



Innovation über alles

Over the last 70 years, Truma has, without doubt, become one of the most successful companies in the caravan/RV sector and now supplies OEMS and consumers around the world. It must also be credited for creating so many successful products for camping, caravans and motorhomes. Aboutcamp BtoB recently visited Truma to celebrate its first 70 years, see its production facilities, and learn about its plans for the future.

Words John Rawlings

Looking at how successful Truma has become in the global RV sector today, it's almost hard to believe that it was started by one person, Philipp Kreis, in 1949, shortly after the Second World War, making gas lights in Putzbrunn, in southern Germany. He named the company Truma after the then US president Harry S. Truman, who he admired for the role he played in restoring Germany to an industrial nation. Truma is still family owned, and now has 820 members of staff around the world. One of the most significant products behind its success was the first heater for caravans it launched in 1961, which made winter caravanning possible for the first time; since then it has produced around six million S-heaters and is known by almost every camper in Europe – and now the world. Thanks to Truma's

practical research and development, it has continuously introduced new products and further developed existing ones for the market, such as the first caravan manoeuvring system. The majority of the staff (600) are based at its headquarters in Germany across all the main operational departments and production. This is where it produces up to 600 of its latest Combi heaters each day, having introduced a second line last year so it can do a double shift to be able to meet demand. The AquaGo instant water

heater and a version of the Combi are both adapted and made here for the American market. The same happens for all Truma products for the Australian and Chinese





markets. Production processes are being optimized by involving the employees who work on the lines every day, and asking for their suggestions. The Truma Ideas Program encourages employees to put forward their ideas about improving a product or a process. Every OEM customer has access to the Truma climate chamber to test any product. This chamber is also used to test Alde products, even though it has its own climate chamber in Sweden. Truma's customers often use its climate chamber to test new vehicles or prototypes with new materials and of course to test the Truma heater and the warm air distribution. The climate chamber team handles every part of the tests, from preparing the vehicle, cabling it and setting up sensors, and, most importantly, providing the customer with the full data to optimize the results. Although these tests do not have any official recognition, they are carried out according to all the European norms for the known grades of thermal insulation. For example, Truma can certify for the Grade III standard, where a vehicle is tested from -15° to $+20^{\circ}$ in just four hours, and Grade II, from 0° to $+20^{\circ}$ in two hours.

Internal processes

Truma has the advantage of having everything bundled on one site: R & D, production and service departments can quickly react to any problem or task. Every division is able to talk to each other and test everything in order to continually make more and more product improvements. Everything is the result of team effort by an interdisciplinary project team made by engineers, sales and service, purchase, marketing and project and product managers. This team deals with all aspects of the project and a product is released only after everyone's input and agreement. Truma established a Business Development Unit to work on future trends, focusing on competition, marketing analysis and, mostly, creating a business road map for the next years ahead. This includes researching new products, next lifestyle trends in society, new technical equipment or strategic new partners for the company. In addition, there is also a Corporate Development Unit with a team of people responsible to develop the organization, in terms of processes, company culture, structures and resources.

Service

Truma is proud to have a large network of service centers worldwide. These are able to help with any installation, repairs or provide spare parts. When consumers call the Truma customer service hotline, an operator will try to fix the problem on the phone first, and then pass it on to an official Truma technical service centre, or dealer, if needed. In addition, there are 21 special Truma service technicians with cars and equipment, in different strategic areas

