

# INFORM

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# "SWISS MADE" IS OUR COMPANY PHILOSOPHY.



Dear Readers

Whether PET preforms for beverage bottles, thin-walled packaging articles for foodstuffs or silicone cartridges are concerned, the injection moulds for these plastic products are made by Otto Hofstetter AG in Uznach/Switzerland and exported to customers all over the world.

Quality, durability and punctual delivery are typically Swiss attributes and fundamental elements of our company philosophy. The declaration "Swiss made" comprises these and further pluses and is acknowledged globally for an impeccable product in every respect. One might ask whether or not such characteristics and the resulting products are still in demand in our fast-moving world? Doesn't everything hinge on the price? Aren't plastic injection moulds degraded to inexpensive consumer articles which must be replaced again within a short time? These are questions which we as manufacturers of high-performance equipment must, of course, ask ourselves.

And our answer is: We adapt to the market requirements but we don't give up our traditional values. While the life-cycles of the products of the packaging industry are much shorter these days, the demands imposed on the moulds producing them have increased enormously. Substantially shorter cycle times or the use of recycled materials are only two of the criteria which mean that even higher expectations apply as regards the durability, stability and quality although the operative periods of the moulds have become shorter. It is and remains a fact that all our customers must be able to operate our moulds profitably, whether they run them for a shorter or longer time. From page 16 onwards you'll get an impression of how such lasting equipment can be made fit again even after years of use.

"Swiss made", we stand by it.

Stefan Zatti

Member of the Management, Otto Hofstetter AG



**Title page.**

Szczepan Kwiatek, founder and CEO of the Kartpol Group.

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## STRONG BASIS AND SUCCESSFUL NICHES.

**Schieferdecker GmbH & Co. KG** have been engaged in the packaging trade for the **last 50 years**. One of their three core activities is the production of cartridges. **Focusing on the core business** is the reason why the agile medium-sized operation in Erkrath/Germany is so successful. On the occasion of the company's anniversary the General Manager Mrs Heike Schicketanz and the Factory Manager Dietmar Kaupert provide an insight in the **success story** of their enterprise.

Heike Schicketanz, General Manager, and Dietmar Kaupert, Factory Manager, of Schieferdecker GmbH in Erkrath, have set their company on the right course for the next 50 years.

**This year the Schieferdecker company celebrates its 50th anniversary. Mrs Jossy Schieferdecker laid the foundation for this success. Looking at the society at the time and at the industry, all we can do today is take our hats off and admire the achievement. How has your aunt accomplished all this?**

Heike Schicketanz: There's a little past history to this. Jossy's uncle was the owner of the mechanical engineering company Guschky & Tönnemann, at the time the global leader in machines making paper tubes. After his death, my aunt met the challenge and assumed the responsibility of running the business. Typical for strong entrepreneurs, she thought far ahead and relied on the competences of the employees. One day, one of her engineers advised her to set up a new operation for plastic packaging products. After careful and thorough examination of the idea she bought the terrain which has been our site to this day, and started the company in 1962.

**You have been managing the company since 1999. How come?**

It happened in a similar way as with my aunt. She died after a tragic car accident. Seeing that no succession arrangements had been made, we looked at several options. In the course of the negotiations I decided to follow in the steps of my courageous aunt and to further develop her legacy. I kneeled into the dossiers, familiarized myself with the characteristics of this industry dominated by men and, together with my fellow workers, brought the enterprise on the right



Since more than 13 years Heike Schicketanz has been conducting the Schieferdecker GmbH in a very far-sighted way.

track to a new future. Four years ago I persuaded Dietmar Kaupert to join our team.

**Mr Kaupert, you've been the Factory Manager of Schieferdecker since 2008. What does the company look like today?**

Dietmar Kaupert: In peak periods we employ fifty persons. One of our three pillars is the production of plastic cartridges which are sold in building supplies stores like the DIY supermarket. Our second pillar is the production of accessories for the cartridges such as pistons and nozzles in a great variety. The third pillar are special cartridges for the aircraft subcontracting industry. These cartridges are filled with two components which are mixed by an integrated system immediately on application. More details I can't give away.

**"OUR ALL-ELECTRIC PRODUCTION OF CARTRIDGES IS A MILESTONE IN OUR COMPANY'S 50-YEAR-OLD HISTORY AND FOR THE ENTIRE BRANCH OF THE INDUSTRY."**

Dietmar Kaupert

**Are these tech-kits your speciality?**

Yes, I can say so with a little pride because, apart from us, there's only one American firm making these cartridges, and the USA are a long way from Europe.

**How big is your plant?**

The products sold by Schieferdecker are currently produced on 20 injection moulding machines. Of these, seven big ones are running here at the works in Erkrath near Düsseldorf.

**How are the markets likely to develop?**

We operate in a highly contested market. The Eastern bloc keeps coming nearer, especially when it comes to serial products. This is why we see our future rather in the niche. Like the special nozzles for the chemical industry, for example. We've been active in this area with much success for more than 15 years. And apart from our leader products we have some projects in the pipeline, among them some very exceptional ones which hold much potential.

**What technical developments are pending?**

On the technical side we're about to optimize our infrastructure. These days we commissioned, as far as I know, the



Schieferdecker GmbH & Co. KG are producers of cartridges and accessories. Their products are used in the building and chemical industries as well as by subcontractors to the aircraft makers. The medium-sized enterprise was founded in 1962 and currently employs 50 persons.

[www.schieferdecker.de](http://www.schieferdecker.de)

Dietmar Kaupert takes the view that the success of Schieferdecker GmbH lies in the niche not in common products.

first fully electrically driven moulding machine in Europe for cartridges. This technology is already resorted to in the production of nozzles and pistons, but to our knowledge nobody in Europe has dared taking the step for cartridges yet. And this is in fact the second step we've taken as regards the optimization of the production. The first one was nearly two years ago when we commissioned an entirely new generation of moulds together with Otto Hofstetter AG.

