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M. J. Brinkmann
A clear leader in semifinished acrylic products

Medium-sized, family-owned companies like Findeis GmbH in Kirchlengern form Germany’s famed ‘Mittelstand’. These companies are credited with providing the backbone supporting Germany’s powerhouse economy. Findeis GmbH is a good example of the type of company that bases its success on entrepreneurship, hard work and a sense of social responsibility. It was founded by husband and wife team Willi and Bärbel Findeis selling semifinished plastic products from their modest garage. Today, the company provides employment for 55 people, and its management has passed into the hands of their daughter Bettina Diestelhorst-Findeis and new CEO Torsten Hertel.

Founder Willi Findeis was a pioneer in the plastics sector and, as well as a successful entrepreneur, he was also a founding member of the Purchasing Association of German Plastics Traders (EVDK). “Willi Findeis realized that mutual cooperation was essential for individual success,” says CEO Torsten Hertel, who joined the company in August of last year and assumed his current position in May. “Sadly, he died in 2011, but it is thanks to his passion and wise, strategic decision-making that the company is in such rude health today.”

While Cofounder Bärbel Findeis retains a 50% stake in the family business, she has passed its day-to-day running to new CEO Torsten Hertel and her daughter. Bettina Diestelhorst-Findeis holds the remaining 50% stake in the company and is responsible for human resources and finance. “After 51 years at the helm of the company, my mother stepped down from the operative side of the business in May of this year,” says Bettina Diestelhorst-Findeis. “As I continue in my parents’ footsteps, I am fortunate to have a CEO who shares my vision for the company at my side.”

That vision continues to emphasize family values of solidarity and mutual respect, but also finds room for new ideas. “Findeis has become established as a leading supplier of semifinished plastic products in its local region,” explains Mr. Hertel. “We have an extremely comprehensive product range that covers technical plastics in a variety of formats, acrylic sheets, tubes and rolls for the building and advertising sectors, and PVC sheets and bars. We also trade acrylic and aluminium composite products as well as polycarbonate boards.” Findeis’s traditional customer sector was the construction industry, but it finds itself increasingly supplying the advertising sector with...
acrylic products for display purposes of all kinds and in a variety of colours. Demand for technical plastics is also growing, and these are used in conveyor technology, the construction of special machinery and as skirting protection. Findeis stocks a total of 11,000 different inventory items, providing one of the most varied product selections in the market. It also offers complete flexibility regarding order volume and even supplies small quantities worth as little as 500 to 1,000 EUR. Furthermore, it is able to offer product personalization and a high level of customer service. “We have two Schelling CNC sawing centers that allow us to cut boards to specific sizes,” says Mr. Hertel. “We also offer motif engraving and edge polishing.”

Having specialized only in semifinished products, Findeis is now venturing into producing its own finished products. It is currently at the prototype stage for a garden shed and bin enclosure for integration in garden fencing. “The idea was born at a conceptual workshop run to develop a solution for the German North Sea island of Sylt, where bin enclosures are mandatory,” says Mr. Hertel. “The problem is that existing solutions do not always suit the style of housing. We hope to solve this problem with our new concept.” The new enclosures will be sold online to private and commercial customers rather than via retail channels so as not to compete directly with its traditional customers.

Personalization, service and consultancy are the aspects that will assure our future as we enter our second half century.

This new direction reflects general changes in Findeis’s strategy. “Personalization, service and consultancy are the aspects that will ensure our future,” confirms Mr. Hertel.
Interview with Jürgen Kleine-Berkenbusch, Operation Manager of TIGER Deutschland GmbH

Making people smile

A stall at a flea market in Denmark, where Lennart Lajboschitz sold umbrellas with his wife Suz, was the beginning of the success story of Flying Tiger Copenhagen. Today, the group operates more than 800 stores in Europe, the USA and Asia and each week, new stores are opened around the world. With its unique, quirky, fun, and affordable shopping experience, Flying Tiger Copenhagen has conquered the hearts of the people. Also German customers welcomed the Flying Tiger Copenhagen stores with open arms and TIGER Deutschland GmbH based in Flensburg has managed to successfully position the brand in the market.

‘Turn the world upside down’ is the motto of the Danish brand and the secret of its success. “We want to create a fun shopping experience and put a smile on people’s faces,” says Jürgen Kleine-Berkenbusch, Operation Manager of TIGER Deutschland GmbH. “It is not only about products, it is about giving people experiences to share with their loved ones. Flying Tiger Copenhagen believes that relationships and experiences are what make people happy. And ultimately happiness is what we want to give to our customers. That is what makes us happy in return.”