Company Profile

With its strapline 'Mehr Komfort für unterwegs' ('More comfort on the move') Truma has been the leading specialist for caravan and motorhome accessories for 70 years. In 1961, Truma developed the "first officially recognised caravan heater", which made winter camping possible for the first time. The company now offers an extensive range of products in the fields of digital networking, heating, hot water, cooling, manoeuvring and gas supply. Air conditioning came along in 1999 with the Saphir under bunk air conditioning systems. They are very quiet and distribute the air individually throughout the vehicle thanks to a modular piping system. Truma's first roof-mounted system, the Aventa, launched in 2011. With a cooling capacity of 2400 W, its clean lines and compact dimensions got the company off to a flying start in this sector of the market. Since then Truma has been developing and expanding its range of bunk and roof-mounted air conditioning systems for RV owners worldwide. The new Aventas are very much part of this process. Truma is characterised by high product quality, exemplary service and a strong customer focus. Over the years it has won many awards for its products. These include the prestigious "red dot design award", which honours outstanding design features, a high level of innovation, functionality, ergonomics and longevity. The company's headquarters and production facility are in Putzbrunn, near Munich. Truma has branches in Great Britain, Italy, Sweden, China and the USA. In total, the family-owned company employs 820 people. Truma is one of the top employers and one of the top 100 innovators among German SMEs (www.topjob.de and www.top100.de).



Left: Truma Combi



Truma Aventa compact and comfort





Above: Truma iNet Box

covering the whole country, available for any help with products. Truma has special software to fully control the automation for scheduling repairs and tracking every spare part involved. The company offers the possibility to find any of the 2000 service points worldwide on the Truma App. All employees, dealers and service centers are educated at the Truma Training Centre. Another team, called Technical Customer Service, is completely dedicated to being in constant dialogue with OEMs, informing them about new products, training their staff when needed, to provide a 360 degree service. In addition, the Truma Partner System, looks after approximately 1500 Truma Partners who are the only ones who can sell certain products, like the iNet System or all air conditioning systems. These Partners are regularly trained to ensure a high level of expertise and customer orientation.

Sustainability

Caravanning and the environment go hand in hand, so sustainability is something Tru-

ma is passionate about and an important part of the company culture. Truma's energy and environment management systems are certified to European standards (DIN EN ISO 50001 and DIN ISO 140001). Since 2017, Truma has had its own cogeneration plant for heat and power. This has a generator powered by natural gas with an electrical output of 100 kW and thermal output of 130 kW. It has a high efficiency of 90 percent, as the exhaust heat is fed into the heating system for the building. Energy-saving circulation pumps heat the buildings and ventilation systems with heat recovery. With this power plant, Truma is able to produce 25 percent of the electricity it needs with the lowest emissions and reduce its total power-related greenhouse emissions by around 18 percent. On its roofs, Truma has 10 photovoltaic plants that produce 600,000 kW of 'green' electricity, two rain water cisterns which collect 55,000 litres of rain water to be used in the building's sanitary facilities, plus plenty of planted roof greenery. There are two electric BMW cars that Truma staff are encouraged to use wherever possible, including weekends for personal use. Of course, Truma uses recyclable materials and retreats water when developing and manufacturing its products. Due to the high efficiency of up to 98 percent and the use of liquid gas, Truma products are environmentally-friendly with low emissions.



The workplace

Truma has adopted a new work concept for its staff. As a modern building completely renovated in 2018, Truma's headoffice in Germany is completely open plan and everyone 'hot desks', sharing desks and sitting in a different place with different people around them each day. Instead of PCs, everyone uses laptops and plug them in at a different charge station to work each day. Staff can work at desks with big screens, and instead of telephones, every communication is made by Skype for Business with VOIP and a chat. There is a paperless and clean desk policy, and every employee has their own locker to store a laptop, personal mouse and personal headset. Truma applied this work model because an open working atmosphere helps people to get together and have and share new ideas. Different teams can have more contact and share experiences as communication is easy, and it encourages people not to care only of their own specific role or task. This model makes people responsible for more than just their own area and puts them in a more dynamic system. The ideas flow becomes easier and faster. In order to attract the best people as staff, engineers, or software developers, Truma has developed good contacts with some of the best technical universities in Europe. Many students undertake their masters in Truma and often choose to stay. Truma is proud of this, and to be even more attractive to employees, and to keep its family-run heritage it also has its own canteen with a chef and a modern kitchen. Truma owns caravans and campers, of different sizes, that employees can use for test drives and really enjoy and experience what they work on, every day. The first 70 years are just the beginning for Truma. With all its systems and internal structures in place, it will keep on developing its employees and products in to the future.

