

Unknown world leader

Anatech from Sittard (The Netherlands) is a world leader on the market of equipment for thermal analysis. Still there are no devices with the logo of the company. "We develop and build devices with a measuring accuracy of a one millionths' degree Celsius for large manufacturers of laboratory equipment", explains president Archi Leenaers the absence of the company logo.



In the production area one can see the names of those manufacturers labeling the equipment with their own logo. This way Anatech smartly uses the worldwide sales network of their customers. "As a small company, with almost thirty employees, we cannot afford a worldwide distribution network. Still we need it, because the niche market we are working is so small that you need to be a world player to sell enough."

Anatech manufactures three different kinds of instruments. Instruments for DSC (differential scanning calorimetry) measure the difference in temperature between two cells: one empty and one with a sample. As soon as the sample is absorbing or releasing heat, the device records the difference. Applications include the measurement of reaction heat of crystallization processes. In instruments for TGA (thermal gravimetric analysis) a sample is placed in a small oven and continuously weighed with a balance. During the subsequent heating process, volatile substances will evaporate from it or the material will burn. The variations in weight as a function of temperature give information on the composition of the sample. Finally, Anatech manufactures small extruders and injection molding machines to enable the production of plastics parts on a laboratory scale.



All these products can be found in laboratories for quality control, product development and fundamental research. Leenaers: "For each type of research we develop special equipment. A machine for quality control is designed especially for that purpose. Often you see manufacturers removing all sorts of attributes of their top model to make it suitable for quality control measurements. We deliberately do't do that, to reach the price/quality ratio as optimal as possible."

This price is one of the strengths of Anatech. "We design the equipment with as many standard components as possible." Leenaers is not afraid this approach enables the customer to copy the device. "Even if you have all the components, still you cannot build a working unit. A big part of our knowledge is in the assembling of the unit." Patents are mostly applied together with its customers, because only big companies are capable of financing the fight against patent infringement. And Anatech is just too small for that. "Together with trade secrets, the continuous improvement of our devices ensures to maintain our competitive edge."

In the manufacturing area employees assemble the modules that later become a part of the whole device. Leenaers: "Each employee works on one type of product. A second one can take over his work, and a third employee can also do this in case of an emergency, just as well but not more slowly." Half of the employees work on the development of the products. Leenaers: "We are also working on new instruments, outside our current area of trade."

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Text: Patrick Marx

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