CHEManager

Interview with Dr. Andreas Bonhoff (in English)

Relentless Pursuit of Innovation

Pharmaplan supports clients from the conceptualization of a facility to operational support.

July 10, 2024 - As one of Europe's leading pharma consulting and engineering companies, the TTP Group, through its subsidiary Pharmaplan, specializes in the integrated and holistic planning and realization of buildings and facilities for the pharmaceutical and biotech industries.

Founded in 1974 by the pharmaceutical company Fresenius, Pharmaplan is a specialist in the planning and realization of research and production facilities for healthcare companies. For 50 years, the Rosenheim-based company has positioned itself as a driver of innovation in pharmaceutical engineering, taking on responsibility for projects as an EPCMV partner or general contractor. Initially acquired by Novo Nordisk and later by its engineering division NNE, Pharmaplan is now part of the TTP Group. Michael Reubold took the company's anniversary as an opportunity to interview TTP Managing Director Andreas Bonhoff about Pharmaplan's development, future, and general market trends from the perspective of an engineering service provider.

CHEManager: Mr. Bonhoff, today it's not uncommon for pharmaceutical companies to outsource technical or production activities. How was it 50 years ago when Pharmaplan's story began?

Andreas Bonhoff: Fifty years ago, outsourcing of development and production activities in the pharmaceutical industry was not as widespread as it is today. Back then, Pharmaplan started as the technical department of Fresenius, specializing in nutrition systems and large-volume parenterals. We sold Fresenius technologies to Eastern European countries, and these initial successes laid the foundation for our later expansion and specialization in commercial engineering. The turning point came in the early 1990s when more and more companies began outsourcing the planning and construction of entire production facilities.

Today, Pharmaplan operates in three business areas covering the entire lifecycle of pharmaceutical facilities and projects. What market developments have allowed this business to grow and expand?

A. Bonhoff: The expansion of Pharmaplan has been driven by various market developments. First, the growing demand for efficient and sustainable solutions in the

pharmaceutical industry was a key factor. Additionally, technological advances and stringent regulatory requirements in the industry increased the need for specialized services. Our ability to develop innovative and customized solutions has allowed us to continuously expand our services and adapt them to the needs of our clients.

"Our clients' requirements are more demanding and complex than ever."

When a company successfully operates for half a century in a highly regulated and demanding market like the pharmaceutical industry, it undoubtedly possesses special competencies. Where do you see these?

A. Bonhoff: Our special competencies lie in our extensive experience and relentless pursuit of innovation. We have completed projects that set benchmarks in the European pharmaceutical industry. Our expertise in engineering, architecture, construction and project management, and qualification is unparalleled. Additionally, we focus on close partnerships with our clients and provide continuous support throughout the entire lifecycle of the facilities. This enables us to successfully complete complex projects and ensure long-term success for our clients. It also allows us to retain and cultivate the knowledge gained on production technologies and product forms within our company and among our employees.

How has the customer requirements profile for pharma projects changed over the years? It has undoubtedly become more demanding and complex, hasn't it?

A. Bonhoff: Absolutely, the requirements profile of our clients has evolved significantly and is now more demanding and complex than ever. In the past, the focus was mainly on functionality and cost, whereas today, flexibility, efficiency, and compliance with stringent regulatory standards are paramount. Our clients increasingly demand customized solutions that are not only technically advanced but also environmentally friendly and flexible enough to adapt to market demands.

Pharmaplan has responded by creating three business areas. What are their roles, and how do they complement each other?

A. Bonhoff: It’s less about three separate business areas. Rather, we focus our competencies according to customer requirements. This allows us to precisely meet the engineering requirements throughout the entire lifecycle of pharmaceutical facilities and projects. In the Front-End Projects area, we focus on feasibility studies, site planning, and evaluation of project options. In the Investment Projects area, we concentrate on engineering, architecture, project management, and overseeing construction implementation. We ensure that projects are completed on time and within budget, and our team also supports the qualification of the facility. We accompany the entire process up to commissioning. Finally, in the Site Projects area, we offer continuous support and assistance with retrofit projects for existing facilities

during ongoing operations. All of this complements each other, as all our competencies seamlessly integrate, allowing us to offer our clients comprehensive solutions from a single source.