The first store called Tiger opened in Copenhagen in 1995 under the Zebra parent company. The first Flying Tiger Copenhagen in Germany was opened in 2006. Today, the group operates 45 stores throughout Germany, employing around 300 people or rather 350 people in cooperation with partners. “Germany is a huge market for TIGER, although it is quite different from the Danish market,” explains Mr. Kleine-Berkenbusch, who joined the group three years ago. “However, our unique culture and brand and retail concept work worldwide.”

Flying Tiger Copenhagen presents its customers a world, where they can feel welcome. They can step into the stores and join a world that is dominated by unique experiences and creative, fun and useful products. The company’s mission is to engage with people’s lives, to help them live their values and ideas and connect to the people that matter to them. The broad product range includes categories such as home, hobby and party or toys, electronics and gadgets as well as food, animal supplies and accessories. Each month, up to 300 new products find their way into the assortment. “Our founder

People can expect high quality at affordable prices from TIGER

The products should also make people feel welcome and comfortable
Lennart Lajboschitz had the idea to be unique with the products, only offering goods with special characteristics when it comes to the design or the functionality,” states the Operation Manager. “It is also important that our products are affordable. You can compare us to a discounter when it comes to prices, but the customers should feel like millionaires after leaving our stores because they get a really high value for their money.”

Besides the trend towards digitalization and online business, TIGER clearly focuses on the stationary trade. The stores give the customers the opportunity to discover the full range of products and to try out some of the products. In addition, the employees are always there to help and are committed to improve the shopping experience for the customers. However, the digital media play an important role in the marketing strategy of Flying Tiger Copenhagen.

The rapid growth of the Zebra group and its TIGER stores is likely to continue in the future.

“We are very ambitious when it comes to the further development in Germany,” says Mr. Kleine-Berkenbusch. “We plan to have around 150 stores in the next five years. The challenge is to find the right locations. But we will face this challenge as fearlessly as a tiger and will keep on turning the world upside down and putting a smile on people’s faces.”
The art of selling

Selling is the passion of POOL. Die Agentur. and its founder and owner Hubertus von Tiele-Winckler. Through the creation of innovative sales promotion and marketing campaigns, the agency helps its clients maximize sales of products and services. Founded as part of the Cologne Agency Group in 2005, it went its own way in 2010 and is now part of the Blue Agency Network, which was also initiated by von Tiele-Winckler and comprises eleven agencies in total. What sets it apart in a competitive market is a real enthusiasm for the art of the sale.

“I’m an old school salesman,” says Mr. von Tiele-Winckler. “To be good at it you have to enjoy what you do and just have fun with it, rather than putting yourself and everyone else under pressure.” Here, the Managing Director is not talking about the big deals brokered in opulent board rooms but the face-to-face contact with the public that getting a new product off the ground requires. “I was out and about in Cologne just a couple of weeks ago, doing promotional work on the street the old-fashioned way,” he says. “You meet so many people and learn so much about human nature and purchasing behaviour.”

While online shopping continues to grow, the feeling that face-to-face retail is losing out is only subjective. Objectively, the market is growing. “Our market is on the upswing without a doubt and will always have its place in the overall retail mix,” insists Mr. von Tiele-Winckler. “Consumers often lack confidence and are uncertain when it comes to making purchasing decisions, particularly in the case of products which need to be explained. Customers want to be able to ask questions and receive answers from a real person.”

Nevertheless, old-fashioned does not mean stuck in the past. “We have to be innovative and offer our clients new ideas about how to approach customers,” says Mr. von Tiele-Winckler. “We also work hand in hand with new technologies where these make our work easier.” POOL. Die Agentur. specializes in sales and marketing promotional activities and materials. Wherever customers come into physical contact with products and services, be it on the supermarket shelf, in a display window or service desk, POOL is there trying to make customers stop, look and buy. “We have over 30 years of experience in sales and marketing at the point of sale,” says Mr. von Tiele-Winckler. “Our aim is to achieve a measurable increase in our clients’ sales through the use of targeted strategies. However, that is often easier said than done.

The art of selling lies in identifying the right incentives for a particular target group. Only by narrowing the definition of the target audience is it possible to develop an effective sales concept and promotional activities that bring results.”
With POOL, clients benefit from its many years of experience and a proven track record with many of the biggest brands including names like Sky and Mobilcom-Debitel. Besides telecommunications, the customer list covers a wide range of sectors including food, non-food, hardware, televisions and FMCG. POOL’s motto is that those who can sell, can sell anything. “Our most important goal has always been quality,” states Mr. von Tiele-Winckler. “We have to rise above the market by delivering high-quality solutions and services that really make a difference.” POOL does this by putting itself in its customer’s shoes and looking at things from the other side. “I come from that side of the industry so I know what our customers want,” says Mr. von Tiele-Winckler. “We always have to think about how we can surprise marketing managers who have seen it all before. There has to be a constant process of self-evaluation and self-improvement.”

