

Issue #4

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The production floor of Schulte-Elektrotechnik in Lüdenscheld, Germany.

What is good for business can also be good for the planet

Ken Smith, Chief Executive and President of Ever-Green Energy, on Schulte-Elektrotechnik and environmentally friendly business practices.



Ken Smith

Q: You are visiting Schulte-Elektrotechnik. What are you seeing that is impressive and captures your imagination?

A: Well, it is very inspirational on how they have integrated the wasted energy from their manufacturing processes into recovering that energy and putting it back into the building,

and that together with renewal energy on the roof of the building was able to essentially achieve net zero for the manufacturing facility. And while this was a new fact that we visited today – that's only 18 months old – this idea, the owner had started in the 70s. I asked him tonight, what inspired him and it was really two things. You had an energy crisis happening in the 70s, but also just his sensitivity towards the environment. So, using those two things, he pushed and figured out a way to do this. And it makes sense for his business, not in the short term, but in the long term because the energy is essentially free. He put in the infrastructure to recapture it and reuse it, and it makes it more competitive in the long run. It is very inspirational and can be done in many, many, many places in industry.

Q: What are you learning about this method of energy recovery that you think Minnesota will benefit from?

A: This is a method that I've actually talked about for a long time: the idea that we have wasted energy streams in all kinds of industry. Really all throughout our society we have wasted energy streams, we have wasted water streams that are resources that we should be capturing and reusing to the extent that we can reuse them inside of a factory or inside of a campus is good. But beyond that, how we can reuse them in a community is great,

because it can be an economic benefit to that community, it can be an economic benefit to the company, and it can be very much an environmental benefit to all.

Q: What is valuable about seeing this operation and being able to talk with Herr Schulte? What would be lost if you could not be here in person?

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- Ken Smith

A: Coming in person, together, with the colleagues who are traveling with us, you're able to point out what is possible. These are ideas that are around, but they become tangible when you're able to see them, when you're able to talk to your counterparts who actually have done it. What have they learned about the process? And the Germans are wonderful about telling you “this worked, and we made it better” or “this didn't work. We changed and we've made it better” or “we're not going to do that. again.” So, it's a very honest open discussion. Something we can point to and learn from and take back and apply in Minnesota.

