

# Thomas Christoffel



CEO, Hatebur Metalforming Equipment Ltd

In 2016 Hatebur Metalforming took the next step in its growth strategy with the acquisition of Carlo Salvi SpA. Here Editor Will Lowry talks to CEO Thomas Christoffel about the benefits of that acquisition and his thoughts on the current trends within the hot and cold forming sectors.

## It has been nine months since Hatebur acquired Carlo Salvi. What first attracted you to the Italian-based company and how has the integration process gone so far?

“We were not strategically looking for an acquisition; it was more of a case that if it was a good opportunity then we would look at the potential – Carlo Salvi was the perfect ‘fit’. Its range is very complimentary to Hatebur’s with little overlap. Also, from a market point of view, there is again little overlap with both companies having subsidiaries in potential growth markets.

With no succession plan, Dr Ziotti, the previous owner, was looking for an alternative solution, but was very clear the new owner had to have a strong commitment to the plant in Garlate, Italy. As a family-based company we understood this commitment to the area and the people, as we also have a similar philosophy and working mentality. Tradition is important for both of us and we want to make sure we respect this history whilst growing together.

The integration process has been smooth so far and both businesses are already benefiting from the partnership. We can help each other gain in strength on the market and provide a bigger portfolio to customers, and potential customers.

A key advantage of Carlo Salvi being part of the group is that it strengthens the cold forming technologies as a whole. Also, Carlo Salvi has a lot of experience in aerospace applications and fasteners, including titanium, which will be a big benefit to Hatebur. Another important aspect is that both companies will benefit from the sales and services subsidiaries and agencies each has around the world.

There is also the experience and knowledge within both companies for their fields, markets and technology. This gives us an excellent base to combine this knowledge and to further grow both companies. More service. More experience. More opportunities.”

## Hatebur is a key player in the cold and hot forming sector, producing high-quality machines for the automotive, roller bearing and fastener industries. How do you ensure you are supplying the machinery your customers need?

“We always say that you don’t just buy a machine from Hatebur you enter a partnership. We provide customers with complete service support to develop the process and guarantee a full customer package – machines, services and tools, and processes. Rather than a simple ‘turn key’ machine we offer a full package. →



**Name:** Thomas Christoffel  
**Joined Hatebur:** 1998  
**Current position:** Became CEO in June 2015

“One of the great things about Hatebur is that young people can develop in this fascinating field of forming. I have grown inside the company and developed through my various roles. Thanks to this experience I know the products, I know the processes and I know the people.”

→ Buying a Hatebur machine is a long-term investment with the aim for the machine/line to play a key role in the production process. We are only happy if our customers can run the machines successfully and that means high precision parts at big quantities for a long time. We also design the machines with the operators in mind and look at how we can make the machine processes more efficient, whilst improving the overall production process.

To ensure the machines are constantly at their optimum performance we offer training to our customers' operators so they can maximise the machines' capabilities and use them in the most effective manner. If you have good operators, that understand the potential of the machines, you can run them more efficiently and produce bigger volumes.

### **Hatebur Metalforming Equipment Ltd**

**Established:** 1930

**Headquarters:** Reinach, Switzerland

**Employees:** 180

We do this thanks to the knowledge and experience within the company, as well as by working with customers and listening to their requests. It is through this close customer contact that we also stay close to what is happening in the market, which helps us internally to think about in which direction we develop the product.

Typically, before we develop a machine we look at the needs of the customers around the world and how we can improve the machine further. We only introduce new features where we can see an advantage to the customer. Also, we do not only develop new machines; we look to gradually – module by module – upgrade the existing models that are already in the market. This is important because some customers have machines that are 30 – 40 years old, but are still reliably producing precisely manufactured high-quality products.”

### **What are the key countries and markets for Hatebur? How do you provide a consistent service?**

“We have an export share of 99% and sell our machinery around the world, with key markets including west Europe – mainly Germany; Asia – Japan and China; as well as North America. →



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## A well deserved retirement

At the end of 2016 Dr Sergio Ziotti retired from Carlo Salvi SpA, with Hatebur leading the appointment of a new management team.

**D**r Ziotti acquired the company in 1994 following the death of its founder, Carlo Salvi. Under his leadership further development of the company was planned and, from 2002, production was expanded and modernised.

In 2014 Carlo Salvi acquired a partner company, a supplier which had previously contributed the electrical and electronic systems of the machines. This important strategic step secured further production of modern machines and paved the way to high-quality customer service.

In October 2015 further development of the company was concluded with the addition of a 1,300m<sup>2</sup> building and marketing activities were simultaneously strengthened as well.



At Hatebur's headquarters in Reinach, Switzerland, there are more than 30 people in engineering who not only take care of the current products, but also look at new opportunities

→ To enable us to supply customers around the world we have sales and service subsidiaries in Japan, China and Germany. Also, through the acquisition of Carlo Salvi, we now have further sales and service subsidiaries in the USA, the UK and a further one in China.

In the other markets, we work together with agents where we have established long-term partnerships. In some cases we have partnerships going back more than 40 years. We are always looking from the long-term perspective – building relationships with our partners is very important.

In a lot of the countries our agents have service engineers of their own that can initiate the first contact with customers. This means we can quickly deal with customers' enquiries. As a next step we can also bring in our own staff from one of our subsidiaries if necessary.

Service is very important in our business and we emphasise the attention we give to it. We want to make sure we can provide a complete service to customers – providing the spare parts they need when they need them. To do this you need to be versatile, both with the capabilities of the machines but also with the service you provide as a company."

### **How important is innovation in the market? What role does it play in new machinery?**

"Innovation is very important for both companies. We continuously work on our machines and introduce improvements step by step. We spend a lot of effort in engineering and design and we are always looking at new processes, sometimes successfully and sometimes less successfully. But that is something you must deal with and learn from if you are committed to being an innovative company.

At Hatebur we tend to introduce smaller innovations. We don't have a 'new machine' every half year, but we are constantly developing products and providing better parts for our existing range and established machines. At our headquarters in Reinach, Switzerland, there are more than 30 people in engineering who not only take care of the regular products, but also look at new opportunities."

### **What do you see as the opportunities for the future?**

"I see a lot of positives for the future, but it would be too early to say what we are planning. Of course, one big topic for us is the growth of the two companies. We do not want to be just the sum of the two companies. By combining the strengths of both companies, we can become a very strong supplier of cold, warm and hot forging machines on the market. It is a big challenge, but we are excited about it.

There is also still room for improvement on the machines. Some of the key questions we focus on at Hatebur is how can we help our customers produce more precise parts and how they can produce parts with lower costs? These are the technology drivers for us.

2017 promises to be an exciting year as we continue to see the benefits of the partnership between the two companies. We will be exhibiting together at Fastener Fair Stuttgart and we invite all customers to come to our stand to find out more about the exciting opportunities we are able to provide." +

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