POOL is part of the Blue Agency Network which unites eleven agencies in the German market. POOL has offices in Düsseldorf, Munich and Berlin as well as Cham in Switzerland. It employs 40 people out of 130 for the network as a whole. Network turnover in 2016 reached 48 million EUR. “We have a large field sales force comprising 23 consultants who visit clients to coach their sales people and collect feedback on the efficacy of the measures we have implemented,” says Mr. von Tiele-Winckler. “We leave nothing to chance and are the only marketing agency with such a large team on the road. This allows us to deliver the quality for which we are known.”

Mr. von Tiele-Winckler is constantly on the go himself maintaining contacts with customers and making new contacts. “I take around 160 flights every year. Sales is in part a numbers game. If you don’t knock on the door, it will never open for you. In the FMCG sector, purchasing decisions are made in seconds. In our business, the time between first contact and the signed contract is around two years. At the moment, I am working on a project to bring German industry to China.

As part of its national sales optimization strategy for Sky in Germany, POOL set up promotional points in shopping centers

Optimizing face-to-face contact with customers is vital to any sales strategy

An interactive stand for satellite television provider Sky allows it to explain the benefits of its service to customers
Raising the spirits of the Black Forest

The Black Forest region in south-west Germany is rich in tradition: the Brothers Grimm fairy tales, cuckoo clocks, its rich and tasty cherry gateau, skiing, fine wines, the list goes on and on. One tradition with which the region is particularly closely associated is the production of fruit brandy. The warm summers in the Black Forest are perfect for growing the quantity and quality of fruit necessary for making the popular spirits. Bimmerle KG is a private, family-owned distillery which boasts a long history of producing fruit brandies, and has, in recent years, diversified its portfolio to increase its prospects on the export market.

Founded in 1966, both the first and second generation of the Bimmerle family owners are active in the firm. Mr. Bimmerle senior was a trained barrel maker who believed passionately in the future of fruit spirits, for which the Black Forest is renowned. “He really started the business from nothing,” says Managing Director Nicolai Benz. “Fruit brandy is a popular, natural product and, over fifty years later, the company is still extremely successful.” There have, of course, been challenges along the way; one of the greatest was trying to introduce fruit spirit to the export market. Mr. Bimmerle quickly realized that to depend on this product alone to develop an international customer base would be very difficult. He decided to diversify and therefore the distillery included rum and gin in its portfolio two years ago.

Today, Bimmerle produces fruit brandies made from cherries, zwetschgen and mirabellen plums, pears, and raspberries. “This is still our main product,” emphasizes Mr. Benz. “We process between 30 and 40 million kg of fruit a year; 12 to 15 kg are needed for every bottle.” Bimmerle does not burn any fossil fuels in the production of its fruit spirits. Instead, the company uses the stones from the fruit, mixed with wood; hot water is produced, which is used to power the distillery. Fruit is purchased from selected farmers in the Black Forest area with whom the company has fixed contracts. “It is very important to us that we take care of our local region,” Mr. Benz underlines. “Consequently, we make sure that we pay the farmers a fair price for their fruit and, as a result, the whole region benefits.”

In addition to its fruit brandies, Bimmerle’s portfolio also includes gin and rum. A year ago, the distillery introduced its own-brand gin, Needle Gin, which is sold in a very distinctive chemist-type bottle. The gin is high quality and has been very well received on the market. In its quest for internationalization, Bimmerle has recently formed a cooperation with Cuba in relation to Cuba’s famous Ron Mulata rum. “The raw sugar is grown on Cuba and the rum is produced there. We are the only company in Europe with a contract to sell this brand,” explains Mr. Benz. While the existing product portfolio is extremely successful, Bimmerle is, nevertheless, keen to continue expanding its product range. The company now has its sights set on the production of whisky. “We believe that the broader our portfolio, the better
our chances on the market are. We are firmly convinced that whisky is the way to go, and we will soon be in a position to begin production," Mr. Benz points out. "This will, however, take time. If we distilled it today, it would only be ready for sale in 2020." In preparation for its anticipated expansion, Bimmerle has invested significantly and, two years ago, built a new distillery in Sasbach where all products are manufactured, proceeded and stored.

