



1. Mr. Wolff, you manage both Cosmedico and Wolff System. What characterizes the two firms?

Both Cosmedico Light, Inc. (USA) and Wolff System Technology (USA) are operating companies of JW Holding GmbH in Stuttgart, Germany, and I serve as chairman of JW.

Cosmedico Light serves the North American market and is managed by its President, Jerry Frank. WST also markets its products throughout N. America and WST is managed by Michael Stepp, who is President of the WST business.

These two companies are actually competitors of each other in the markets they serve. It is a fundamental belief of mine that competition is good for, business. It is competition that keeps product costs and prices in check. It is competition that drives innovation and technical developments. In fact, competition is the energy behind progress.

If you were to look closely at these two companies, you find differences in their products, in their customer base and in their strategic approach to their markets. But you find many similarities as well. My personal commitment to real value, quality, product innovation, strict adherence to the laws that govern our business and customer satisfaction are also principals shared by Cosmedico Light and Wolff System Technology.

2. What made you believe, back in the mid seventies, in the bright future of indoor tanning?

Artificial UV light sources were first used on humans (and still are) as a medical treatment. One of the very noticeable side effects was that the UV-treated skin would tan in exactly the same way it does when exposed to natural sunlight.

It was also obvious to my brother Friedrich Wolff and myself that most people had a love for sun exposure. In fact, countless people travel many thousands of miles every year to spend a few precious days on beaches and beside pools in the sun.

When we connected these two facts - the idea for an entire industry was born. The Cosmedico and Wolff companies were started and they became the very foundation of the industry we have today.

I am proud and pleased by the role we have played in the development of this worldwide industry.

3. Research on UV radiation seems important to you. How do you support it?

A major portion of our expense is devoted to our Research and Development budget every year. We maintain an extensive laboratory at our corporate headquarters in Stuttgart. Additionally, we have R&D operation at both of the lamp production facilities in Erlangen, Germany and Drummondville, Quebec, Canada, and two years ago we installed complete testing and measuring capabilities at Wolff System Technology in Atlanta, GA. All of these operations use the same test protocols from all facilities that can be compared. We are entirely unique in this respect.

On the photobiology side, in Europe I have two dermatologists on staff who are very involved in research of our own

design and that of others. Dr. Peter Bocionek and Dr. Norbert Schmidt-Keiner are very active in industry associations, regulatory conferences and scientific symposiums. In North America, we are major sponsors of the Light Symposium, a scientific gathering in Boston, MA, June 15-18, 2001, where scientific research in photobiology will be presented (www.bioeffectsoflight.org). Additionally, we are members of the American Society for Photobiology.

[4. Sun lamps have constantly evolved in the past 25 years. What does the future hold?](#)

You are correct that sunlamps have evolved. And they have evolved in many wonderful ways . . .

Our lamps today deliver 25% more UV to the tanner than products of even 10 years ago. This is a huge benefit that is not well publicized. This means that more UV is delivered without more expense for electrical energy or lamp cost. Sunlamp maintenance (useful life) is also greatly improved. The first tanning lamps had useful lives of only 300 or 400 hours.

Today we have lamps that last 2 to 3 times as long. Many of our competitors have not yet reached these levels of performance. In addition, we now offer a huge selection of lamps with different characteristics - which provide different results. This allows us to provide lamps to different users who may have very different expectations. Future sunlamps, from my companies at least, will employ less mercury - which contaminates the environment when lamps are disposed of. This will also allow our lamps to reach optimum output much faster than before. Our efforts to increase output will continue successfully, with each new generation of sunlamps ever more efficient than the one before.

[5. How would you describe the ideal tanning apparatus?](#)

Forgetting whether one prefers a bed or cabin (booth), the ideal tanning apparatus will of course be populated with our latest sunlamp technology, preferably with just enough UVB to stimulate melanin production without burning the user, and high values of UVA to darken the pigment that is produced.

The UV should be delivered to the tanner in a session that is both comfortable and sanitary. In other words, the experience should be totally enjoyable. The salon owner is the key individual in this matter. He/she must have a firm understanding of the desires and needs of the customer. The equipment, lamps, services and pricing offered by the salon must be tailored for the customers of the particular salon.