**Energy management is a central topic at Schieferdecker. Are there first successes?**

About eighteen months ago we developed an energy management system in cooperation with an external consultant. Ever since its introduction we know, for example, the power consumption of each individual machine. In 2011, for instance, we observed that we used less kilowatts per cartridge than in 2010.

**You just commissioned a new injection moulding machine?**

This machine of the Engel company is one of the first ones – if not the first – in Europe which produces cartridges all-electrically. This machine runs with high-output moulds of Otto Hofstetter AG. In the test runs we operated with a cycle time of a little over 10 seconds. This is remarkable,

but there's room for improvement. Every second counts. And the energy saving we have measured is enormous. Estimated by rule of thumb we save almost 50 per cent energy compared with the previous machine – it's fantastic.

**Where do you see further development potential on the technical side?**

In Otto Hofstetter AG we have an ideal partner supporting us. We have been cooperating for decades and will no doubt jointly introduce several innovations yet.

**Why have you decided in favour of Otto Hofstetter AG?**

The moulds are running and producing during ten to fifteen years. In the last years several mould makers have shut down within this period. With our Swiss partner we feel in good hands in this respect. We are confident that we'll still be able to get a spare part for our mould even in ten years from now. In the daily business the people at Otto Hofstetter AG are competent contact partners who keep their promises. In our business it's worth a lot if you can rely on the other side.

**Mrs Schicketanz, Mr Kaupert, we wish you and your enterprise every success in the next 50 years. Many thanks for this discussion.**

## THE RIGHT MOMENT IS DECISIVE.



Szczepan Kwiatek, founder and CEO of the Kartpol Group, had to wait until the market was ready for his products.

**Szczepan Kwiatek founded the [Kartpol Group](#) in 1996. In the meantime the company has progressed to one of Eastern Europe's important [producers of cartridges](#). Entirely new perspectives have been opened to the [successful Polish enterprise](#) in Wolomin with the integration in the Canadian Wentworth Group two years ago. It is planned to double the production capacity by 2016.**

**Mr Kwiatek, please give us some data on Kartpol.**

I set up the company together with a partner in 1996. Today it is a trading company. We produce cartridges and print cartridges. Our enterprise has been established in its present location for eleven years. We employ just under 50 persons. Central and Eastern Europe are our main markets.

**Why cartridges?**

It was in the time after the change of the political system in Poland when I looked for a product which would be present on the market for a long time without modification. A suitable product might be the packaging of everyday products

which are used everywhere. One day I came across such a product, it was a cartridge.

**The point in time was no doubt favourable!**

I considered entering this business for the first time already in 1991. But after a market analysis I concluded that things weren't ripe yet for quite a while. The market wasn't ready for a product of this type. This is why we held back with the investment and the founding of the enterprise for some years until there were producers who wanted to fill their products into cartridges.

**In the meantime Kartpol in Poland has won an entrepreneur award already for the sixth time. Of what significance is this to you?**

The Business Gazelle – this is the name of the ranking – is awarded to the companies with the most dynamic development in Poland. One of the conditions is that the company has been active in the market for at least three years and that it is transparent as regards its obligations towards the state and the banks. It is a big plus in marketing, of course, if one achieves this ranking year after year. A company which is annually represented in this ranking is seen with entirely different eyes by banks and business partners. And this is very important to us.

**Do you have a recipe for success?**

The determination to achieve objectives. And the right trading partners, the right subcontractors and the right persons as employees, of course. Most important of all are the partners because, basically, an enterprise is judged by its business partners and by the market.

**“KARTPOL SEES ITSELF AS A COOPERATION PARTNER RATHER THAN AS A PRODUCER.”**

Szczepan Kwiatek

**Why do customers select the cartridges of Kartpol?**

It is perfectly clear to us that in our cooperation with Den Braven, Henkel, Soudal, Selena, etc., we are the ones who have to meet the conditions. The entire atmosphere in customer care, the fast reaction to the wishes and needs of the client are very important. We don't make a product for the market – we produce for our partners. The end product consists of the product of our customer and of our packaging article. The two form one unit.

**Quality is Kartpol's goal. What are the relevant factors?**

The fact is that big business partners test a product for several months before they enter into business relations. Quite often we don't even know about it. It is only after their labs and quality inspectors have achieved positive results that discussions are started on a possible cooperation, and never earlier. We must submit proof of our products' quality, our innovation capability and our willingness to serve our customers at the highest level on a daily basis. We can only hold this high level thanks to our "environment", i.e. our production conditions and our partners.

**You've been cooperating with Otto Hofstetter AG for the last twelve years. What characterizes your Swiss partner?**

The openness towards our wishes and requirements. In my view this is one of the big strengths of the Otto Hofstetter company. A good cooperation needs a basis, and in the last twelve years we had many opportunities to confirm the basic principles of this good cooperation. Particularly also in the last two years during which we at Kartpol implemented a new technology.

**“THE CONFIDENCE IN PEOPLE, IN ONESELF AND ONE'S BUSINESS PARTNERS IS THE BASIS FOR SUCCESS.”**

Szczepan Kwiatek

**What are your next steps?**

In 2010 we opened a new chapter in the history of our enterprise. We are a part of the Wentworth Group whose owner and principal shareholder is Walter Kuskowski. The Suwary Group belongs to him as well. This connection gives us a much wider view of the market and opens new perspectives. We plan as far as 2016, by which time we want to double our production.

**Mr Kwiatek, we thank you for this discussion and wish you every success in future.**

My thanks to you, also. Our enterprise wouldn't have the position in the market and the prospects for the future if it didn't have a partner such as Otto Hofstetter AG. Our Swiss supplier plays a very major role in our current market position. Kartpol is just lucky when it comes to business partners.