The firm sells its products through food retail chains, specialist drinks stores and cash and carry outlets, and besides its own brand products also creates private label goods for its customers. Exports currently make up between 15 and 20% of Bimmerle’s 140 million EUR annual turnover, a figure which Mr. Benz believes can be increased. “It is not easy to sell Schwarzwälder Kirschwasser in Australia,” he laughs. “In recent years, we have increased our exports through the sale of vodka, rum and gin, and we now supply around 40 countries. Our products are particularly popular in Austria, Switzerland, England and Ireland; these are really our key markets.”

With around 80 employees, which increases to 100 for the busy Christmas season, Bimmerle is headquartered in Oppenau where it was originally founded. The production site is located in nearby Sasbach, and the management departments and bottling plant are situated in Achern. Mr. Bimmerle senior is still involved in the running of the business, and Mr. Bimmerle junior is responsible for the strategic direction of the firm. Mr. Benz himself has devoted his whole working life to date to Bimmerle. “I did a three year business apprenticeship here before leaving to study economics in Düsseldorf,” he reveals. “Afterwards, I reapplied to come back to Bimmerle; I have been here ever since, and was appointed Managing Director two years ago. I am responsible for sales and general management. My personal aim is to modernize the business through the introduction of new products.” Product development within Bimmerle is very much oriented towards current market trends. “The sales team identifies the latest trends through its discussions with customers,” notes the Managing Director.

“These are passed on and we develop the products. A recent example of this in the private label sector was cream liquor, for instance marzipan cream liquor. However, it takes time to develop new products so the time frame from idea stage to getting a product on the shelf is relatively long.”

The fact that Bimmerle never stands still and is constantly focused on extending its range is, Mr. Benz believes, one of its key strengths. “Knowledge is not fixed, we can always learn something new,” he says. “We use our knowledge to react to market trends. We are a mid-sized company which enables us to be very innovative and, above all, flexible. We love developing new products as well as new bottles – the packaging is very important. Nevertheless it is, for sure, the quality of our spirits which sets us apart from the competition. The history, the marketing, and the packaging all belong to a product concept, but ultimately, that product must taste good. We have invested a huge amount in our production to ensure that we are ahead of the market in terms of quality. At the end of the day, the consumer drinks the product, and if it tastes good, he or she buys it again.”

Bimmerle’s fruit brandies are the symbol of a long tradition of fruit spirit production in the Black Forest region.
Interview with Nicolai Benz, Managing Director of Bimmerle KG

Although product quality is the top priority, Bimmerle also focuses heavily on the bottling and packaging style of its products to ensure they appear modern and fresh.

In brief

Core Competence
Private distillery for fruit brandy, gin, and rum

Facts & Figures
- Founded: 1966
- Structure: Family-owned, headquartered in Oppenau
- Branch offices: Production in Sasbach; bottling and management in Achern
- Employees: 70-80
- Turnover: 140 million EUR
- Export: 15-20% to approximately 40 countries; key markets are Austria, Switzerland, England and Ireland

Products & Services
Distiller of fruit brandies, gin and rum; sole European distributor of the Cuban Ron Mulata rum; own brand and private label products

Target Groups
Food retailers, specialist stores, cash and carry outlets

Philosophy
Leverage five decades of knowledge, combining modern technology with traditional skills to produce high quality products from the native fruits of the Black Forest region: at home in the Black Forest, popular everywhere

Future
Increase sales of gin, rum and Cuban rum, both in Germany and internationally; commence production of whisky, in particular for the export market

As far as the marketing is concerned, Mr. Benz recognizes that the firm needs to focus more on this as the portfolio grows. Bimmerle advertising can be found in the classic media channels, and it has also established a social media department to raise the profile of Bimmerle brandies still further.

The firm has a clear vision of its future, where exports are anticipated to play a leading role. “My own expectations are set relatively high,” admits Mr. Benz. “We want to continue to serve the German market with gin, rum, and, in the future, whisky and, at the same time, strengthen our export market with these products. Our team is passionate about our work; we see the fruits grow locally and we have the full production chain under control. The job of a distiller is very special, particularly in the fruit spirits segment. We are often contacted by institutes who want to learn from us. Personally, I love the fact that our product is natural. To capture the taste of the fruit and herbs and essentially transport a whole history – that is amazing.”
Interview with Thomas Müller (left),
Managing Director of Gebr. Müller Kerzenfabrik AG

Lighting up since 1744

A history that dates back to the year 1744 can be seen as an obligation to adhere to traditions but, for Gebr. Müller Kerzenfabrik AG in Straelen, it has been a driving force to combine tradition and modern production under one roof. The company is one of the oldest candle manufacturers in Europe. Since 2013, its production has been certified as ‘segregated’ by the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO), confirming its position as a committed promoter of a sustainable production.

