

# INFORM



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## SETTING THE SWITCHES CORRECTLY.



India celebrated its independence day on 15 August and, like everywhere else, the head of the government took advantage of the festivities to deliver a speech. Apart from the usual best wishes, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced this year that India intended to move away from disposable plastics. What sounded at first like one of the nowadays frequently published aims or demands of governments and NGOs appears to be an important step further in the case of India's premier. According to him, plastics should not just be banned, but collected and recycled on a large scale in future. Various ministries are being called upon to develop and implement appropriate measures.

Fortunately, forward-thinking strategies such as those planned by Narendra Modi for India are being introduced more often. In South Africa, for example, a new type of entrepreneurship has emerged. "Wastepreneurs" collect plastic waste of their own accord and are paid on a weight basis in collection centres. Read this issue of *inform* to find out what the solution looks like and what benefits it brings.

As far as I can see, producers of plastic packaging articles have already been accepting entrepreneurial responsibility for a long time, and have taken countless measures to optimise the ecobalance of their enterprises and thereby their products. You will find two examples of this in the issue in your hands – the PET preform producers Nuovaplast in the Italian Villa Lempa and the Swiss plastics processors Fischer Söhne AG. Sustainability enjoys top priority in both companies and is taken into account in all technical and commercial decisions. The same applies to our Swiss partner described here. In addition to their core activity as metal processors, Messrs Schilling AG of Bilten even went a step further and developed their own e-vehicle.

As you will see, the latest *inform* is once again packed with articles worth reading. I hope you enjoy this issue, and hope to welcome as many of you as possible at the forthcoming K'2019 exhibition.

Yours  
Otto Hofstetter



### Front page.

CEO Iwan Tresch relies heavily on clean-room production at Fischer Söhne AG.

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# RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE.

**Nuovaplast s.r.l. of Villa Lempa**, at the gate to the Abruzzi, looks back on an eventful history. Owned and managed by **Signor Roberto Tomasoni**, the company developed from an insolvent operation to one of Italy's **most powerful producers of PET preforms**. And Tomasoni's plans are for continued growth. *inform* spoke with the restless entrepreneur.

In his 22 years as owner and CEO of Nuovaplast s.r.l., Roberto Tomasoni made the company one of the leading PET preform producers in Italy.



"THE QUALITY OF OUR PRODUCTION IS A FUNDAMENTAL AIM FOR ALL OF US."

Roberto Tomasoni, CEO Nuovaplast s.r.l.

**Five years have passed since I last interviewed an Italian producer of PET preforms. How has the market developed in the meantime?**

The market situation in Italy has not changed very much in the last few years in terms of numbers. The branch of soft drinks, particularly mineral water, has seen a significant decrease in the weight of bottles and consequently of preforms. As a consequence, this situation has clearly produced important variations regarding the different types of neck finish, which has forced us to invest in moulds.

**Where do you see the biggest challenges right now?**

Since, as everybody knows, the price of raw materials (PET polymer) has been continuously fluctuating, it hasn't been easy to face a very aggressive market. We understood that we had to lower our costs of production to meet the competition and be successful, so it was necessary to adapt our plants to the use of recycled polymers, fulfilling both the new European rules and the need to rapidly satisfy the requirements of our customers.

**On your website, you refer to ongoing developments as regards both technology and quality. How do you ensure these developments?**

We have always aimed to ensure efficiency, high-quality production and just-in-time service. And, in order to be able to do so, we made investments in a second trigeneration plant (the first one was opened 14 years ago), LGV internal transport, automated warehouses for the storage of products, and an automatic program to forward goods.

To improve quality, we have also installed online control systems and of course duly trained the staff in charge. All this now enables us to be very fast to react and satisfy any need.

**You started at the company in 1997. What does it look like today?**

Nuovaplast was born out of a company created in 1990 that was closed because of bankruptcy in 1996. There were only three lines of production then, and their capacity was of about 20 million preforms per month. In 1997, I received the proposal to manage and reorganise this company. My previous



experience (from 1996) was in the direction and production of companies belonging to the branch of textile synthetics, mainly in the polyester field.

As a matter of fact, the raw materials used for both polyester production and PET preforms are the same, with the exception of polymer viscosity. After 22 years of hard work, Nuovaplast is now a well-known company in the Italian preform market and has now reached a production capacity of 2.5 billion preforms, with 14 production lines and a yearly use of 60,000 tonnes of PET polymer.

