



#WeAreViskoTeepak

## Vladimír Ševčík : 26 years working at ViskoTeepak

**An inspiring career journey of a key figure in the sausage casing industry. Vladimír Ševčík's story highlights overcoming challenges without prior expertise, leading training programs in the US and Asia, and adapting to evolving industry trends. It also emphasizes the importance of continuous learning and effective communication. As retirement looms, insights and reflections are shared, marking an impactful legacy in the world of Wienie-Pak.**

**Looking back, what were some of the most memorable moments or achievements in your career?**

It was certainly the transition from the Production department to the Sales & Marketing department, taking up the position of Sales Support Manager in 2008. I joined this position at a time when the company had no specialist in Wienie-Pak Product applications, so I had no chance to inherit practical knowledge from my predecessors. I gradually trained with individual manufacturers of machines used in sausage production with our Wienie-Pak cellulose casing, such as Townsend, Handtmann, Vemag, and HiTech. I learned how our product is utilized in various stages of sausage production, from the preparation of the stuffing emulsion to stuffing, heat treatment including peeling, and final packaging. Participating in Iowa State University's intensive Sausage Course also provided a significant early boost, but mainly, it was learning by doing.

For the first two to three years, I spent an average of 3-5 days a month in my office in Brno. The rest of the time, I was with customers, mainly traveling across Europe, including Russia. It was a challenging period, adapting to diverse customer needs, but also very interesting, given the variety of experiences and learning opportunities.

## What were some of the biggest challenges you faced during your career and how did you overcome them?

The biggest challenges in my career involved training, construction projects, and expanding our distribution network. One major challenge was training the US technical team on the Wienie-Pak cellulose casing product, which began in 2010. The first theoretical training for the US technical team took place in Las Vegas, Nevada, focusing on product knowledge, followed by practical training in the



Another important milestone was the construction of the Gel Stuffing Center in Lommel in 2010. This was the first step toward building a modern, fully functional professional Innovation Center in Brno, which was successfully implemented last year.

However, the biggest challenge was the gradual training of our partners in the emerging Asian distribution network. This initiative started in 2012 in cooperation with Esa Setälä. After his retirement, we continued these activities with his successor Mark Shufflebotham, Director APAC Region. We provided full technical training to our distributors in all commercially active countries in the Asia-Pacific region, including countries such as Japan, South Korea, China, Taiwan, Philippines, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Australia, and New Zealand.

## Asian Technical Training Program



### **How have you seen your industry or field change over the years?**

Reflecting on my 26 years in the casing business, I've witnessed significant changes. One major change is the concentration of production in large plants, a trend evident in Europe and, more recently, in Asia. These plants utilize modern automatic stuffing machines, continuous thermal processing lines, and fully automatic packaging lines. For us, this shift necessitates a focus on developing High-Density products, like maximizing shirring length and strand inner bore. This is a future trend.

Our technical application team and development personnel must maintain constant contact with machine manufacturers. They need to understand new machines' workings and their product requirements to provide professional service to customers using the latest sausage production technology.

In Asia, there's a notable shift from inexpensive machinery to reliable, high-quality European equipment (e.g., Vemag, Handtmann, Fessmann, Mouting). Customers are realizing that investing in cheaper machinery leads to significant production losses, prompting them to invest in more modern, powerful, and reliable equipment. Furthermore, even smaller companies, once reliant on manual machines like Twist Linkers, are now investing in automatic stuffers like Vemag and Handtmann.

Moreover, our customers are increasingly inquiring about our certifications (ISO, BRC, FDA, etc.) and how ViskoTeepak addresses ecological and sustainability concerns.

### **What are some important lessons you've learned throughout your career?**

One vital lesson I learned during my six-year stay in Syria at the start of my career is the importance of listening. Listening is crucial for effective and successful communication. Effective communication involves understanding your partner's perspective, achieved by attentively listening and reflecting on their message.

Empathizing with your partner's position and striving to understand their motivations is key. Avoid jumping to one-sided conclusions; instead, adopt a 'helicopter view' to consider various perspectives and understand the root causes before making decisions.

Respect is essential, not only for partners and colleagues but also for our front line staff.

## "Education isn't something you can finish."

### **What advice would you give to someone just starting out in this field?**

It's crucial to understand the basics of the processes and tasks you handle or manage. Regardless of your position in the company, starting 'on the floor' is invaluable. This approach provides deep insights into processes and helps build future-useful contacts.

Effective communication with subordinates, co-workers, and partners is key. Be responsive to their queries and assist in problem-solving. Don't be afraid of change; every change brings new



### **What are your plans for retirement?**

I'm looking forward to finally having the time to completely renovate our garden. I'm also excited about dedicating more time to my hobbies, like cycling, tennis, and skiing. But most of all, I'm eager to embrace my new challenge as a full-time grandfather. My new employer - grandson Norbert, is eagerly awaiting my arrival.

**As you look towards retirement, is there a message or sentiment you'd like to share with all our customers and partners around the world?**

As I approach the end of my professional career, I reflect fondly on my time, especially in the Asia region. Asia is a beautiful, interesting continent, home to very friendly and pleasant people. It's a place of many opportunities, both now and in the future, and I will certainly miss it.

Everything has a beginning and an end. I wish ViskoTeepak, our employees, and all our partners and customers around the world continued success.

**Lucie Motyková: ViskoTeepak's New Wienie-Pak Specialist!**

After her excellent performance in the Brno Quality Department, Lucie will officially start on February 1st, 2024, as ViskoTeepak's new Wienie-Pak specialist. Her skills and experience will be utilized in quality related tasks, focusing on resolving issues and developing quality standards. Furthermore, some of Vladimir's tasks, as well as certain responsibilities from Filip Veselka (Wienie-Pak Product Manager) and Petr Brandýs (Innovation Centre Technician), will be managed by Lucie. Not to mention, she will also oversee tests within the ViskoTeepak Innovation Center.