

**SIEMENS**  
ENERGY

**General Manager**  
of Siemens Transformers Linz, Austria

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Interview with **Ronald Schmid**

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I'm proud to be part of a company that makes a difference to society - locally and also globally - and that's helping its customers around the globe to transition to a more sustainable world using innovative technologies.

# Ronald Schmid



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**Transformer Technology:** Ronald, thank you for taking the time to share your knowledge and insights about Siemens Transformers and your very successful career within our industry. First, tell me a little about the Linz factory, which is one of the oldest in the world for the manufacture of transformers. I believe you became General Manager in October of 2018, correct?

**Ronald Schmid:** Yes, I became General Manager in October 2018 and now have the privilege of shaping the factory for STL's next century of business. As you mentioned, we're a long-established factory with a 100-year tradition of delivering high-quality transformers. Our business managed to successfully thrive during inflation and the Great Depression, and it was bombed during World War II and rebuilt soon after. Ever since, we've basically transitioned from a regional transformer provider to a global market player with an export quota above 80 percent.

**TT** Ronald, what is the specialty focus of the Linz plant? What range of transformers are produced there?

**RS** Our main business is the development and production of innovative solutions for special customer demands. Nearly every transformer delivered out of Linz is unique. Special environmental conditions (like low/high temperatures and seismic zones), low noise-level requirements, restrictions in dimensions/weight, alternative insulation media, rupture-resistant designs, and many more special applications are integrated based on our customers' requirements. Our design range comprises transformers, both mineral oil as well as synthetic and natural ester from 10 MVA to 300 MVA and up to 500 kV.

**TT** One of the changes we see taking place in our industry is the focus on Reliability Engineering by Design or RED. How does Siemens integrate all aspects of the process from design to engineering, and from engineering to integrating production, quality control, testing, and commissioning?

**RS** We're aware of the importance of reliability engineering. That's why the Linz factory and a local IT partner developed a

tool that uses artificial intelligence to analyze market, customer, and product-specific lessons learned from built units that will be automatically integrated in future designs. By closing the feedback loop with production and quality management, we're able to constantly improve the reliability of our designs in the engineering phase.

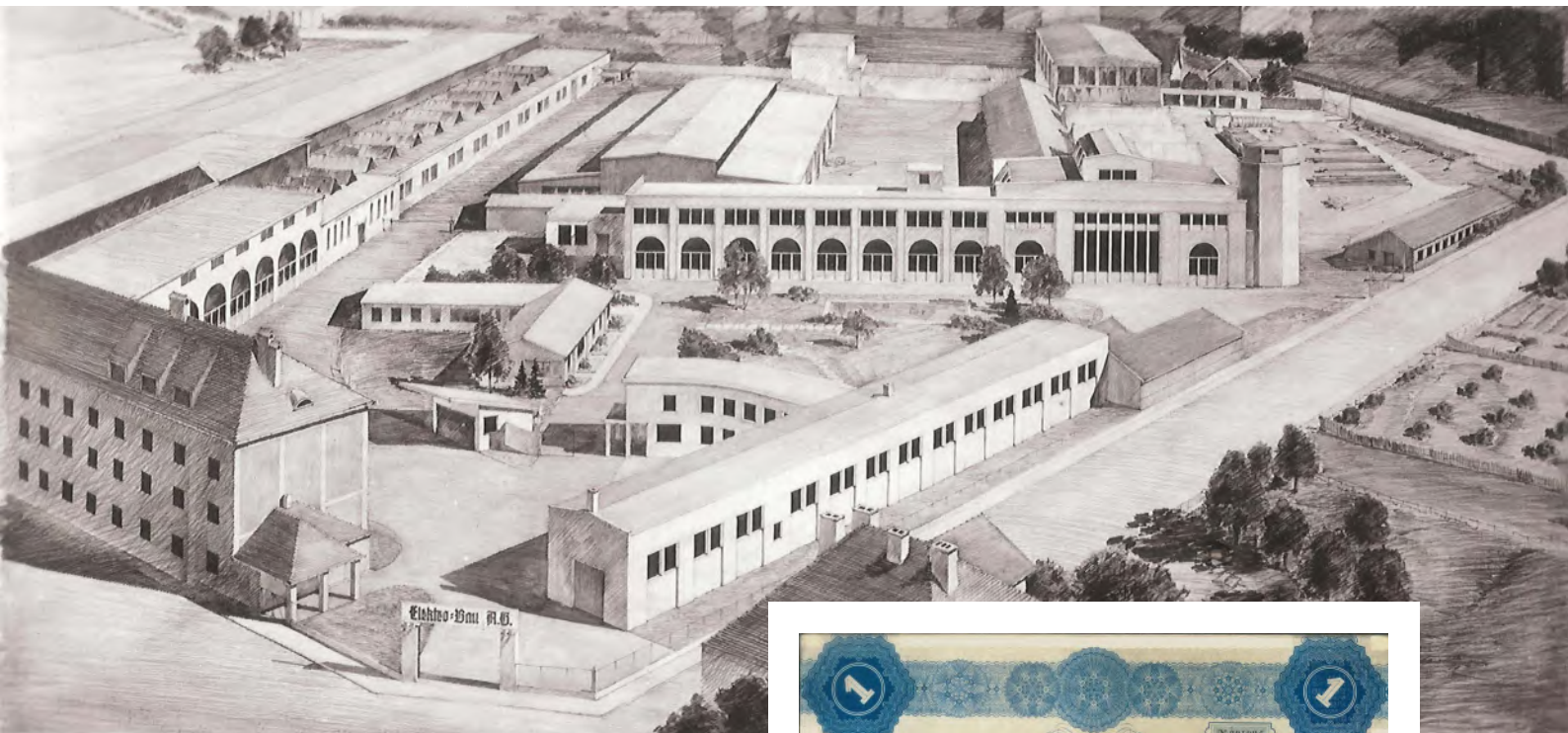
**TT** What are some of the biggest challenges you see facing the global market for transformers in the years and decades ahead?