Our market is mainly formed by bottles for soft drinks and mineral water, which make up 70 per cent of the market, and bottles either for oil and milk or non-food items such as body care and cosmetic products and detergents, which make up the remaining 30 per cent.

**How is mould maintenance organised?**

First, I must say that the quality of our production is a fundamental aim for all of us, so you can understand the reason why we place so much focus and importance on the care and maintenance of our plants, moulds and machines. The task of 20 per cent of our staff (50 employees) is the preparation and maintenance of our moulds.

Despite this, we would also like to increase this care, further favouring more collaboration with our suppliers and planning periodical checks and controls of our machines and moulds. This will undoubtedly allow us to react more quickly when required.

**Co-injection is widely used for milk bottles, but not available from you. What is the reason for this?**

The milk bottle industry is not our main field, but of course

we know very well what the needs and developments in this particular market are. However, it is not yet very clear what effect multilayer preforms may have upon PET recycling. We are afraid that this technology may be rather paralysing as far as recycling and the use of pigments (TiO2) are concerned.

**PET preforms are highly standardised. Why do your customers buy from you and not from a competitor?**

Italy is a very unique country; nothing is really standard. Every producer tries to develop their products with features that must be different from their competitors. Nuovaplast has developed a high level of flexibility in its preforms so as to be able to satisfy the needs and specific requests of our customers. All this requires a lot of work and, together with good quality, excellent service and the right cost of production, allows us to stay ahead of the competition.

**“NUOVAPLAST HAS DEVELOPED A HIGH LEVEL OF FLEXIBILITY IN ITS PREFORMS TO SATISFY THE NEEDS OF CUSTOMERS.”**

Roberto Tomasoni, CEO Nuovaplast s.r.l.

**Villa Lempa is not very centrally located. What speaks in favour of this place?**

The geographical position of our production site in central Italy allows us to take delivery of raw materials at a port (Ancona) which is quite close to us (170 kilometres). Secondly, we are situated rather close to our customers, enabling us to provide a prompt service for them, since they are mainly situated in southern Italy, where the production of mineral water is really very important.

Besides this, there is a very easy-to-reach motorway connection, which enables us to reach both northern and southern Italy very quickly. The climate is really mild and agreeable, and the landscape is a mixture of hills and seaside. We must not forget the people of this part of the country; they are really reliable, serious and deep-rooted.

**The public is increasingly critical of PET bottles. To what extent is this an issue with your customers?**

It is a fact that there is a campaign against the use of plastic bottles. However, we have to be quite realistic and be aware that there is no substitute material that can provide the same advantages that PET has brought into our market.



I think it is very unrealistic to expect that we should completely eliminate plastic simply because of our inability to get people to learn how to treat it, but I do think and hope all this campaigning will be useful to help improve recycling.

**What measures is Italy taking to get more used PET bottles back into the raw materials cycle?**

The recycling of PET bottles is still not well organised in Italy. In spite of this, the quantity of plastic waste collected is rising steadily according to the trade association. The recycling rate is at a little over 40 per cent. The income from the fee on PET preforms, unfortunately, is not used to improve the recycling quota, but goes to the communities to finance general waste disposal. Generally speaking, however, waste management is about to further adapt to EU standards. As in other areas, a big difference exists between the provinces in the north and those in the south.

**Lempa lies in a tectonically special region. How is production influenced by this fact?**

Indeed, we live in a zone subject to a higher threat from earthquakes than others. The event which shook our region severely in August 2016 and caused major damage in some villages had no serious consequences for us because we strictly followed the very stringent rules on constructing buildings that can withstand earthquakes when building our premises.

**"OUR SPECIALITY IS FLEXIBILITY,  
AND THIS GOES BACK  
TO THE VARIETY OF MOULDS."**

Roberto Tomasoni, CEO Nuovaplast s.r.l.

The silos shook, but there was no damage to buildings or machines. The snow, however, caused us serious problems. In the winter after the earthquake, it snowed so heavily that part of the roof on our production facility collapsed. We had to put up with a production standstill of several weeks and incurred considerable costs to get the operation up and running again.

**In 2004, you commissioned your first 72-imp. mould from OHAG. What prompted you to take this step?**

Our speciality is to be flexible, and this goes back to the variety of moulds. The decision for or against a mould depends primarily on the type of system. Since 1998, we have been producing with a 48 cavity mould from Otto Hofstetter

AG, and our experiences have been positive. In order to get more productivity, especially in the 38-millimeter market, the change was obvious.

