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by Francisco Rojas July 13, 2014


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Interview with Exergy's CEO, Claudio Spadacini

Picture: Claudio Spadacini, CEO of EXERGY

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ThinkGeoEnergy interviews Claudio Spadacini, the CEO of EXERGY, and innovative manufacturer and supplier for Organic Rankine Cycle turbines for the geothermal industry.

ThinkGeoEnergy has had the pleasure of interviewing Claudio Spadacini, the CEO of EXERGY, prior to the upcoming GeoLAC event in Costa Rica. The interview provides a unique insight into the specific view of this renowned professional on the geothermal industry and its current issues, alongside a brief view of his company and expertise.

EXERGY designs, manufactures, supplies and operates Organic Rankine Cycle (ORC) systems for geothermal, waste heat recovery, biomass and solar (CSP) applications. The firm was founded in 2009 by Claudio Spadacini based on a clear goal, the creation of a turbine that could utilize lower quality heat sources and convert it into energy, which was envisioned by the firm's founder and CEO Mr. Spadacini.

Where is your company based and where are you right now?

EXERGY is based in a custom built facility near Milan, in the north of Italy. The facility (in Olgiate Olona) houses the engineering, project management, manufacturing, after sales service, procurement, operations and research & development teams under the one roof. Additional support for the business comes from the SECI Energia headquarters based in Bologna. Right now I spend much of my time travelling between Bologna, Turkey and the Olgiate Olona headquarters.

How international is your business and how does this affect your work?

EXERGY has a global outreach and concentrates on geographical areas susceptible to high electricity costs and where there are natural or industrial resources fitting our technology, like Turkey, Indonesia, South America and Russia. We also look for countries with favorable regulatory frameworks in place to encourage investments in renewable resources and energy optimization. This affects our work because we must ensure we can reach our target markets not only with a commercial team but with customer support and after sales service. So once we enter a market we participate to the development of renewable energy projects and establish a service center or service partner in the area.

How much do you travel?

I have a young family so travelling less is something I am working towards. Luckily EXERGY have a skilled, dedicated team who service all corners of the globe, so we definitely share the load when it comes to time on the road.

What technology do you carry on a trip?

Nothing too advanced to be honest. Just the phone and laptop, and obviously a pocket calculator, which helps me to quickly approach any new idea on technology or business.

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What are key elements that differentiate your company in the market?

Our innovative, exclusive technology facilitates the improvement of energy efficiency, reduces the cost of energy supply as well as reduces the impact on the environment. Given that all teams, including R&D, operations and assembly are located under the one roof there is much greater collaboration and controls throughout every step of the process. This facilitates the delivery of a high quality product in a timely manner. EXERGY is part of the Gruppo Industriale Maccaferri and enjoys the financial, strategic and some management support of the group. This has been a distinct benefit in regards to the development and expansion of the business.

What are the main obstacles for your business today?

Every market has its own set of rules and practices that must be understood in order to perform successfully. Generally speaking, the main obstacles to start operating in a market are the existence of regulatory constraints, excessive bureaucracy and a lack of cultural understanding around sustainability and energy efficiency issues. Since the financial crisis a few year ago there have been some markets that experienced credit shortages, but this situation seems to be easing off now.

What are the key markets for the geothermal industry right now and why?

Turkey has become one of the world's most important geothermal markets in recent years, combining high electricity costs and a favorable regulatory framework in place. Turkey represents a significant market for EXERGY. We have the largest geothermal binary capacity portfolio in the country (177.2 MWe), and we are the largest ORC player in the marketplace. Other interesting countries for geothermal applications are Latin America and Asia, in particular Indonesia.

Where do you see the industry in 20 years from now?

Geothermal exploitation technology is constantly evolving and will continue to do so into the future. I see the specific costs of installation and operations becoming more affordable as efficiencies improve. The other change I see is a relaxing of government regulations in certain countries that make it difficult for developers to operate profitably. If governments help stimulate the industry via incentives and less red tape it will be a benefit for all. But none of this will happen without greater education and collaboration at a government level.

If you had unlimited funding to promote geothermal, what would you do?

Education at a government and large industry level would be a good first step. Educating key decision makers as to the cost vs benefit of utilizing geothermal sources is half the battle. Secondly I would promote a system of back-up guarantees on first-well insurances, so that exploration of new geothermal areas would be incentivized by the minimization of the geological risk.

What would be your key advice for people wanting to enter the geothermal industry?

I would encourage anyone thinking about getting into the industry to think about focusing your studies towards the energy sector. The sector is only going to get bigger over the next 10 years so there are plenty of opportunities to be part of a constantly evolving sector of the market. Networking is also extremely important and one of the most valuable tools you can develop on your way to a rewarding and successful career. Go to industry events, talk to people and start asking for help and mentoring.

The final piece of advise I have is basic but incredibly important. Young graduates really must speak Business English to be competitive and stand out from the crowd. EXERGY is an Italian company but business is almost always conducted in English. You can be the brightest student or the best engineer, but if you don't have English it can be very career limiting.

About Claudio Spadacini:

Claudio Spadacini earned his Master's Degree in Mechanical Engineering at Politecnico di Milano. During this time he wrote a thesis on ORC cycles and thermal stability of organic fluids, and received the 'Premio Sesini' award, presented to the top student of the academic year. With 15 years' work experience in the field of renewable energy and heat recovery applications, Claudio is a recognised expert in ORC cycle optimization and design. He has authored multiple articles and papers on system engineering and energy recovery applications, and has developed a simulation software for ORC cycles. Today Claudio is a member of the ASME IGTI - ORC Power System Committee and served on the scientific panel for ORC 2013. He was named Geothermal Person of the Year at the 2013 World GeoPower Markets Awards. Prior to founding EXERGY, Claudio was the Chief Technical Officer for Swiss company THERMOSELECT.

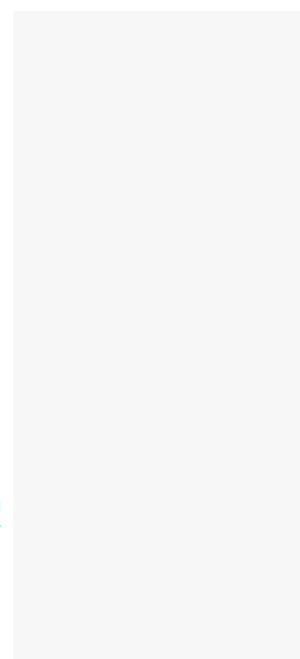
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About EXERGY:

EXERGY designs, manufactures, supplies and operates Organic Rankine Cycle (ORC) systems for geothermal, waste heat recovery, biomass and solar (CSP) applications. Based in Italy, they have a custom and unique product, the Radial Outflow Turbine that operates exceptionally well at low heat levels.

The firm was founded in 2009 behind a clear goal, the creation of a turbine that could utilize lower quality heat sources and convert it into energy, which was envisioned by the firm's CEO Mr. Spadacini. After years of research and testing, their vision was realized and the Radial Outflow Turbine was launched into the marketplace and marking the start of the company's operations. Since then, EXERGY has grown surely and steadily, entering marketplaces across the globe and providing turnkey solutions and services to customers in all stages of the geothermal value chain.

Continuous innovation and international expansion are the firm's objectives for the near future and no better way of embodying them than to be the BRONZE Sponsor for GEOLAC in Latin America, where key stakeholders will meet and discuss projects and the advancement of the geothermal industry in Latin American and the Caribbean.

