

# Top technology that wins people over

A conversation with Dr. (James) Vince Gruber, Director of New Technologies at Jeen International



**EURO COSMETICS:** *For more than 20 years, Jeen International has been successful in sales, delivering specialty chemicals to manufacturers of the cosmetic, personal care, fragrance and pharmaceutical industries. What was the company's greatest achievement?*

**Vince Gruber:** As you noted, Jeen International has been in business for some time. Personally, I have been working with the company only a short time. In speaking with the owner, Adam Perle, he is most proud of the reputation Jeen has achieved as a provider of high quality ingredients including actives and functional materials. However, the work that was developed to produce the first cold-water dispersible waxes (a patented technology called Jeesperse®) is perhaps one of the company's better achievements. The technology, while seemingly conceptually simple, had

not been realized by the industry and no such products were available until Jeen invented, patented, and launched them in 2010.

**EURO COSMETICS:** *Jeen is also known for its green, earth-friendly products. What precisely distinguishes these products?*

**Vince Gruber:** The focus of Jeen and Jeen's joint-venture company, BotanicalsPlus on the natural ingredient market, has been ongoing for many years and the company has numerous offerings for customers seeking naturally and sustainably-sourced ingredient technologies. Recently, the company expanded its offerings in the cold-water dispersible wax technologies by developing two naturally-based cold water dispersible products, Jeesperse® OptiDerm™ and Jeesperse® OptiTress™. These new technologies employ natural hydrocolloids instead of the earlier acrylate technologies that were part of the original concepts. These new technologies are also offering the opportunity to deliver actives (in the case of the Jeesperse® OptiDerm™, the emulsion delivers a synthetic skin ceramide and in the case of the Jeesperse® OptiTress™, a behenyl quat). In addition, the company has now begun to offer a line of naturally-sourced linear alkanes that can substitute for petroleum-based ingredients. These are finding use as feel modifiers and as potential substitutes for cyclic silicones that are rapidly coming into disfavor in the industry.

**EURO COSMETICS:** *Some of Jeen's most recent developments are a series of cold water dispersible waxes and the Jeesperse® CPW line. What can you tell us about these?*

**Vince Gruber:** The concept around the Jeesperse® dispersible waxes is the novel ability to take a high melting wax (above 40°C) and carefully incorporating a polymeric rheology modifier into the wax at carefully designed ratios. These blends are then cryo-ground and sieved to provide powders that can be easily dispersed into



Vince Gruber

water with only mechanical stirring as the energy input. No heat is required to disperse the waxes (although heat can be used if desired) and the ingredients can be post-added to finished emulsions, if necessary, to modify and improve rheological, stability or tactile properties of the emulsions. The technology can literally turn a two-pot emulsification process into a one-pot operation which can double tank capacity in manufacturing operations while reducing costs associated with the need for heating.

**EURO COSMETICS:** *You have been Director of New Technologies at Jeen since August of this year. What are your goals?*

**Vince Gruber:** Jeen International is expanding. Recently, the company acquired a new building that will increase the company's footprint 3-fold. Within this space, the company is planning to create over 3000 sq ft of new laboratory and pilot operations. The company plans to expand its R&D and pilot scale operations to offer customers greater flexibility and opportunity for innovation. My role will be to bring a strong scientific basis in the development of the newest ingredients that will include technologies designed for skin, makeup and hair care. In addition, Jeen maintains many close relationships with certain strategic suppliers and partners and working

together with these exceptional companies, Jeen and BotanicalsPlus can offer exclusive ingredients that meet customer's needs. My role will be to expand these external opportunities and to help guide our partners (some of whom do not necessarily function in the cosmetics industry directly) with improved *in vitro* and clinical testing to support the product launches. I will also be working on external communications, like this interview, to bring a more precise understanding of Jeen's capabilities and technologies to the global cosmetic industry.

**EURO COSMETICS:** *The desire for more biocompatible products is growing due to changes in the environment and the faster-changing target group. How can you satisfy this variety of demands?*

**Vince Gruber:** This is a very good question. As the recent issues around plastics entering waterways and certain sunscreens potentially having impacts on ocean life have grown, the need for ingredients that are more carefully designed to leave little or no footprint on the environment is critical. The industry still enjoys, for example, the wonderful feeling that silicones impart on the skin. However, silicones are known to be slow to degrade and often difficult to handle in wastewater treatment facilities where they typically end up in the sludge coming off of the treated water. The introduction of biologically-sourced alkanes is an example where Jeen is exploring opportunities in more sustainable and nature-compatible ingredients to support the needs of the cosmetic industry. Care in sourcing incoming raw materials, such as palm-sourced ingredients, is also important to know how the ingredients are working from the cradle to the grave. Even the Jeesperse® technologies, which are evolving to more natural systems, can help by reducing the carbon footprint that manufacturers experience when they have formulations that require significant heating to bring incompatible ingredients together.

**EURO COSMETICS:** *Can you tell us in a few brief words what services your company offers for cosmetic producers?*



**Vince Gruber:** Jeen is a company that has prided itself on being able to work closely with its customers and to provide ingredients and technologies that are tailored to the customer's needs. I have to say that in my time working with Adam Perle, the owner of Jeen International, I recognize and have come to have greater appreciation that he is a person who can see the pulse of the cosmetic industry and see where it is heading and to try and be there first. In addition, the company recognizes that close relationships with customers can go a long way to building trust and the experience of the sales and technical teams supporting the customer's needs is hugely appreciated by those who know the company, its supporting teams, and the owner.

**EURO COSMETICS:** *Jeen is known for its high-quality products. What do you do to keep the standard of quality high?*

**Vince Gruber:** Jeen international is currently an ISO-certified manufacturing operation. In the new building, there will be areas where we will take the ISO standards to the level of cGMP to be able to support even greater demands from our customers for high-quality products. The company moves a tremendous amount of chemicals through the warehouse doors and the work is done professionally and quickly to ensure that orders are shipped quickly and in good condition to our demanding customers. Also critical is the turnaround time for both samples and actual orders which one often hears is a problem for larger multinational companies to accommodate.

**EURO COSMETICS:** *Where do you see room for innovation in cosmetics?*

**Vince Gruber:** I believe that there are several areas where innovation in cosmetics will continue to grow. Inflammation will remain a key area of focus in skin and scalp health and the company is working on new ideas and products that will address this. This will likely overlap with the growing knowledge of the skin's microbiome that surely impacts the health of the skin and hair. In addition, as noted above, the push towards more sustainable and naturally-sourced ingredients will not slow down. The industry hears the customers speaking through their wallets and if the customers say they are interested in naturally and sustainably sourced ingredients, then we need to respond accordingly. Finally, as I mentioned, the Jeesperse® technology remains a strategically interesting technology, patented and developed by the company. We will continue to expand our offerings in this innovative product line to provide greater multifunctionality for customers with easy-to-use products that speed their time to market.

**EURO COSMETICS:** *On what would you like to focus more in the future?*

**Vince Gruber:** In my role, I have the benefit of traveling regularly with our skilled sales team. This places me directly in front of key innovators, scientists, artisans, and formulators who are really the drivers for new ideas in this industry. I will continue to focus my skills and attention on hearing what our customers are saying and making sure that the message gets back to the strong technical teams here at Jeen and BotanicalsPlus. I will continue to keep my eyes and ears open for companies not operating in our personal care sphere who may have very interesting technologies that could find a home in this industry. Finally, in my role, I will keep close tabs on developing ideas (and concerns, like the sunscreen issues in Hawaii) that will impact the future direction the company will go to develop new products.

**EURO COSMETICS:** *Thank you very much for the conversation.* ■