**RS** There's no doubt that decarbonization will play a central role in the decades to come. At Siemens Energy, we're committed to carbon-neutral operations. With regard to the energy market, the most pressing challenge is the integration of energy generation by renewables in the existing power grids and providing solutions for a smooth transition to a more decentralized power supply. With the ecological footprint gaining in importance, we're also noticing an increased demand for our experience in designing transformers with alternative insulation liquids.

**TT** How has Covid-19 affected or changed the approach you are taking in regard to these challenges?

**RS** The trends as such are neither sped up nor slowed down by COVID-19. By implementing stringent measures, we've been able to stay at full operation throughout the crisis. At Transformers Linz, the real change caused by COVID-19 was an acceptance of new technologies in the way we work together. Our clients came to accept and appreciate the advantages of remote inspections and FATs, and on the internal level, many prejudices about the home office diminished.

**TT** Ronald, you have spent a great deal of your time at Siemens working in the Distribution Transformer market, so share with us what you have seen changing in that specific marketplace over the past few years? Is there a regional response to market forces or is it a truly global approach? For instance, do you see changes between the US, Latin American, European, or Asian markets?



The Siemens transformer factory in Linz (Austria) can look back on an eventful history of 100 years.



1920 is the year it all started with the foundation of the O.Ö. Elektro Bau GmbH (EBG). In the picture: EBG share, 1937.



**This year we're proud to deliver the one-hundredth unit to an important U.S. business partner.**

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**RS** My perception about the distribution transformer marketplace is that it's quite a local business. Nevertheless, the challenges have been the same globally, with a differing focus and intensity: Energy-efficiency, environmental sustainability, and integrating renewable power generation, just to name a few. In the upcoming years, digitalization will play a major role in every industry and every country.

**TT** I see that you were the head of R&D in Budapest and then working in Innovation management in Nuremberg. That must have been fascinating. Tell us a little about your time there and give us some insight into where innovation and R&D is affecting the future of transformer design, engineering or manufacturing?

**RS** Indeed, this has been a fascinating time and a great experience for me. I appreciate working in a strong global team and bringing expert and practical knowledge together. We've worked with our customers to make transformers more energy-efficient, reliable, and environmentally friendly. Our engineering and design processes entered a new era thanks to 3D modeling and simulation capabilities. It's now impossible to imagine transformer manufacturing without the support of digitalization. But manual work still plays an important role in the transformer business, and this will continue into the future.



Siemens Transformers Linz plant, around 1954 with new built high-rise building.



Siemens transformer factory in Linz, Austria, today.

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**TT** You must have seen a great deal during your career with Siemens. What would be one or two of the significant highlights of your career thus far?

**RS** My personal highlight was in 2016, when I started my first General Manager position at the Siemens traction transformer site. Working with my colleagues, we almost doubled our output in less than two years.

I feel the same great team spirit now at Siemens Energy Transformers Linz. This year we're proud to deliver the one-hundredth unit to an important U.S. business partner.

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**TT** Any final thoughts or advice you would give young engineers just starting their careers, thinking back to when you had just graduated from the University of Applied Sciences in Mittweida, Germany?

**RS** The advice I would give to any graduate is to seek a field of employment that they're really interested in and passionate about. I never once regretted my choice of Siemens because it offers a wide range of exciting opportunities for personal growth, as long as you're flexible in terms of relocation.

**TT** Thank you, Ronald. We greatly appreciate your time.