**"WE HAVE ALWAYS AIMED TO ENSURE  
EFFICIENCY, HIGH-QUALITY PRODUCTION  
AND JUST-IN-TIME SERVICE."**

Roberto Tomasoni, CEO Nuovaplast s.r.l.

**Where do you see the strengths of the Swiss company?**

Otto Hofstetter AG is also in the hands of one individual owner, who is actively engaged in the business and available to customers when necessary or desired. The employees are qualified and have the required competences to enter into agreements and enforce them. Getting in touch is quite easy for me, as I visit the Italian-speaking part of Switzerland regularly.



**What does the future of Nuovaplast look like?**

In January 2019, an Italian Private Equity fund acquired 75 per cent of Nuovaplast, and I have since agreed to be available for a further three years. A new general manager is going to start at the end of October.

**Many thanks for the discussion, Mr Tomasoni. We wish you all the best for the future.**



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Specialised in the production of PET packaging articles

Application areas: Mineral water, edible oil, milk, detergents,  
body care products and cosmetics

Production volume: 2.5 billion preforms per year

Infrastructure: 9 production lines



Nuovaplast combines qualified employees with efficient automation, thereby ensuring an attractive range of products in every respect.

EVERY-  
THING'S  
THE  
SAME,



ONLY  
DIFFER-  
ENT.



**Otto Hofstetter AG** is launching a new range of injection moulds in the field of packaging. The S-Line is our answer to the pressures of time and cost, pressures which producers in this line of business are experiencing ever more frequently. Otto Hofstetter's S-Line relies on a novel concept which shortens a project's realisation time and reduces the investment cost. When it comes to the quality, however, everything remains the same.

It is a wise old saying that quality takes time. It applies in the kitchen, when you build a house or work in the industry. A careful choice of high-grade ingredients, meticulous and well-founded planning of all working steps and perfectly trained and experienced professionals are essential whenever quality is important. Otto Hofstetter AG is well known in the PET and packaging industry for its high quality level. If you look for the reasons for this excellence, you soon come across the three aforementioned components. The fact that top-quality work is virtually a cultural asset of Switzerland is a further argument for this characteristic.

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"QUALITY IS ALWAYS  
MARKED BY DISTINCT  
TECHNICAL AND ECONOMIC  
ASPECTS."

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**Quality in two directions.**

Individuality provides quality with an additional dimension. If a solution or a product meets the user's needs and suits their situation 100 per cent, a new type of quality emerges that unfolds its effects in economic efficiency, overall operating costs and ecological footprint. For Otto Hofstetter AG, therefore, quality is always marked by distinct technical and economical aspects.

**Producers under pressure.**

In the day-to-day business at producers of PET preforms and plastic packaging articles, three dominant topics come up next to the need for quality. Firstly, cost pressure – although already at a high level for years – is rising steadily. Secondly, demands on the overall ecobalance of both products and enterprises keep growing under the constraints of public discussion and increasing entrepreneurial responsibility. An obvious third aspect – especially in the packaging trade – is the short-term nature of projects. Purchasers are under time pressure since time to market is essential for success because of seasonality and trends. The general conditions in terms of project duration, capital and production costs, and product life cycle, combined with the demand for the highest quality, sometimes confront producers of packaging articles with challenges that are very hard to meet.

**A new concept is the answer.**

The customer consultants of Otto Hofstetter AG are in permanent close contact with the companies in their care, which means they are aware of the problem. However, they can offer an immediate solution to the problems. Jointly with their colleagues from the development department, they have worked out a completely new line of moulds which meet the established quality standards of Otto Hofstetter AG and at the same time provide an answer to the challenges described: the Otto Hofstetter S-Line.

**Standardisation brings advantages.**

The Otto Hofstetter S-Line is a new range of moulds which mainly consist of standardised modules. There is a master mould and the interface to the service group, which is parameterised. This results in the two main advantages over a conventional mould for the packaging sector: the significantly shorter project period and, as a logical consequence, the markedly lower investment cost.

**Standard is not just average.**

In the field of plastics packaging, individual solutions are a hallmark of Otto Hofstetter AG. Although partly standardised, the new S-Line contradicts this philosophy in no way. A mature concept allows the customer themselves to determine numerous important parameters. If the technical specifications remain within certain ranges, the customer benefits from the financial and time advantages of the S-Line.