The Kartpol Group was set up in 1996 and has been a part of Wentworth Technologies Co. Ltd. since 2010. The company domiciled in Wolomin near Warsaw produces cartridges for silicones and sealants for customers in Central and Eastern Europe.



Walter T. Kuskowski, President and CEO of Wentworth Tech Incorporated, became a shareholder of the Kartpol Group in 2010. [www.kartpol.eu](http://www.kartpol.eu)



# QUALITY NEEDS PROTECTION.

Foodstuffs such as milk, for example, are very sensitive as regards their shelf life. Hereby the right packaging plays a decisive role. Multilayer packaging products based on the co-injection technology are clearly at an advantage. They are not only flexible, safe and economically efficient, but also unobjectionable from the point of view of the law on foodstuffs.

It's the season of the alpine pastures in Jenaz (Grisons/Switzerland). Each year after the last snow has melted away and the young grass gives the slopes a first pale green, a herd of about 90 cows leaves the village of Jenaz and starts the steep ascent to the Larein Alp. The site extends over an area of 175 hectares of pastureland and approx. 50 hectares of forest meadows. The cattle alp starts at 1550 metres above sea level and reaches up to the ridge of the Glattwang mountain at 2376 metres.

**Old Swiss tradition.**

Alpine farming has a long tradition in the alpine regions. There is evidence of alpine pastures having been set up since five thousand years BC. From the 11th to the 12th century the mountain grassland used to belong mostly to nobility or monasteries and was let to individual farmers or farming cooperatives. In the course of time the tenants were able to buy parts and later on entire alpine operations from the ecclesiastical and grand owners. Today the roughly 7300 summer alpine operations of Switzerland are to 50 per cent each in the hands of private persons or corporations.

**Off to the heights.**

The first leg covered by the cows of Jenaz ends at the lower-level barns. Larein has alpine barns and facilities at two levels, like most Swiss alpine pasturelands. As the grass ripens for grazing at different times during the season depending on the altitude, the pastures are used from the bottom upwards in the early summer and downwards towards autumn.

**Mountains of hard work.**

The summer season during which the cows are on the alpine pastures lasts about 100 days. One alpine dairyman and two aids live and work on the Larein Alp during this period. The days are hard and long. Heavy physical work and arduous long walks characterize everyday life in the mountains. The weather is far from always fine and can confront the workers with strong winds, heavy rain and severe cold even in mid-summer.

**Quality at the highest level.**

The mixture of barrenness, variety and naturalness, however, has its distinct advantages. Nature in the mountains is generous and provides the cows with the very best grasses and herbs. The Larein Alp and the slightly higher located Nova Alp yield a total of 140,000 kilos of the finest alpine milk in one season. A part of this milk is processed to different dairy products directly on site. Larein produces 6500 kilos of alpine cheese, 650 kilos of alpine butter and 200 kilos of green

cheese. The products are extremely popular down in the valley and in the cities. At the end of the season, the time of descent from the alp, they are transported down and sold.

Considering the environment, it isn't surprising that the alpine milk is superior to milk from the valley. Anyone uncertain of his/her sense of taste can look it up in studies. Research has confirmed that milk from the alps contains more substances conducive to the human health than the ordinary type.



Pictures: KEYSTONE

**Maintaining goodness isn't easy.**

The task is to bring this extra value in the milk without impairment to the consumer. Gentle processing is one aspect. Antiseptic conditions, perfectly cleaned and sterilized processing equipment, low-germ ambient air and the least possible interference during the filling process are the basis of a correct treatment. Any deficiencies in the process cause the milk to lose its vitamin content, assume an unwanted flavour or get contaminated by a foreign substance.

**Suitable packaging.**

Special receptacles are needed to ensure that the milk from the Larein Alp doesn't lose any of its healthy effects until it reaches the consumer. The product's shelf life depends decisively on the properties of the container's outer wall. Light transmissiveness, aroma protection as well as oxygen barriers are the biggest influencing factors. If the container offers sufficient protection, the milk lasts longer, the oxidation of the lacto fats and changes in taste are delayed.

**The right technology.**

Three technologies are currently available to improve the shelf life. A first variant are material mixtures which provide barrier functions. The second possibility is to work with inner or outer liners of the finished container. The third technology is the co-injection process which is gaining ever greater significance in the foodstuffs industry. Here the barrier material is injected as an individual layer into the preform wall so that later on, when the preform has become a bottle, neither the liquid inside nor outside influences come into contact with the actual barrier.

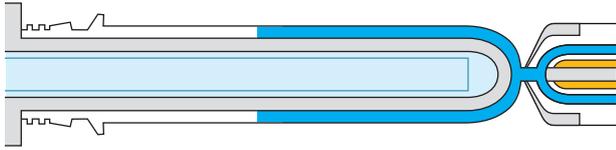
**Pluses of co-injection.**

On closer examination it is evident that the co-injection technology brings the best results. With material mixtures the preform price can be up to 85 per cent higher and recycling is impossible. Inner and outer liners can get damaged or contaminate the filled medium. Seeing that the coating is applied to the finished container, the logistics mustn't be underestimated, either. Recycling of the coated containers requires a higher effort additionally.

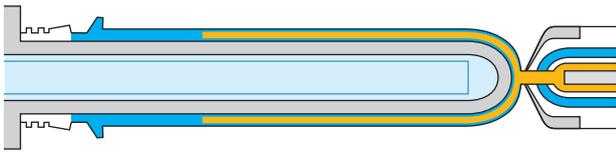
Barrier injection moulding is currently the most flexible, safest and most economical technology and is likely to remain so in the near future. Flexible, because preforms with a barrier layer need only smallest adaptations to a preform mould and further processing can take place on any standard machine. Safety is guaranteed by co-injection in that the barrier is protected inside the bottle's inner and outer wall without coming into contact with the content. The economic benefits are clearly the flexibility and the relatively low extra costs.