[6. After Europe and the USA, you've established grounds in Canada in 1998, more specifically in Drummondville \(Quebec\), where sun lamps are being produced for distribution worldwide. What motivated that decision?](#)

Many things precipitated the move to Drummondville, Quebec. To start, this manufacturing site had the room for expansion that was needed to accommodate our rapidly growing business. It also had close proximity to Montreal - the second largest ocean transport port on the eastern coast of North America. This was necessary because of the number of containers of lamps that are exported every year.

But, most importantly, this area of North America has a very educated and talented work force, which is an absolute

requirement in the production of these products. We are now very pleased to be able to say the world's best tanning lamps are all made in this small community in eastern Canada.

[7. Do indoor tanning habits and requirements vary from one country to another?](#)

Indeed, habits and requirements vary greatly. In Eastern Europe, a much higher proportion of the population tans on a regular basis. Here tanning is recognized for the health benefits that are provided. A typical tanning bed uses low energy UVB lamps and session times are longer. The process tends to be cumulative but the result is a very natural-looking tan and minimized red skin-tone.

In most of North America (with the possible exception of Eastern Canada) customers ask for more immediate skin coloration. This means we see more red skin-tone. The results also seem to be less durable. Americans in particular are moving towards shorter session times and this is obtainable from lamps with higher UVB and from equipment with high wattage (160w+) reflector lamps.

In many other areas, like Poland, the former East Germany, Australia, New Zealand, Japan and South America, tanning is in its infancy. But it is born! Time will tell us what habits these areas develop.

[8. How important is salon operators' education to you?](#)

This is clearly the most important challenge this worldwide industry faces today. In this area, Europe is ahead. In North America the salon education and training programs are very good - but too small a percentage of salons use them. My North American companies are as supportive of this area as I am and both are supporting an initiative to make an information website available to everyone at no cost. I hope to be able to give you some very good news about this project in the near future!

It is a fact - without properly trained operators we cannot deliver our services safely and effectively.

[9. What business advice would you give them?](#)

Educate yourself and your staff in all areas. Learn the mechanics of the tanning process. This not only makes you able to offer sound advice to your customers, it gives them confidence in you and your staff. It also helps you make very good equipment and lamp choices.

Don't think you can "skip" the expense of sending your staff to a training class. It is essential that they fully understand the process and can communicate it to your clients. Good training at the start can eliminate problems and the expense caused by staff turnover. Develop a good understanding of your financials and develop a business plan that provides profit. Profit funds growth. This is an area where you might want professional help. A qualified accountant can be your best investment. Know your customers. Tailor your equipment, services and salon environment to meet the needs of your clientele. For example: a comfortable bed with a 20-minute session is right for the tanner who wants a peaceful, relaxing break from a hectic routine. But, 8 minutes in a standup might be the correct choice for a client in a rush.

[10. You preside over the European Sunlight Association \(ESA\) and are actively involved in numerous associations to help our industry progress. What are the most significant problems you have to deal with, and how hopeful are you to see them resolved?](#)

We are always faced with problems - but it might be better to call them challenges. We have already spoken about education and training - it has always been a first priority.

However, there are others. For many years, the manufacturers of sunscreen lotions have been growing their markets by using "sun scare" messages (millions of dollars have been spent in this advertising campaign). We must strive to bring balance to some of the public opinion that is now in place. We know that there is no danger associated with moderate UV exposure. And we now know that there are health benefits that are directly attributed to UV. We need to publish and distribute the science and information that supports our positions.

Further, we need an informed, unified strategy to deal with the various agencies that regulate our business. All of these and other issues cannot be dealt with by individuals or individual companies - and for this reason I have been a constant supporter of the newly formed Indoor Tanning Association (ITA). This is an organization that will meet the challenges and give the industry a unified voice.

[11. Last but not least, what was the highlight of your professional career?](#)

This is probably the most difficult question you have asked. Certainly there are many milestones. The founding of Cosmedico, the founding of Cosmedico Light US, the acquisition of Wolff System France and Wolff System Technology. But I like to think that even with these wonderful events in my professional life, the best is yet to be. Although this industry is nearly 30 years of age, we are still in our infancy, with many challenges and - I hope - rewards to come.

Also, one of the most rewarding aspects of my professional life is being asked to comment on our business and its future. I am honored to provide my comments and insights to you and the readers of Tan Info.

Thank you for this opportunity.