

90 Years of the Markert Group

On the occasion of the 90th anniversary of the Markert Group, Philipp Markert, Managing Partner (45), gave an interview. The questions were asked by Aline Steiner, Marketing:

A. Steiner: Mr Markert, 90 years is a long time. How did everything start?

P. Markert: The company was founded by my great grandfather as a retail business for technical products which successfully sold a comprehensive range of products, from cleaning cloths through to conveyor belts, for more than half a century. Long before internet retail took its leading role, my father, Klaus Markert, began to realise that the days of small retailers with a broad base of products were numbered. He realigned the company and specialised on two areas of business, textile filter media and industrial hose lines.

A. Steiner: For what purposes are textile filter media required?

P. Markert: In the industrial sector, many processes take place in water. One example are metals such as copper - indispensable for electrical cables and motors - and zinc - the efficient corrosion protection for steel -, with which only a couple kg arises per tonne of rock in the natural world. Iron ore exists in high concentrations, but also has to be re-concentrated before the blast furnace, as otherwise the use of energy there would be too high. At the end of the process, the water and the ore are separated in filters. This separation takes place so efficiently that the water can be completely cir-



The executive team of the company: Sönke Burmeister-Benker (Managing Director), Tobias Stoltz (Director of Purchasing), Philipp Markert (Managing Partner) and Katja Riedel (Director of Inside Sales). PHOTO: MARKERT

culated. A guarantor for this high efficiency is the correct textile covering - the filter! An industrial filter of this kind can have a surface area of up to 4,000 m² - which is approximately the size of one football pitch. We supply more than 250,000 of such textiles per year, which is equivalent to a filter surface area of some 1.2 km² (300 football pitches).

A. Steiner: What is so special about industrial hose lines?

P. Markert: The best known industrial hoses are those that are found at petrol pumps or the ones with which fuel is pumped to and from the tanker truck. We also manufacture the latter, but our primary area of use is where corrosive media are transferred when under pressure. In this area, the high quality of our manufacturing and comprehensive testing ensure that the hoses are completely leak-proof. It is important that many media such as medical products don't enter the environment, because in high dosages, they would pose a threat to employees' health.

A. Steiner: What steps did your father take at that time?

P. Markert: He took the brave step of not just reloca-

ting the manufacturing, but the whole company, from Hamburg to Neumünster. It was here that he found sufficient space to ensure the manufacturing capacity for long term growth. At the same time, he developed the know-how and the market for both areas of business. He was also brave enough to say goodbye to his former core area of business - retail of technical products. The success of the company provided the confirmation that his decisions were right.

A. Steiner: How long have you been working at the company?

P. Markert: After completing an apprenticeship and my degree in business studies and gaining practical experience in the world of finance, as the 4th generation, I was privileged to assume management of the Markert Group in 2002. My father supported me with helpful advice for more than 15 years on the advisory board, however. I must also make mention of the management team, especially Mr Burmeister-Benker, who welcomed me with open arms and supports me every day.

A. Steiner: How have things advanced under your management?

P. Markert: We attribute considerable importance to

continuous innovation and the optimisation of our manufacturing. The high quality of our products means that we are able to prevail against providers from low wage countries. As a family business, we expand on a cautious and yet very decisive basis.

This takes place in terms of new applications and at the regional level. With subsidiary companies in the Benelux area and Italy and partners in countries that are even further away, export - in addition to growth in Germany - is constantly gaining importance.

A. Steiner: What things cause you worry?

P. Markert: Worry isn't a word I would use, but the solid rates of growth mean that it is hard to find the right employees. We are constantly seeking technical specialists and engineers to drive ahead with our product developments, as well as sales staff who are prepared to market our products with the customers as technical consultants.

A. Steiner: Could you tell us a little bit about your life outside work?

P. Markert: My biggest hobby, so to speak, is my wife and our four children. The weekends and holidays that I spend with them provide the decisive basis for my ability to perform to the best of my abilities in my job. I also try to do as much sports as I can (jogging, snowboarding and cycling), and enjoy my life with good food and by attending cultural events.

A. Steiner: Mr Markert, thank you for the interview.