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"THE NEW CONCEPT  
BRINGS SHORTER PROJECT-  
REALISATION TIMES  
AND LOWER INVESTMENTS."

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**Quality without compromises.**

Furthermore, with the new range of moulds, Otto Hofstetter AG makes no compromises when it comes to the quality of the processed materials. As in the case of the entirely individually manufactured moulds, only top-quality steel grades are used, mostly of German origin. The commercially available mould parts are from the same sources as those of our conventional moulds. Their type and quality meet the requirements of the Uznach manufacturing plant in every respect.

### Guaranteed as always.

Of course, the S-Line moulds are made at the company's main domicile in Switzerland. They are produced by the same experts and with the same dedication as every other individually manufactured component. It is only logical that every finished mould of the new S-Line is tested at our Tech Centre under production conditions, and that experienced technicians accompany commissioning at the customer's premises. As all injection moulds of the new S-Line are Otto Hofstetter originals, the moulds are also covered by the same warranty as any other product from our Swiss plant.

### Inspected, tested and looked after.

As regards service support, there is also no difference from the conventional moulds of the packaging field. The same applies to maintenance. The intervals correspond to the established generous standards for which the products of Otto Hofstetter AG are praised in the whole trade. Due to the part standardisation and the resulting multiple testing of a type, it is possible that maintenance intervals are slightly longer than those applicable to individual designs.

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"THE WARRANTY  
ON THE S-LINE IS IDENTICAL  
WITH THAT ON  
THE CUSTOM MOULDS."

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### Ecological advantage.

The Otto Hofstetter S-Line also scores when it comes to the ecological footprint. Thanks to its standardisation, the master mould can be reused for a new mould of similar dimensions. The insert groups of moulds from this range are also suitable for multiple use. With a new master mould, for example, it is possible to convert a mould from four to six cavities. This guarantees the same quality of both materials and processing.

### Proven elements in a new form.

In brief: The S-Line of Otto Hofstetter AG is a new range of moulds. Thanks to this novel concept for the packaging segment, it features clearly reduced project realisation periods and a lower price in comparison with individually manufactured moulds. Since absolutely no compromises are made

as regards quality, the life-cycle costs are reduced and thereby the amortisation time is shortened. In view of the fact that individual parts of the S-Line can be reused for new moulds, the overall ecobalance of the mould is improved.

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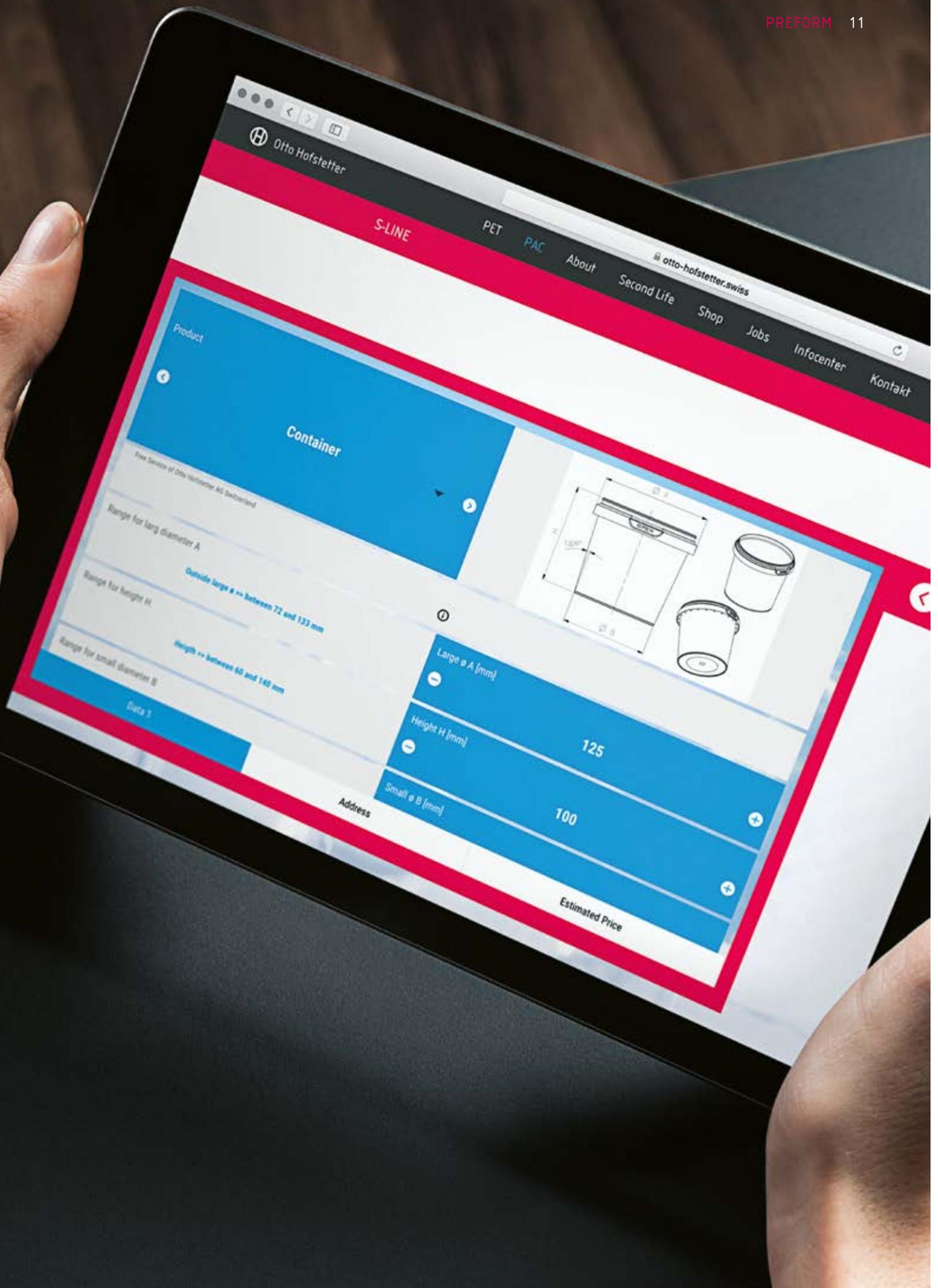
"THE INSERT  
GROUPS OF THE S-LINE  
ARE SUITABLE  
FOR MULTIPLE USES."

