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APPLICATION STORY

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From fuses to cruise ships :

German regional utilities provider turns its thermography team into a customer service

EWE is Germany's fifth-largest energy company. Headquartered in Oldenburg, a city in the German federal state of Lower Saxony, the EWE Group employs more than 5,300 people serving an electricity grid of approx. 78,000 km for over one million electricity customers, predominantly in the Northwest, in parts of Eastern Germany and Western Poland. The company's two core business areas are electricity and natural gas. In the past few years, EWE has also expanded its activities in IT, telecoms, and building management and security. It also holds important stakes in insurance and other businesses.

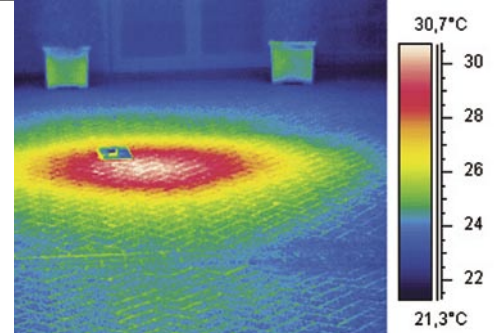
A product of the relatively recent liberalization of the energy market in the European Union, EWE is diversifying

its business. But it is also integrating its technical services. Initially, they only existed to serve EWE's core business. Now, EWE is offering the experience, gathered by its skilled workforce and engineers, as service-features to its customers and even the customers of its customers. It is turning knowledge into assets that are becoming profit centers. Infrared thermography is such an asset.

PRODUCTIZING THERMOGRAPHY

EWE's core business, the supply of power or gas, is completed with efficient maintenance tools for installations which provide power to both the public as the private end customer.

"Certainly, our prime concern is the proper functioning and maintenance of our own low- and mid-voltage installations,



severe district heating pipe leak spotted by FLIR Systems ThermoCAM™ S65

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including some 150 substations”, says engineer Martin Floerke, EWE’s Chief Thermographer. “But why shouldn’t we provide energy analysis or advice to our customers? A consistent and timely application of infrared thermography means less maintenance, less testing, less cleaning and more cost-saving for them”.

Customers targeted by the EWE thermography unit are predominantly local city energy providers in the EWE supply area. In Germany, many big or midsize cities have their own utilities company, incorporated into the ‘Stadtwerke’, which oversee all other technical and community services facilities. These ‘Stadtwerke’ are public limited companies. They have to act accordingly with regard to supply and service in general, and economic efficiency in particular. Moreover, they supply utilities to other important utility spenders such as hospitals, sports facilities and private, residential customers.

EWE’s thermography consulting is also integrated into the services of EWE daughter companies and stakes: the Gebäudesicherheit Nord, a company providing technical building management, from building access and fire prevention security to maintenance and facility management concepts, has integrated thermography into its customer programs.

RAISING AWARENESS FOR THERMOGRAPHY

Meanwhile, at the customer’s place, raising awareness of infrared thermography, explaining its benefits and destroying some myths about it (“You can see through walls, can’t you”) is a constant task. “We act as consultants, and to some extent, as evangelizers of thermography” says Floerke.

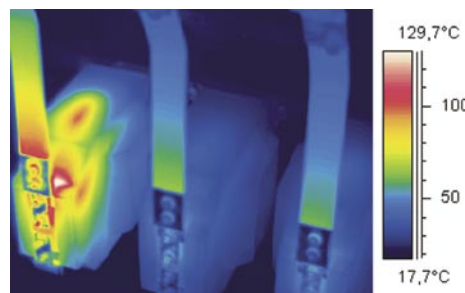
The EWE thermography team uses a FLIR System ThermaCAM S65, an infra-

red camera for professional use with a FireWire output. It is compatible with the ThermaCAM Researcher software suite which Martin Floerke has chosen for its extensive analysis capabilities, including its ability to record thermal imaging in real-time.

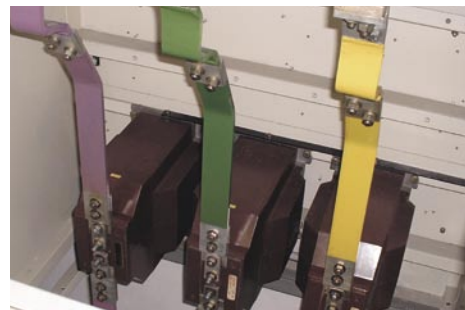
THE POWER OF REPORTING: MORE THAN A BUSINESS CARD

Delivering the customer a thorough, clear and comprehensive report is one of the basics of EWE’s service philosophy: Floerke’s department presents a CD with all the visual pictures and infrared images, classified according a three-level severity scale and with comprehensive and clear comments.

If the inspected site is very large, the report is presented with a map of the facility with numbered interactive buttons. A simple click show the underlying hot spots and visual pictures: it gives an excellent overview of the inspection and allows the maintenance people to instantly find the repair spot. And, it is a modest, but efficient and promising link between thermography reporting, a facility management tool, and mapping.



Substation transformer

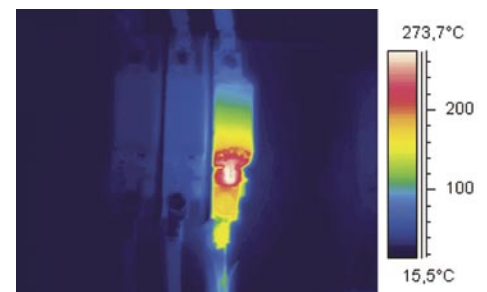


EWE applies thermography as a driver for diversification and differentiation. On the customer side, thermography contributes to customer loyalty and to the operative quality of the latter’s installations. Against a background of growing competition in the energy and other activities of the North German utility group, this is a strong asset.

ANOTHER STORY ?

But M. Floerke’s real passion as a thermographer is something different, although quite familiar. Especially in a region, which for ages has been living from shipping and shipbuilding. At the official request of the Meyer Werft shipyard in Papenburg, the world’s leading cruise shipyard, Floerke-, (and his ThermaCAM S65), regularly takes the sails to Norwegian waters for a six-day test trip, during which he entirely inspects electrical and mechanical installations of brand new 290-meter-long cruise ships.... It sounds like the beginning of a wonderful thermography story.

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Fuse unit of a current compensation system



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