### 1. STEP: PET



### 2. STEP: PET/BARRIER



### 3. STEP: SEALING OFF



#### Barrier which works.

Co-injection allows in principle the use of all presently known and future barrier materials. This permits to take over all innovations on the market without further effort.

#### Protected advantages.

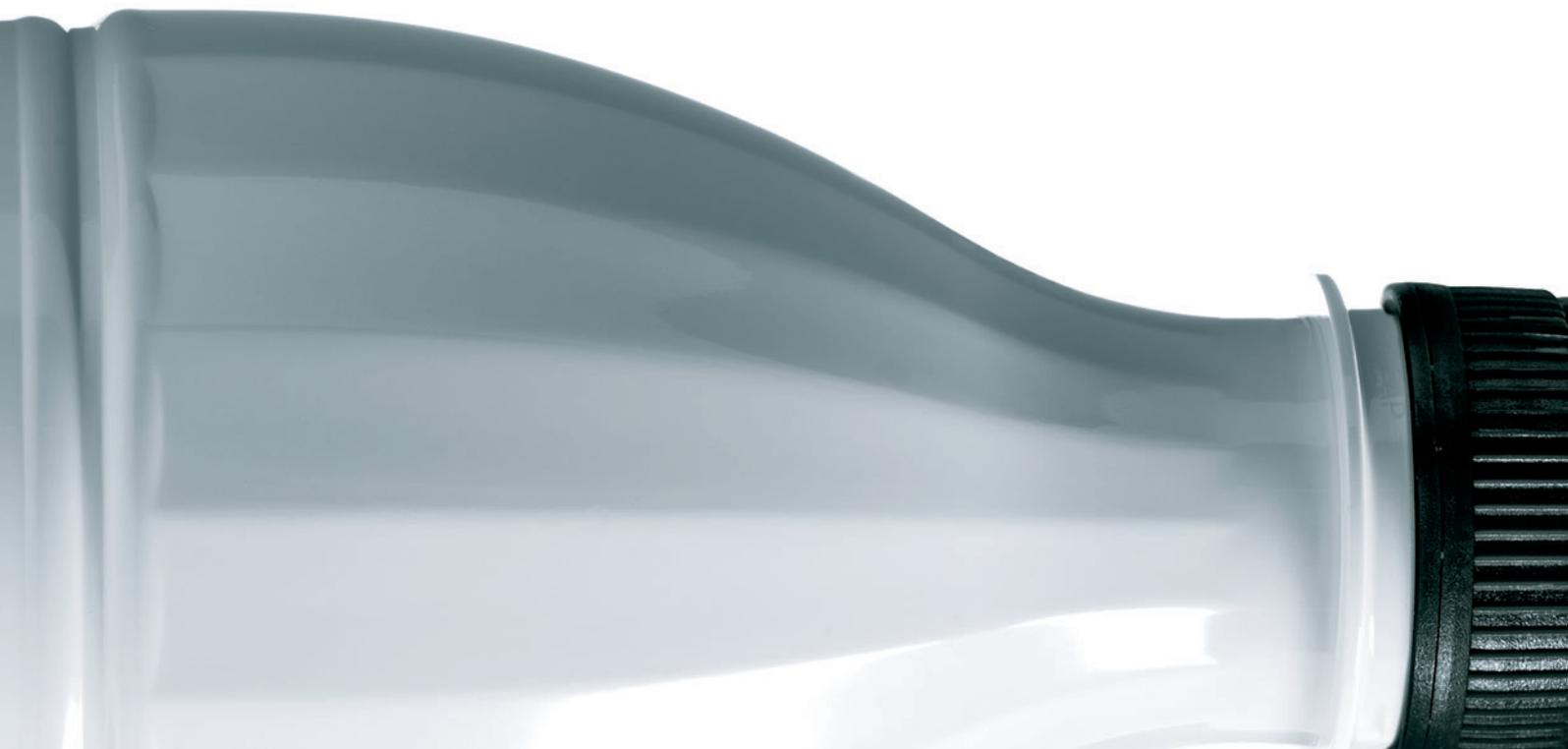
Let's get more concrete. The multi-layer bottle for the delicious alpine milk is made from a preform which features a black barrier layer in its core. This makes the bottle virtually light-impermeable ( $\leq 0.05\%$ ), a fact which is absolutely decisive for the nutritional value and the taste of the milk. In spite of the ideal barrier there are no restrictions as regards the design of the bottle. On top of all this the multi-layer milk bottles are fully recyclable and meet the applicable regulations on foodstuffs.

#### Co-injection convinces.

Compared with mixed materials and coatings, the co-injection technology has the advantages clearly on its side. Looked at technically, two injection units are required on the moulding machine, but only one hotrunner in the mould through which the two components are injected. This means that new barrier materials can normally be processed in the existing mould system with only a minor extra financial effort. The co-injection technology will remain highly attractive for the production of multi-layer preforms and bottles also in future.

#### The advantages of the co-injection technology:

- Standard injection moulding machine featuring a second injection unit
- Known and well-proven mould engineering
- Only marginally increased preform wall section
- Unobjectionable from the point-of-view of the law on foodstuffs
- Excellent protection of the aroma
- Very good gas barrier
- Shelf life of the content is extended and guaranteed
- Lowest cost per bottle compared with other technologies



# QUALITY WHICH BEARS EVERY COMPARISON.

**Mercedes-Benz ranks undisputedly among the leading brands and sets the benchmark for quality in motor construction. High-grade materials and mature technologies enable the noble brand to provide generous warranty performances. Judged by the strains they are subjected to, the injection moulds of Otto Hofstetter AG are way ahead of the German motors.**

“A courageous twitching in the right foot is enough for the flap-controlled AMG sports pots to release such a magnificent roar over the countryside that the hairs on the back of one’s neck stand on end individually.” This is how Alexander Bernt, journalist of the German “Auto Bild” magazine, describes his impression of the new Mercedes-Benz SLK 55 AMG. The new sports model from the tuning works of the German car manufacturer causes experts and enthusiasts for exclusive cars to go into raptures all over the world. The new V8 engine, especially, causes delight. The latest development combines an enormous power with highest efficiency.