“No doubt, it is always a challenge to carry on with an enterprise that has been established in the market for such a long time. But we have been extremely lucky to have made the right decisions time and again,” points out Managing Director Thomas Müller who, together with his brother Stefan, manages the family company which is now in the seventh generation. However, the next generation is already involved in the company’s daily operations and will take over in due time.

The company went through stormy times, following its expropriation in Silesia after the war. In 1948, it shifted its production to Straelen where it has experienced growth ever since. Müller Kerzenfabrik produces five million candles and lights every day at its three production sites in Germany, Poland and China. It has become market leader in pillar candles, generating an overall turnover of 100 million EUR. “When we decided to expand our production abroad and set our sights on Poland, we could not foresee that this would turn out to be such a real success. Since 1988 we have been manufacturing in Grudziądz, and today, the majority of our candle production is located there. We have at our disposal a fully automated production area of 100,000 m² where the entire range can be produced,” stresses Mr. Müller. Since 2008, the Polish production site has been manufacturing large volumes for IKEA. “As competition is strong, we have continuously invested in our Polish production and have set up lean management processes with a high level of automation. The candles are produced fully automatically in large quantities,” says Mr. Müller. In 2000, Müller Kerzenfabrik went even one step further when it opened a production site near Shanghai in China. “Initially, manual work was relatively cheap but in the meantime prices in China have also increased,” adds Mr. Müller.

Müller Kerzenfabrik supplies large retailers in Germany and in Europe, either under private label or under its own brand. Its wide product range and its strong focus on sustainable raw materials have made Müller Kerzenfabrik really stand out in the market. “We have mainly switched from paraffin to palm oil that is grown sustainably in accordance with the standards of the RSPO. As an active member of the organisation, we are involved in pursuing new standards for our raw materials paraffin and palm wax for the benefit of the planet. Tradition is also about safeguarding our environment,” says Mr. Müller.

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A strong focus is on seasonal products with special placements in the shop

Müller Kerzenfabrik is market leader in the production of pillar candles in Europe

Scented candles in different sizes and fragrances complete the broad standard range
Generating electricity while on the move is the specialism of German engineering company Lindenberg-Anlagen GmbH. It is a world-leading manufacturer of marine generating sets, including those used to keep the disco lights burning all night on the Aida party cruise ship. The company’s power generation expertise is also used on dry land to manufacture diesel and gas generators for electricity production used by industrial clients worldwide as well as biomass power plants. More recently, it has begun to target the growing electricity storage market with projects aimed at increasing the viability of battery storage for large quantities of electricity.

Electricity makes modern life and all its comforts possible. It is also what powers the wheels of industry and commerce to keep turning. It is clean and reliable at the point of use and can also be transported easily. Its only drawback is that it is difficult and expensive to store. Lindenberg-Anlagen GmbH is now applying its considerable expertise and experience in electricity generation to solving this precise problem. “This is an ongoing project for us that we are tackling on a regional basis,” explains Managing Director Rainer van der Beek. “One of our sister companies just brought the world’s largest battery storage facility on line in Dubai. It is part of a two-year research project into improving the viability of battery storage of large amounts of electrical power. The potential benefits are huge.”

In the meantime, the company will continue to do what it does best; which is to produce custom-built power generators using both conventional and sustainable fuels. Founded in 1948, it celebrates its 70th anniversary this year. It was founded by Karl Lindenberg, an engineer specializing in the design of large, water-cooled diesel engines. “We have been producing marine gen-sets since the 1970s and established our reputation in this field with our own in-house designed generators,” says Mr. van der Beek. “We are now recognized as one of the leading manufacturers of marine aggregates worldwide not just for the quality and efficiency of our...
generators but also our ability to deliver on time and on budget.”

It is not just at sea that there is a need for an independent source of electrical power. Lindenberg’s emergency generators provide back-up power in the event of outages. “In key industries, it is better to rely on self-generation in case of emergencies,” says Mr. van der Beek. “This is also the case in many emerging countries where electricity supplies are far from reliable. For these markets, we design and manufacture turnkey power plants and have completed many successful projects in the Middle East, Asia and South America.” Increasingly, the power plants supplied by Lindenberg-Anlagen are fired with sustainable fuels, reflecting wider environmental concerns and political will to move away from unsustainable fossil fuels. “We are currently working on a new biomass power plant in Scotland that will be brought on line this summer,” adds Mr. van der Beek. “The project will serve as a basetype for other plants in the future.”

