eat lunch together every day. The campus has its own restaurant,

which is paid for equally by the company and the employees. It is not the typical lunchroom. LOGICDATA hired a professional chef and a four-person team to cook for the workforce. The menus include freshly made soups and a mix of traditional Austrian and contemporary dishes.

The company has about 200 employees around the world, but the new campus was built to allow for growth. The campus can house about 280 workers. As the oldest section

height-adjustable desks. The control box was clunky by today's standards. The company has three clear boxes in its showroom, each filled with 10 control boxes — one from the original design, one from a later iteration and a current design. Though each of the boxes contain 10 boxes, the first is filled completely with the large controls and so heavy it is nearly impossible to lift. The second is half full and about half as heavy. In the third box, the controls take up less than a third of the space and weigh almost



of the building is redone, some employees are working out of office containers. Most of the company moved into the new space a couple of weeks ago. The rest of the work is expected to be complete by July.

An electrical engineer, Koch founded LOGICDATA in 1997 after being asked to design electronics for a bedding company that would make it easier to control the pitch of an adjustable bed. It is a market LOGICDATA remains in today. In 1998, while visiting Orgatec, Koch saw the first height-adjustable desk, made by a Scandinavian company. He believed he could make a better mechanism to adjust desks, just as he had for bedding.

By the next year, he did just that, designing the first, free-programmable control box for

nothing. It is an effective way for the company to show how its components have gotten smaller and lighter.

With LOGICDATA's most recent products, the control box has disappeared completely. The company has designed it to fit in the leg of the table, which means there is no black, clunky box to mount under the table at all, a feature furniture and interior designers love. The products are smaller, to be sure, but they are just as complex and high tech. There are 140 electronic components in a small slice of the height-adjustable table leg, which allows them to get rid of the control box.

LOGICDATA products are getting greener as well. A new product allows for one power source that feeds up to four tables, which



Walter Koch

reduces materials and improves the environmental story.

The company doesn't own any of its own factories. Its production is found in Hungary, which LOGICDATA established in 2001 and now in China, which was added last year. LOGICDATA added an office in Grand Rapids in 2011 to serve its customers in North America.

Koch wants LOGICDATA to be a company that makes a difference in the world and contribute something to it. He shares 10 percent of the company profits with its employees. When the company does well, so do its workers.

"LOGICDATA is investing in a lot of stuff that is not like a normal company," he said. "We care about people's development."

Part of that caring comes from his Christian roots, Koch said. A cross is prominently displayed in the company's atrium. Koch also

supports a charity called P.A.P.A. (Pater Aidan Partnership for Africa) Bridge, an aid organization in Tanzania run by Aidan, a priest who is focusing on providing vocational training for the impoverished area. Koch has invested \$400,000 in the project and visits the site at least twice a year.

"As a Christian, I grew up like this. I am just trying to be responsible. At the end of my life, I want to be able to say that I gave something back. We only have one life, and I know the blessings I've had are from God," he said.

For him, sales and profits are secondary. Money has never been the driver, Koch said. "Our driver is exciting our customers," he said. "I don't come to work everyday because I like the money. I come here because I like what we are doing." **BoF**

THE GONG

