

MIRA BURGBACHER

Making the impossible possible

It's time for the big photo shoot for TRUe and there's not enough water in the new stainless steel pool. There's no way to save the day now – unless you're Wolfgang Gassner. He's determined to solve the problem – even if that means getting the fire service out to fill the pool. The managing director of Gassner Edelstahlpools is testament to the maxim "nothing is impossible."

A modern villa in a desirable area in the hills overlooking Linz in Austria. A coveted view that most of us can only dream of. And a pool that's missing 15,000 liters of water. Disaster. Wolfgang Gassner circles the pool, checks the water connection and makes a string of phone calls. He sounds calm but determined, and makes it crystal clear that the pool must be filled and as soon as possible. The next morning, when Wolfgang called the TRUe team before breakfast, we could hear in his voice just how satisfied he was: "So the pool is full. If it's convenient for you, we can meet there at 11 o'clock and take the pictures." We simply could not imagine how he had managed to conjure up so much water overnight. We were shocked, but in no way surprised – if you meet Wolfgang Gassner, one thing you soon learn is that nothing can stop him. This applies both to his personality and his business philosophy. Wolfgang's product portfolio is really a roll call of creations that everyone had deemed impossible to manufacture. Until, that is, he made them not only possible, but also perfect. It is this aspiration that has made him one of the most proficient entrepreneurs in his field.

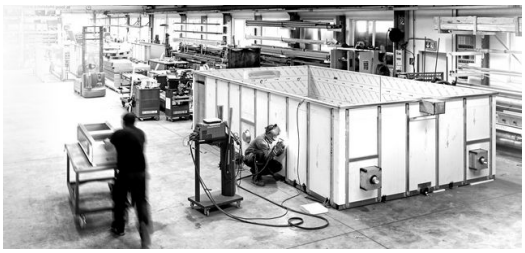
» **" We started making pools really by accident. About 15 years ago, an acquaintance asked if we would be able to build him a stainless steel pool. So we just did it. "**

Wolfgang Gassner, managing director of Gassner Edelstahlpools

Gassner Edelstahlpools is a medium-sized company based in the idyllic countryside surrounding Neuzeug in Austria. Founded by Wolfgang's father 50 years ago as a specialist supplier of metal roofing, the company has been growing steadily ever since. Incorporating everything from stainless steel furniture, ovens and electric machines for gas stations and bakeries, and ultimately stainless steel pools, the company's product portfolio has been not so much expanded as fundamentally realigned. "We started making pools really by accident. About 15 years ago, an acquaintance asked if we would be able to build him a stainless steel pool. So we just did it."

Expertise must grow

A tendency to "just do it" is something outstanding entrepreneurs share. It's been 35 years since Wolfgang joined the company he now runs. "Like so many others, I started as an apprentice and spent the years, or decades really, since then getting to know all aspects of this business. That's basically the only way to develop entrepreneurial skills – you can't do it without a lot of hard work and, more than anything, experience."

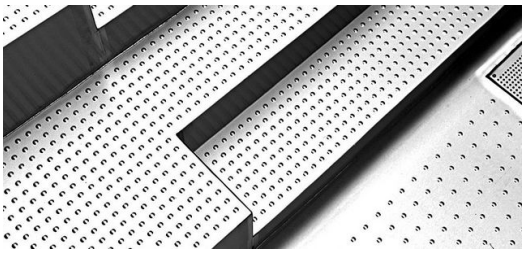


In one piece: Pools with standard dimensions are fully finished at Gassner and transported to the installation site on flatbed trucks. Picture: Niels Schubert

What was once a one-man show now employs 43 people and de-livers 50 to 60 pools to private and corporate customers every year. No matter whether it's whirlpools for luxury hotels, outdoor pools complete with a cover or stainless steel swimming pools for the FC Bayern Munich soccer team, there's nothing Gassner Edelstahlpools can't handle. As an ardent Bayern Munich fan, Wolfgang is particularly proud of the pools his company has made for the current champions of Germany's soccer league. The smile on his face when he mentions the fact that his company has now made three pools for the club gives away just how proud he is. FC Bayern Munich certainly won't have chosen this Austrian company at random; Wolfgang's products are often just that little bit better than what the competition can deliver. This stems from Wolfgang himself being an absolute perfectionist and paying attention to even the tiniest details. "Sometimes this means I really make life difficult for myself, but I just can't be any other way."

"We don't do 'standard'"

The company's many unique solutions are also testament to its expertise. Take the studs that are a characteristic part of these swimming pools, each one drawn and stamped individually. "No one else does that. But it's the only way to end up with a completely clean and even look." This is something Wolfgang feels is crucial – and that goes for his products and company alike. So he's now busy building a showroom to a design that is both functional and demanding. The sketches and previews once again show a love of design that characterizes this entrepreneur. He has an eye for the unconventional and the exclusive in everything, from his conference room decorated exclusively in black and white to his products. "We don't do 'standard'."



Precision: Wolfgang Gassner is the only pool manufacturer to draw and stamp each stud individually. Picture: Niels Schubert

This is especially apparent in the many custom solutions and innovations the company has produced over the years. One USP

is the large floor-edge to side-wall radius, which means cleaning can be performed by a robot with a curved brush. Since angled floor edges are much harder to keep clean than curved ones, this is an advantage. A key competence that sets the company apart from the competition are its sunken inlet nozzles. "Instead of using standard nozzles, we build our own and recess them so they are flush with the surface. This is a prime example of our claim of functionality and design." And the stainless steel pools certainly fit that description. They have that certain something, mainly because the company is always prepared to go the extra mile. Its wave reflecting edge is yet another detail that reinforces this impression. "That's unique to us, you won't find that anywhere else. Thanks to its special shape, this unconventional edge helps our customers save water and energy because it stops water slopping over in all directions. What's more, there are no sharp edges that might hurt someone behind the knee or under the arm. We also call this one the wellness edge."

Wolfgang and his team develop all the company's innovations themselves. They then produce all the parts they need, too, to ensure the desired level of quality. Of course, this also continuously refines their expertise and keeps their skills up. "I love and live this product and I'm always looking to get better at what I do," Wolfgang says. He demonstrated both this and his urge to always find the best possible solution in solving the problem with the pool in Linz. "I simply had a word with the fire service and asked if they were willing to pump the water we needed into the pool. And that was that."



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