What sets Lindenberg-Anlagen apart is the turnkey nature of its work. Whether constructing a power plant, marine generating set, diesel generating set, gas generating set, wood or coal gasification plant, CHP plant, compressor drive or steel container, everything is designed and produced to order. “We do not work to a catalogue of standard products,” confirms Mr. van der Beek. “We are providers of tailored solutions. We take the needs of the client and turn them into individual solutions. In fact, the more specialized and complex the problem, the better it is for us. We can solve problems that no one else can. That is how we stand out from the market.”

Lindenberg-Anlagen’s clients are shipbuilders and shipyards on the one hand and industrial or institutional clients on the other. “We serve a very diversified client base,” says Mr. van der Beek. “Electrical power is a universal need that cannot always be met sufficiently by the national power network. More than 85% of our plants are destined for export to countries around the world. From single gen-sets to complete power plants, we are seen as a reliable partner for all power needs.”

Despite the effort and resources being put into alternative power generation, there will still be significant demand for Lindenberg-Anlagen’s generators both in the short and long term. “Nevertheless, we will continue to work on our battery projects and maybe one day we might have solutions ready to go if batteries substitute gensets,” says Mr. van der Beek. “Although such a development would mean a revolution in our industry, Lindenberg-Anlagen has never shied away from going in the direction that new technology and environmental concerns dictate.” Thanks to its position as one of the leaders in the industry, Lindenberg-Anlagen is confident of continued steady growth in the future, whichever direction the market takes.
High voltage, highest quality

It will be a milestone achievement in the world of modern power solutions: the world’s first 1,100 kV ultra-high-voltage direct current transmission link which is currently being constructed in China between the Xinjiang region in the northwest and the province of Anhui in the east, over a distance of 3,400 km. The bushings required for the mega energy project are supplied by HSP Hochspannungsgeräte GmbH, a 100% Siemens subsidiary which stands for highest quality for all high-voltage requirements.

HSP is a leading German, internationally operating manufacturer and supplier of high-voltage technology for the energy industry. The company specializes in bushings, insulated conductors which are used to feed electrical energy into buildings, transformer stations or large power transformers. In high-voltage applications, bushings need to include effective corona shielding solutions to prevent undesirable partial discharges resulting in material fatigue. “We deliver highest-category high-voltage bushings that keep power losses to an absolute minimum,” says CEO and Technical Director Erdal Eroğlu who joined HSP in February 2017, having worked for Siemens for 18 years. HSP covers the entire product spectrum and offers transformer bushings, switchgear bushings, generator bushings, High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) bushings and test bushings as well as a wide range of services from technical support and expert opinions to on-site electrical measurements and chemical analyses. Founded in 1893, as a division of Meirowsky & Co. in Porz, a district of Cologne, HSP has 125 years of experience and technical know-how in the sector. The company became independent in 1989 and, since 2007, has been located in Troisdorf, south of Cologne, where it operates a modern, ultra-high-voltage production and testing facility. Today, HSP is a 100% subsidiary of Siemens and employs 340 people. Including indirect exports through its customers, HSP ships 80% of its bushings abroad. “We are involved in large energy projects across the globe,” states Mr. Eroglu. “When Siemens or other companies supply a transformer, we provide the suitable bushings.” HSP is currently working on an exceptionally large-scale job in China, the Changji-Guquan project, the world’s first 1,100 kV ultra-high-voltage direct current transmission link which will run over 3,400 km from Changji in the country’s northwest to Xuchang in the densely populated eastern coastal region. “We supply the transformer bushings for the project, the largest we have ever made,” explains Mr. Eroglu. “It is a very challenging project which underlines our technological leadership in the sector.”

HSP delivers bushings of the highest performance and durability. “Our products are designed to work reliably for up to 40 years and above,” says Mr. Eroglu, describing the outstanding quality of HSP bushings. To guarantee maximum, long-term quality, the company is equipped with a modern, ultra-high-voltage production and testing facility at its site in Troisdorf. “HSP stands for the utmost quality for the most demanding high-
Interview with Erdal Eroglu, CEO and Technical Director of HSP Hochspannungsgeräte GmbH

“...voltage applications,” states Mr. Eroglu. “Our testing criteria are more rigorous than required by the industry standard. New customers often choose HSP because they cannot obtain the quality they need elsewhere.” HSP also distinguishes itself from the competition through its capability of working with special materials, such as silicone or resin-impregnated paper, and through its coverage of all customer demands, from small bushings to large-scale solutions measuring over 20 m in length.

