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Press release

RENA: Innovator of the year for 2010

The *Top 100* accolade goes to the most innovative small and medium-sized firms in Germany.

RENA GmbH is this year's main prize-winner and therefore bears the title 'innovator of the year'.

Gütenbach: A resourceful workforce, the courage to break new ground and the creative marketing of new products are among the factors that have catapulted RENA right to the top of the list of the 100 most innovative firms in Germany. Lothar Späth will present Jürgen Gutekunst, one of RENA's directors, with the main prize and the prestigious *Top 100* award in Rostock-Warnemünde this Thursday evening.

Jürgen Gutekunst and Michael Schätzle, who were at university together, set up RENA GmbH in 1993. The company is now a global market leader in the field of process technology for wet chemical applications – such as the manufacture of solar cells. Its workforce has grown almost fivefold over the past five years from 190 to 980 people, which makes the firm one of the largest employers in its region.

There are many reasons why RENA has been voted the overall winner of the *Top 100* competition. Some of them are evident from the bare numbers: RENA holds 362 international patents, has brought more than 100 innovations to market since 2006 and generated only 10 per cent of its revenue from unchanged products in 2009. This means that the firm earns 90 per cent of its current revenue from new products and innovative improvements made over the past three years.

This impressive track record is attributable to the company's creative workforce around the world. More than 50 employees work regularly on the development of new customer solutions. If they want to familiarise themselves with the latest scientific findings, they need go no further than the Fraunhofer Institute for Solar Energy Systems (ISE), which is in the immediate vicinity. This proximity is no coincidence. RENA works closely with other institutions in the field of innovation, which provides it with a ready supply of highly qualified talent and access to basic research.

Another major reason for the firm's success is the pioneering spirit demonstrated by Jürgen Gutekunst. By having an acute sense of where new trends are heading and making the right strategic decisions at the right time, he has gradually conquered new markets and fields of expertise. RENA is one of the very few companies in the world that pos-

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esses expertise in two competing technologies used in the production of solar cells: silicon solar cells and thin-layer solar cells. What's more, this owner-run firm produces equipment not just for the photovoltaics industry but also for semiconductors, microsystems and medical equipment. "Good ideas that generate a favourable market response don't just appear out of thin air. We work hard every single day to come up with them. Having been voted the overall winner of the *Top 100* competition we are delighted that all this commitment is now being rewarded because it shows that we're on the right track. Our customers often tell us personally that they too are convinced that we will not run out of good ideas in future", stressed Gutekunst.

The Vienna University of Economics and Business Administration scrutinised the innovative capabilities of 248 small and medium-sized German firms over a period of several months. The 100 best companies bear the *Top 100* seal of approval for one year. A distinguished jury selected RENA as innovator of the year for 2010 from among the winners of the four surveyed categories. One of the members of the panel that chose RENA was Professor Dr Peter Littmann. The long-time CEO of Hugo Boss, columnist on the *Handelsblatt* newspaper and managing director of BRANDINSIDER GmbH summed up the reasons for the decision as follows: "RENA simply had the right mix of qualities: an inspirational leader with an acute sense of what to do and when to do it, a perfectly structured innovation process, a technologically minded sales team and a marketing department that knows its customers intimately. We are all truly impressed by the successful track record that this firm has established in such a short time."

Further information on RENA GmbH (innovator of the year for 2010), the other 99 prize-winning firms and the *Top 100* project can be found at www.top100.de.

Mentor

The project's mentor is Lothar Späth, former state premier of Baden-Württemberg.

Project management

Dr Nikolaus Franke has coordinated the project since 2002 and is professor of entrepreneurship and innovation at the Vienna University of Economics and Business Administration. The focus of his research is on entrepreneurship, innovations management and marketing. He is one of the world's leading experts in user innovation.

Organiser: compamedia GmbH

compamedia organises benchmarking projects for small and medium-sized German firms. By running its *TOP 100*, *TOP JOB*, *TOP CONSULTANT* and *ETHICS IN BUSINESS* nationwide benchmarking competitions it assists and awards prizes to companies that achieve outstanding results in the fields of innovation, human resource management, consulting and values management.

Partners

Partners in the project are: Bayern Innovativ GmbH, the Fraunhofer Society for the Promotion of Applied Research, the German Centre for Productivity and Innovation (RKW), the Association for Electrical, Electronic & Information Technologies (VDE) and the Association of German Engineers (VDI). The media partner is the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* newspaper.

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A digital version of this text as well as background information on the project are available from masurat@compamedia.de; pictures of RENA can be obtained from Michaela Schätzle at michaela.schaetzle@rena.com. Photographs of the awards ceremony will be available in the *Press* section of www.top100.de from Friday, 2 July.

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