## **Inventor of the automobile.**

Mercedes-Benz has always been known for innovation. The German car maker has been further developing the automotive and motor technology ever since the invention of the motorcar 125 years ago. It is said that 80,000 patent applications were lodged in the course of the company’s history until today. A performance record without parallel. Remarkable about it is the fact that the innovations are not just limited to the motor or the body, but that they concern very often the safety, reliability and lastingness.

## **Good refining.**

Mercedes-AMG GmbH, a subsidiary of the car maker of Stuttgart, is specialized in the tuning of the standard models. Gearboxes, chassis, brakes as well as open and closed loop control systems are trimmed to maximum performance. AMG has discontinued the original tuning of the motors and now develops its own motors. Like the new 5.5-litre V8 suction engine, for example, in the youngest offspring of Mercedes-AMG: the SLK 55 AMG.

## **Highest performance.**

The high-tech muscle package convinces by its globally unique combination of advanced technologies. No other spark ignition engine displays similarly impressive values: direct petrol injection at 200 bar and a compression ratio of 12.6:1. The traditional AMG philosophy of “One man, one engine” comes to bear also in this latest product. This means that one technician assembles one complete motor in each case. “Proof of concept” is the person’s signature on a plaque at the motor block.

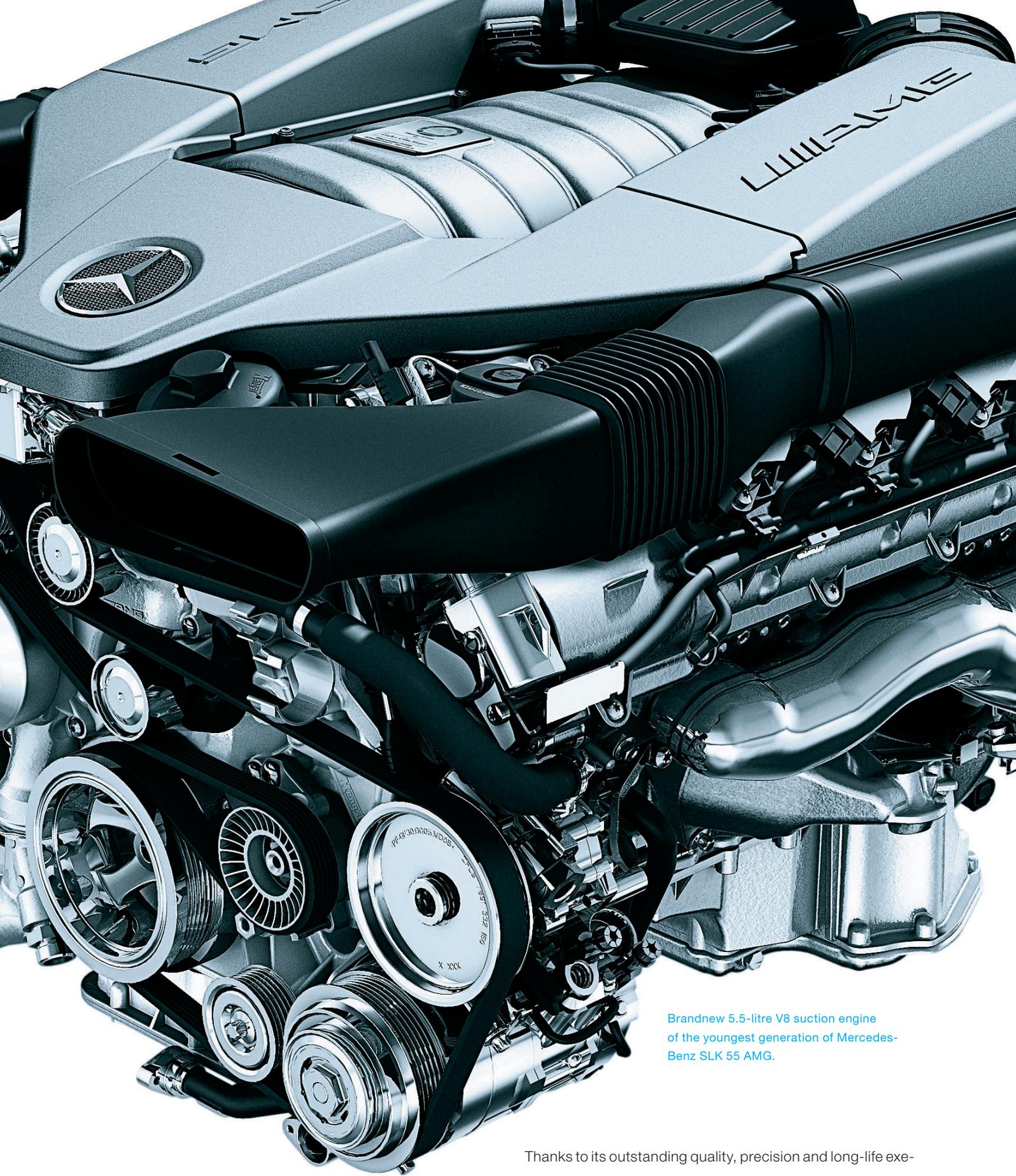
The technicians’ identification with “their” motor guarantees the buyer highest precision and the utmost care. Two enterprise values to which AMG holds on without compromise even in peak periods. Prizes in the “Engine of the Year Awards” in the category “Best Performance Engine” confirm that the engagement pays dividends.