“In addition, we can provide 100% individually customized solutions that perfectly meet the client’s specific technical requirements,” adds Mr. Eroglu. “And in urgent cases at the shortest notice.” HSP wants to achieve sustainable growth, in line with increasing market demand. “We benefit from being part of Siemens, but we are also very flexible in meeting all third-party customers’ high-voltage needs,” concludes Mr. Eroglu.
Involvement from the shop floor to the management

The German Vaillant Group is a global market and technology leader in heating, ventilation and air-conditioning solutions. One of its subsidiaries, HKR GmbH & Co. KG, supplies the Group with high-quality components, particularly precision-machined brass parts. Since it started targeting third-party customers four years ago, the medium-sized company has developed very successfully – not least to a corporate culture which involves everyone from the shop floor to the management.

HKR manufactures and machines turned, milled and forged parts for heating, sanitary, automotive, hydraulic, electronic and several other applications. Based in Roding near Regensburg in Bavaria, the company processes a wide range of materials, including brass, aluminium, steel, stainless steel and plastic. “Our core competence lies in turned components made from brass,” says Managing Director Michel Rahn who joined HKR two years ago after having gathered in-depth management expertise in the metal processing sector, automotive industry and supply chain management at home and abroad. HKR is a member of the Vaillant Group, a leading international supplier of heating, ventilation and air-conditioning technology with headquarters in Remscheid, North Rhine Westphalia.

HKR was established in 1966, as a Vaillant production facility. In 2006, the company was turned into an independent subsidiary, with its own brand and product development. “In 2013, we implemented a strategic reorientation of the company with a focus on the production of precision brass, steel and aluminium parts,” notes Mr. Rahn, describing an important milestone in the company’s development. “A year later, we started contract manufacturing for external customers to better utilize our production capacity and set up our own sales and distribution organization.” Since it opened up to the market four years ago, HKR has acquired many additional clients outside the Vaillant Group, including industry leaders like Honeywell, Mahle, Siemens and Stiebel Eltron. “In 2017 alone, we achieved almost 40% growth on external component orders,” Mr. Rahn points out. “We want to continue our external growth strategy and acquire additional, non-group customers.”

Besides pushing the company’s external development, HKR is working on strengthening its corporate identity and establishing a culture based on trust and common goals. “In cooperation with two consulting firms, we are developing a vision for HKR which,
on the one hand, defines strategic objectives with a focus on third-party business and, on the other hand, involves every employee in the company, at all levels from the shop floor to the management,” explains Mr. Rahn, whose professional passion is managing cultural and strategic change processes in organizations. “It is important that corporate objectives are shared by everyone and do not leave anyone behind. In 2016 we celebrated our 50th anniversary; the motto was ‘with tradition into the future’. We are a company with a rich tradition and a very loyal workforce. If a new vision and strategy are to succeed, everyone has to be involved. And the timing has to be right.” As a supplier of high-precision parts for a wide range of industrial applications, HKR depends on qualified labour. “We have many highly specialized workers and put great emphasis on education and training,” says Mr. Rahn. Another of HKR’s strong points is that it can draw on the rich resources and distribution network of its parent company Vaillant. “Despite being independent now, we are still part of the Vaillant Group,” states Mr. Rahn. HKR operates in a highly dynamic industry, with sectors such as heating and ventilation increasingly moving from metal to plastic as raw material to reduce costs, shifting towards renewable forms of energy to replace fossil fuels, and introducing digitalized, smart home solutions. “Ultimately, however, there will be products like connectors, valves and switches,” says Mr. Rahn. “Such devices will always be in demand.” As a classic contract manufacturer, HKR produces all components to the customer’s individual order. Nevertheless, the company has its own development and engineering facilities. “We cooperate closely with our customers in product development and optimization,” explains Mr. Rahn. “The goal is to co-design a product, bring it to production stage and enter batch fabrication. This way, we are developing more and more markets and applications outside the Vaillant Group, enhancing our capacity utilization and strengthening our market position as a reliable supplier of high-quality, precision-machined parts for demanding customers in Germany and abroad.”

HKR precision-machined products are used by the parent company Vaillant and many other customers

HKR is equipped with modern warehousing facilities to meet its customers’ demands at the shortest notice
Interview with Dr. Dagmar Matúšová, Managing Director, and Dana Grünewald, Authorized Signatory and Director of Sales and Project Management of ELH Eisenbahnlaufwerke Halle GmbH & Co. KG

Build your own rail bogie

There are some rail car builders who also make their own, basic bogies. ELH Eisenbahnlaufwerke Halle GmbH & Co. KG, in contrast, is focused exclusively on bogies. At home on rails around the world, the company specializes in custom-built bogies and innovative services such as a web-based configurator enabling customers to build their own bogie.

