



Dr. Martin Theusner

Vocation: Inventor.

He always has to get right up close to the problem. Martin Theusner stands in a factory building in Puchov, Slovakia, and something is not right – a blaring siren signals a problem. 67-year-old Theusner is wearing office clothing, but he is not worried about getting dirty now. Since he helped to develop this machine, whenever he is on site Theusner feels responsible for ensuring that everything is working the way he intended it to. Stains on his shirt or trousers are of no concern to him in these situations. After all, he has experienced far worse in the past: "One time, my wristwatch had to bite the dust," he recalls. Theusner had forgotten to take it off before working on a large magnet. The watch was a write-off, but the machine was working again.

Martin Theusner's résumé documents an exceptionally interesting career at Continental Commercial Vehicle Tires. But among the job descriptions for all the roles he has performed at this company, his actual one is missing. Theusner has always been one thing: an inventor. Of course, it is not a job for which you can fulfill formal criteria or present certificates. Nevertheless, if you look through the relevant patent pages on the Internet you will find several entries for innovations that he developed for Continental. "Inventor: Martin Theusner" is always written underneath. Developing, introducing, and implementing his own ideas – that was what most appealed to the chemist in his over 30 years at Continental. It is in his blood.

When he was young, he and his brothers 'always liked to tinker around with cars – repairing, screwing, welding'," remembers the man from Hanover. When a career opportunity came up at Continental at the end of the 1970s, when Theusner was an assistant at the University of Hanover after getting his doctorate, he did not have to think twice. He started with chemical raw materials, then changed to compound development, where he was back to experimenting, rethinking. For him, there is no such thing as an obstacle – and if ever one was to arise, he would know how to overcome it. "I contributed my own ideas from the outset. You won't get far on a well-trodden path," he thinks: "You need some intuition as well."

Theusner is creative and thorough, as good scientists are. But he is not necessarily patient. When an idea came to him and he wanted to set up a test series, Theusner once even resorted to using his kitchen at home. He got an old aquarium, including all the accessories, and empty preserving jars from the basement, cleared the sink, and began his experiments. Thursday evenings in particular were dedicated to research because that was when his wife played bridge.

Better products and more efficient production were the targets of Theusner's inventions. From the mid-1990s, saving resources and optimum environmental compatibility were added to this after he had taken over as head of the Environmental Protection department in the Commercial Vehicle Tires business unit.

This sporty nature-lover was certainly the right person for the job. He was always someone who likes spending time outdoors, has been a passionate skier for decades, and likes to jog even now at the age of 67. Despite his love of nature, he has never thought of himself as an environmental activist. But he was appalled by some of the things he saw on his travels: "I have seen huge environmental damage – poisoned rivers and such – which really had an effect on me.

" But why is he a chemist? "You have to contribute your knowledge here," he told himself, "for the sake of the children as well. It is a question of how the world will look for the children in 20, 30, or 40 years' time."

The chemist doesn't just get his ideas at the desk or in the laboratory. The idea for the so-called 'hurricane machine,' which separates rubber compound and steel cord from unvulcanized production waste at the Puchov Continental plant in Slovakia, came to him at a scrapyards. "A lot of things can only be assessed by stepping away and collecting ideas outside the office as well," says Theusner. At Conti plants, partner companies, and universities. That is where the researcher heart beats in his chest. And if someone asks whether it is really necessary to conduct research at scrapyards or other places, Theusner answers: "There is no place in the world where you can't acquire another piece of knowledge." After all, he chose his profession "so that I can innovate." Because "a run-of-the-mill job would not have satisfied me."

Theusner was always supported by his company in his ventures. But he also knows that: "They do need to achieve success with them." Today he is retired but still works for Continental on projects that he started during his active career. And Theusner still has one dream he would like to fulfill: to find a solution to one last problem. "Despite all the protection that modern filter systems provide, all tire plants in the world have to contend with emissions from vulcanization," he says. "Limiting them would certainly be very important!" It is not out of the question that Martin Theusner will also come up with a suitable solution for that.