**AMG’S PHILOSOPHY “ONE MAN, ONE ENGINE” IS PROVED BY THE ASSEMBLER’S SIGNATURE AT THE MOTOR BLOCK.**

## **Guaranteed quality.**

Anyone devoting himself to quality with such passion for decades can guarantee it with a good conscience. Mercedes-Benz does this with a comprehensive warranty promise. In Switzerland the importer covers each and every Mercedes-Benz with a new-vehicle warranty for three years or maximum 100,000 kilometres. A convincing commitment, no doubt. And a clear statement from an enterprise which is convinced of the quality of its products.





Brandnew 5.5-litre V8 suction engine of the youngest generation of Mercedes-Benz SLK 55 AMG.

#### **Comparison with Hofstetter mould.**

As convinced as we of Otto Hofstetter AG are. With our moulds our customers benefit from a full warranty of one year and where structural parts are concerned of three years. Compared with Mercedes-Benz this doesn't appear to be very comprehensive. But only at first sight. The situation is rather different if looked at in more detail.

Thanks to its outstanding quality, precision and long-life execution an injection mould of Otto Hofstetter AG achieves 8322 production hours per year. This in 24-hour operation, which is common in this industry, and with an availability of 95 per cent. For comparison purposes let's take as benchmark a high-tech motor of Mercedes-AMG. At a generous driving performance of 50,000 kilometres, an average speed of 60 km/h and a 100 per cent availability the motor reaches 833 operating hours in one year. In other words,

about ten times less than a mould of Otto Hofstetter. If Mercedes-Benz wanted to offer its Swiss customers the same warranty as Otto Hofstetter AG to its clients worldwide, the car maker would have to increase the warranty period for the whole vehicle to 10 years.

## AN INJECTION MOULD OF OTTO HOFSTETTER ACHIEVES IN A 24-HOUR OPERATION AND WITH AN AVAILABILITY OF 95 PER CENT 8322 PRODUCTION HOURS PER YEAR.

### Quality with a system behind it.

To achieve such peak values in matters of availability, the moulds of Otto Hofstetter are equipped with nothing but top-quality individual parts. This starts with the choice of the tooling steels which, being the basic material for the components to be machined, are of enormous importance. In this case the mould maker relies on quality from German production. The centuries of experience and tradition of the steelworkers in the Ruhr area guarantee top quality and workability of the steels. In our production plant equipped with most modern machinery the steels are then processed based on latest findings in cutting procedures. Our motivated employees guarantee a constant quality and thereby maintenance of the very tight production tolerances.

## OTTO HOFSTETTER'S SPECIALIZED TEAM OF EXPERIENCED TOOLMAKERS GUARANTEE IMPECCABLE FUNCTIONING ON EVERY DAY.

We attach very high importance also to the performances of our partners. Services such as surface treatments and coating of the machined components, for example, are only carried out by long-standing partners of our enterprise.

And at the end, in our mould assembly shop, we adhere to the same concept as AMG. "One man, one mould", meaning that the injection moulds are assembled by experienced toolmakers and thoroughly tested for impeccable functioning.

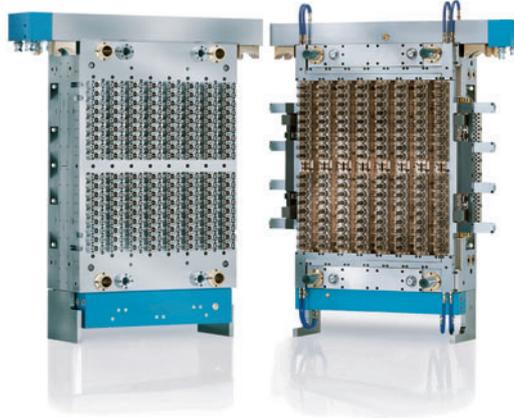
And these specialists guarantee also that the moulds with the rating "Swiss made" lead to satisfied Hofstetter customers all over the world.

### OH XTreme®.

This coating developed by Otto Hofstetter is applied in the range of micrometers and guarantees minimum friction values for the wear surfaces. The coating is standard execution of the insert group components of every Hofstetter mould.

### OH XCool®.

This optionally available cooling of the thread slides reduces the normal cycle times by up to 15 per cent. The cooling bore produced by a special process guarantees an optimal circumferential cooling in the neck section of the preform.



### NGT® (New Gate Technology).

NGT® results in a rapid cooling of the shut-off needle after injection. The process window is widened and hole formation as well as crystallinity in the gate area are eliminated. This technology is applied in every mould as standard and can be retrofitted in older moulds.