Are there also synergies within the TTP Group with other companies like Triplan?

A. Bonhoff: Yes, within the TTP Group, we leverage synergies with other companies like Triplan. By exchanging knowledge and collaborating on joint projects, we can offer our clients a broader range of services and expertise. These synergies allow us to work more efficiently and innovatively, strengthening our position as one of the leading providers of engineering services in the pharmaceutical industry.

You are present with your own offices at major pharmaceutical and chemical sites. Is this presence a key to success, both now and in the future?

A. Bonhoff: Local presence at major pharmaceutical and chemical sites is definitely a key to our success. This proximity to our clients allows us to respond quickly to their needs and work closely with them. This strategy will remain important in the future, as it enables us to build long-term partnerships and continuously improve our services.

Many pharmaceutical companies have announced multi-billion-dollar investments in new facilities or even locations. In the chemical industry, investment activity is rather weak. How do you assess the future development of these two markets?

A. Bonhoff: We expect investment activity in the pharmaceutical industry to remain strong, driven by innovations and the demand for new drugs and therapies. In the chemical industry, however, we see a more moderate growth trend, with investments likely focused more on efficiency improvements and sustainability.

"We expect investment activity in the pharmaceutical industry to remain strong."

Overall, we expect both markets to continue offering significant opportunities for growth and development, albeit with different focal points.

What trends are influencing the realization of investment projects in the pharmaceutical sector today, but also beyond, for example, in chemical plants?

A. Bonhoff: Important trends influencing the realization of investment projects today include digitalization, modular flexibility, and compliance with stringent regulatory requirements. In the pharmaceutical sector, we see increasing automation and the use of data analytics to optimize processes and improve product quality. These trends are also gaining importance in the chemical industry, although the focus there is more on efficiency improvements and reducing the ecological footprint.

What impact does digitalization have on your business model overall and your business areas?

A. Bonhoff: Digitalization has a profound impact on our business model and our business areas. It allows us to implement more efficient and accurate planning and construction processes, improve the quality of our services, and optimize communication with our clients. Specifically, in planning, we rely on digital twins, BIM2Field, as well as digital site and safety management. In our own "virtual pharma facility," we can train operators on the client side and visualize equipment options for our clients. These digital tools and platforms allow us to monitor and control projects in real-time, leading to greater transparency and better decision-making. All of this contributes to us being able to offer our clients innovative and forward-looking solutions.

The 'Pharma Facility of the Future' will be highly automated and digitized. How far away is the future?

A. Bonhoff: The 'Pharma Facility of the Future' is closer than many think. Many elements of this future are already a reality today, such as advanced automation technologies and digital twins. However, there is still room for further developments, particularly in the areas of artificial intelligence and machine learning. At Pharmaplan, we are well-positioned to help shape this future and help our clients realize their visions of highly automated and digitized production facilities.

Right Column:

“The 'Pharma Facility of the Future' is closer than many think.”

(Photo Dr. Bonhoff)

Dr. Andreas Bonhoff, CEO of TTP Group

About the Person

Andreas Bonhoff *has been the CEO of the TTP Group since May 2019. Prior to that, he had been a board member of Triplan since January 2018. After completing training as a bank clerk, Bonhoff studied business administration at the University of Passau from 1989 to 1993. He began his career at Scott Paper, and his professional journey took him to VIAG, SKW Trostberg, and finally to Degussa (renamed Evonik in 2007) from 2001 to 2011, where he held management positions at Stockhausen, Goldschmidt, and most recently Infracor, the operating company of the Marl Chemical Park. Before joining Triplan, he was a shareholder and partner at Aequitas Consultants from 2011 to 2018, where he managed carve-out, restructuring, and reorganization projects in the chemical and process industries.*