ELH develops and manufactures bogies for railway passenger and freight cars as well as railway construction machinery. Founded in 1998, the company offers a wide selection of standard and custom-engineered bogies, spare parts and welding components. “Since 2012, we have been a member of Optifin Invest, a financial investor from Slovakia,” states Managing Director Dr. Dagmar Matúšová. ELH has 115 employees, turns over 17 million EUR and is one of Europe’s top three bogie producers. The company ships about 60% of its bogies abroad, to customers across Europe, in North and South America, Asia and Australia. ELH operates in a highly competitive market, with growing cost pressure. “This is why we are concentrating more and more on special bogies for track laying equipment and other specialized vehicles running on rails,” says Ms. Matúšová. “We are capable of meeting our customers’ requirements faster than practically anyone else in Europe.” “We deliver from one bogie upwards and also handle customer-specific modifications of standard bogies,” adds Dana Grünewald, Authorized Signatory and Director of Sales and Project Management.

One of the latest innovative ELH developments is the patented, TSI certified RC25NT bogie featuring unique rubber metal springs for reduced noise. “The bogie is radially coupled so it adapts to the rails,” explains Ms. Matúšová. “This means less abrasion and makes the bogie exceptionally wheel and track friendly.” ELH has just completed a four-year test period for the RC25NT and is now ready to introduce it on a Europe-wide basis. “We have excellent development capabilities which are mainly thanks to our chief design engineer Detlef Scholdan,” says Ms. Matúšová. “We are very flexible in development and can handle all the required calculations and simulations, including vibration measurements together with local partners,” adds Ms. Grünewald.

To further grow its market position, ELH is continuing to develop new, innovative products, such as high-performance bogies for locomotives or non-standard freight cars. In addition, the dynamically evolving company is working on a web based configurator enabling customers to build their own bogie.
Ferrari Industrieventilatoren GmbH is responsible for Germany and selected customers in the German-speaking parts of Switzerland. "Many of our products, though, go to the international market as part of our customers' plants and installations," states Mr. Günther. "The fans we make are integral components of larger systems and essential for their proper functioning." To further grow its position in the German-speaking countries and get even closer to its customers, Ferrari Industrieventilatoren GmbH plans to open a branch office in North Rhine-Westphalia. "We are also going to expand our technical support services and logistics services, including just-in-time delivery," concludes Mr. Günther.

Ferrari Industrieventilatoren is the German sales subsidiary of Ferrari Ventilatori Industriali S.p.A., the leading Italian supplier of industrial fans. Based in Arzignano in the province of Vicenza in Northern Italy, the company produces more than 25,000 fans annually. "Since 2017, we have been owned by Soler & Palau Ventilation Group, a globally operating, Spanish manufacturer of fans, ventilation systems and air treatment and heat recovery units for residential, industrial, commercial and public buildings," explains Klaus Günther, Managing Director of Ferrari's sales and service operation in Southern Germany. "It is a perfect match. The acquisition enabled Soler & Palau to round off its product portfolio, and we got access to its international distribution network and global presence.”

Established in 1960, Ferrari has almost 60 years of technical expertise in designing and manufacturing customer-specific fans for a wide diversity of industrial sectors ranging from paper, cement, steel and textile plants to filtering, dedusting, agricultural and marine applications. “Every application has its specific requirements: pressure, volume, operating temperature and several other factors,” says Mr. Günther. “This is why every fan is individually customized to guarantee optimum performance and efficiency.” Ferrari offers centrifugal fans, axial fans and built-in fans in carbon, corten and stainless steel. The company is especially strong in high-pressure and high-temperature fans as well as low-noise solutions. Ferrari Industrieventilatoren GmbH is responsible for Germany and selected customers in the German-speaking parts of Switzerland. "Many of our products, though, go to the international market as part of our customers' plants and installations,” states Mr. Günther. "The fans we make are integral components of larger systems and essential for their proper functioning.”

Fans are used in many industrial applications, from delivering dry, hot air to optimize the processing of paper webs to dedusting, exhausting and filtering applications in steel plants or pharmaceutical companies. Ferrari Industrieventilatoren GmbH covers the entire spectrum of fan technologies and customizes each solution to individual needs. Performing vital functions, the company’s products are indispensable parts of many larger plants and systems.

Ferrari centrifugal fans are designed to handle air quantities of up to 500,000 m³/h

Axial fans are used for exhausting and cooling in manufacturing environments

All Ferrari centrifugal fans are 100% adapted to the customer’s specific requirements
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