### Use of corrosion-resistant steels.

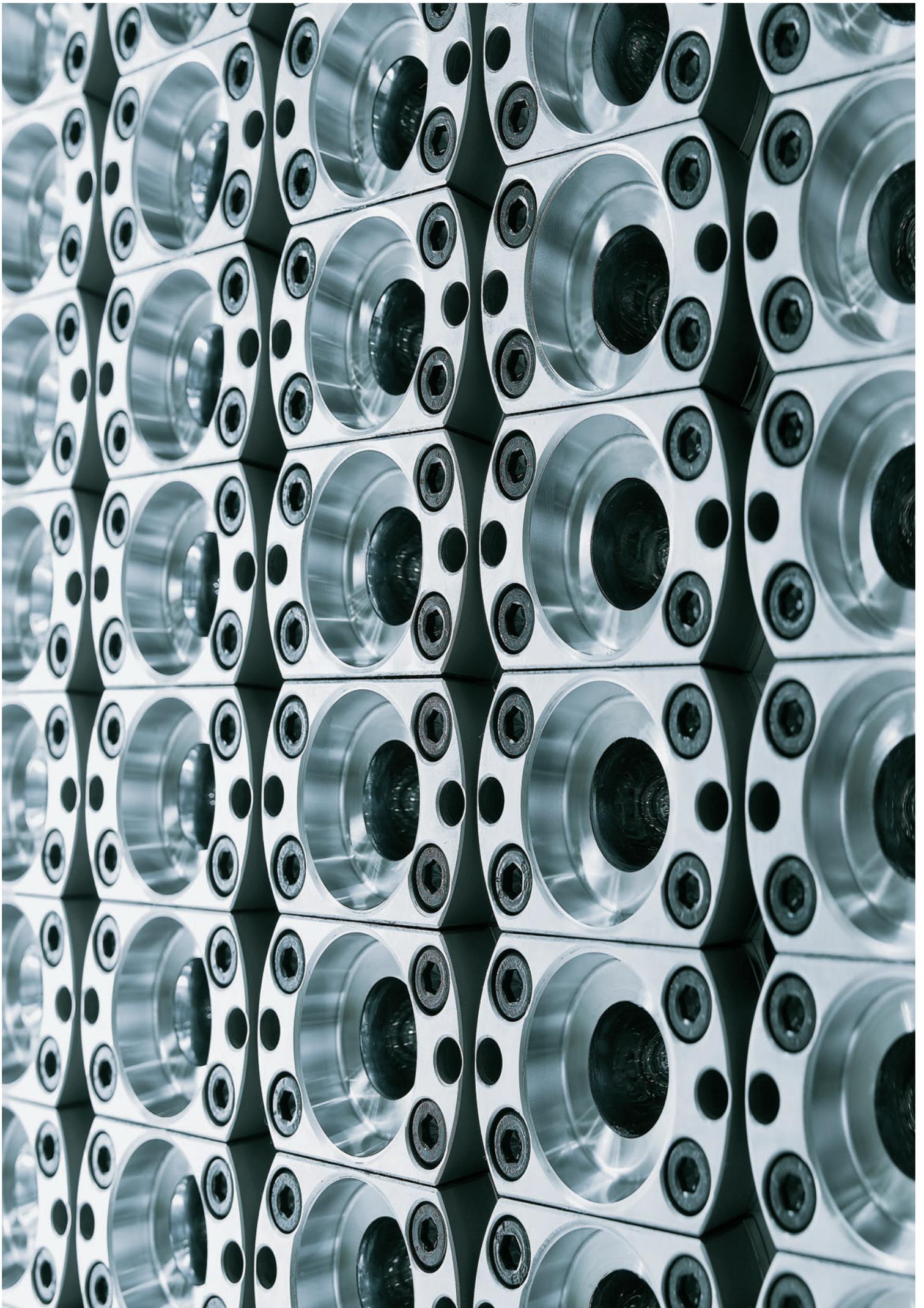
A large part of the main components of the mould are made from corrosion-resistant steel. This guarantees excellent protection from rust also under adverse environmental conditions.

### Hotrunner exchange system.

In the interest of a reliable production at our customers' side, we offer overhauled hotrunner systems of each mould type ex stock for the quickest possible replacement on the spot. This exchange system is highly appreciated by our customers since it guarantees minimal production losses in case of damage.

### Overhauling possibility.

Thanks to their stable and precise execution our PET as well as packaging moulds are suitable for general overhauling or also for the remachining of individual wear parts. This entirely in the interest of a sustained use of resources.



# UPHOLDING THE VALUES AND FURTHER DEVELOPING THE QUALITY.



The main concern of Otto F. Hofstetter, owner and CEO of the same name company, is the user-friendliness of the moulds.

All over the world, products **made by Swiss companies** enjoy the reputation of being **very durable, of high quality and precise**. Studies carried out internationally confirm this image time and again. The company Otto Hofstetter has been producing and exporting its moulds to the world for nearly six decades. While the basic values are upheld without compromise, it is clear that the standard must be **further developed** continuously. Otto F. Hofstetter says why.

**Mr Hofstetter, how do you define quality?**

Otto F. Hofstetter: The quality of our packaging moulds is characterized by the fact that they are user-friendly. Mould maintenance must be as easy and convenient as possible. An example: If a mould component has to be cleaned, there mustn't be any need to take down the entire block. It is sufficient and possible to remove just the part in question. We don't enter any compromises when it comes to the user-friendliness of our moulds. We take care, furthermore, that the customer can correct a minor defect on the spot. The moulds can be returned to us, of course, but it makes little sense to send such a heavy piece of equipment from Australia or New Zealand back to Switzerland for e.g. a 6-hour job. In the interest of keeping the downtime as short as possible we tend to support the customer in getting the work done locally.

**Swiss quality has its price. Aren't you tempted to make concessions in favour of a lower price?**

To lower our sights in the quality is an absolute taboo. There might be a little leeway at the utmost in the convenience. It's like with a motorcar: If a model with an automatic gear change is too expensive, a manual version is available. This latter car is just as fast, only the comfort is slightly reduced. In a figurative sense the same applies to us. With the shorter life-cycles of the moulded products it is no longer so important to design wear parts for an easy exchange. We used to think in the longer term and assumed mould operation durations of five, six and sometimes ten years. Nowadays customers and we calculate with three years, with the effect that our moulds are less complex but still offer the proverbial Otto Hofstetter quality, only at a lower price.

**Have you never yet been unfaithful to this principle?**

This is something we certainly can't afford. It would be against our philosophy. And apart from this we are only so well known because we manufacture such long-lasting, fast-cycling and service-friendly injection moulds. In the meantime some Swiss competitors offer moulds of a similar quality. This is why we have optimized and expanded our services in recent times.

**What does this mean in concrete terms?**

We have expanded our service centre and optimized the processes. The idea had been existing for some time, but we weren't resolute enough in its implementation. The service centre now has its own equipment and spare parts enjoy priority, i.e. they're made hand in hand and storage times belong to the past.

**The excellence which characterizes Swiss products – where is it evident with Otto Hofstetter AG?**

We don't leave anything to chance. We manufacture our moulds with the utmost care. It starts already with the design idea and the actual design work. We employ only the best professionals. They draw from years of experience and know the processes and requirements in the moulding production. Feedback from our customers, internally passed on by our Service Engineers, is taken into account. This, in my opinion, is where the excellence is.

**In other words, a practice-oriented excellence?**

Yes, we try to learn from the feedback and to translate the insights in our new developments. Knowledge gained from research is always considered as well. Innovation results when we combine our know-how with latest scientific findings. It doesn't hold us up if something doesn't work, but spurs on our sports spirit.

**“THE MOULDS COMING OUT OF OUR ASSEMBLY SHOP ARE NOWADAYS LESS COMPLEX BUT STILL OF PROVERBIAL OTTO HOFSTETTER QUALITY, ONLY AT A LOWER PRICE.”**

Otto Hofstetter

**You employ the best workers. How do you find them?**

Every fellow worker has his/her talents. It is my task to detect the potentials in our people and to deploy them in the right places. This creates a qualified workforce on the one hand and a high satisfaction with the job on the other. It makes it possible to find good new persons through the own employees. If there's a vacancy, we always announce this first internally and quite often it leads us to suitable candidates. Much energy is also put in the training of our apprentices. Young persons serve apprenticeships in all areas of our operation – it's a Swiss speciality. We make every effort to give them a solid training and provide them with a broad foundation. By this we ensure that qualified young blood comes along and at the same time we do something for our image as a good employer. Engineers are somewhat rare at the moment, which is why we have set up a supporting leg in India.

**Isn't it risky to export Swiss know-how to India?**

I don't think so. There is a latent danger, of course, if we pass on valuable know-how. On the other hand we have nothing to fear as long as we maintain our high quality standards and don't rest on our laurels.

### How can you be so calm about it?

While the engineers in India are very well trained, they lack the practical experience. We have observed this quite clearly in the course of time. The situation isn't made any easier by the high fluctuations. The familiarization time for a new employee in India is at least two years. As the majority of the workers only rarely stay with us for longer, they leave the company before they've been able to acquire the valuable know-how.

The quality consciousness is another factor. We Swiss are highly pedantic. I become aware of this again every time I



walk through our production premises. All workstations are perfectly cleared up. In India this would be wishful thinking. The same applies to the perfection with which the job is carried out. While the Indian worker is soon satisfied by the result, the one in Uznach is still looking eagerly for improvement possibilities.

### Is it our mentality, then, that makes the Swiss quality?

That's it. If we remain faithful to ourselves, our products will continue to be in demand. Our punctuality of supplies must be seen in this context also. If we promise a customer a delivery date, the mould will be in the specified location at the agreed point in time. This is already different with our neighbours to the north.

### Are these arguments worth a 20 per cent higher price to the clients?

Our moulds are more stable, more service-friendly and they last longer. Additionally, they arrive on the customer's doorstep exactly on the agreed date. These are the pluses we can offer. If they are no longer given as a matter of course, a company can buy its moulds also from Czechia, Spain, Portugal or from Taiwan and China.

**"IF WE REMAIN FAITHFUL  
TO OURSELVES, OUR PRODUCTS WILL  
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Otto Hofstetter

### But the company buys "Swiss made" for the time being?

First signs of a change are evident. Some German firms have bought from China. After first negative experiences they now restrict themselves to prototypes. As soon as a product has found acceptance in the market and they can mould some millions of a certain packaging article, they decide in favour of a Swiss mould.

### Does it take Swiss quality to cope with large quantities?

It's more a question of the safety of supplies. Large orders are always connected to delivery commitments. Those who don't perform often have to accept painful penalties depending on the negotiated terms. In this situation the extra investment for top quality and punctual delivery may well be worth it.

### Stability is said to be the hallmark of Swiss enterprises. How is this evident with Otto Hofstetter AG?

The majority of our customers feel well with us and are able to make money with our moulds. They rely on us for as long



"WE RUN OUR CENTRES IN INDIA AND CHINA IN THE INTEREST OF REDUCING THE PRODUCTION DOWNTIME AT OUR CUSTOMERS."

Otto Hofstetter

as this doesn't change. We are a partner for long-standing, intensive relations and take the problems of our customers seriously. Money isn't a topic if difficulties arise. It is only when the machine produces again that we sit together at the table and discuss the financial aspects.

**Is the distance from the service centre to India and China not excessive?**

We operate a centre in India and are in the process of setting up one in Hong Kong's neighbouring city of Shenzhen. We have signed a rental agreement for a production area of 600 m<sup>2</sup>, will operate a stock of spare parts and offer services on the spot. All this in the interest of reducing our reaction time and, much more important, the production downtime at our customers.

**Your company was founded in 1955. Do you feel safe, committed to the tradition?**

The company was built up by my father. I'm morally committed to him, of course. Beyond this, I feel committed also towards our employees. This doesn't mean, however, that one has to hold on to a business model for better or worse. The commitment is rather to ensure that the business runs well and that it has a safe future. A wrongly understood loyalty doesn't bring anything to anyone.

## OTTO HOFSTETTER NEW IN CHINA.



Picture: KEYSTONE

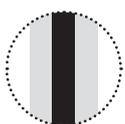
In Hong Kong's neighbouring city of Shenzhen, Otto Hofstetter AG has opened its first service and refurbishment centre in China. Together with representative offices in Brazil, Great Britain/Ireland, Israel and Turkey, Shenzhen is the fifth agency abroad and intensifies the Swiss mould maker's international presence.



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