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## NEW: OTTO HOFSTETTER S-LINE WITH ONLINE CONFIGURATOR.

Do you need a budget price for the required injection mould to submit a quotation to your customer? At [otto-hofstetter.swiss/s-line](https://otto-hofstetter.swiss/s-line) you calculate the amount of your investment with a few clicks of your mouse. Define the parameters of your desired product and provide some guide values for the mould within the stated ranges, and the system calculates a price estimate. Test the new online configurator for the S-Line from Otto Hofstetter AG now.





Otto Hofstetter

S-LINE

PET

PAC

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Product

### Container

Free Service of Otto Hofstetter AG Switzerland

Range for large diameter A

Outside large  $a \leftrightarrow$  between 72 and 133 mm

Range for height H

Height  $h \leftrightarrow$  between 60 and 140 mm

Range for small diameter B

Data 1



Large  $a$  [mm]

125

Height H [mm]

100

Small  $b$  [mm]

Address

Estimated Price



# CLEAN ROOM.

**Fischer Söhne AG** started in 1923 with the production of packaging articles made from sheet metal. Today, the enterprise domiciled in Muri in the canton of Aargau ranks among Switzerland's leading companies of the **plastics industry** and invests heavily in its future. *inform* talked to **General Manager Iwan Tresch** as well as **Sales and Marketing Manager Adrian Gerber** about traditions, quality and the Swiss location.

The speciality of Fischer Söhne AG is the production with high numbers of cavities in the clean room and extrusion blowing.

**Alois Fischer founded Fischer Söhne AG in 1923 and made sheet-metal packaging products. What is still evident today of the founder's spirit?**

**Iwan Tresch:** The founder's spirit is still fully intact. We rely on our own developments, optimise our production steadily and expand our infrastructure. Our objective now as before is that what we do, we do properly. Fischer Söhne AG continues to make packaging products. However, these articles are no longer made of sheet metal, but of plastic, which means that, technically, hardly anything is like it used to be. The company has been operating extrusion blowing machines since the 1960s and injection moulding machines since the end of the 1980s. We apply these technologies in the clean room, which positions us well in the market. We are committed to further develop of this segment.

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**"WE RELY ON OUR OWN DEVELOPMENTS, OPTIMISE OUR PRODUCTION STEADILY AND EXPAND OUR INFRASTRUCTURE."**

*Iwan Tresch, CEO Fischer Söhne AG*

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**The company is still family owned, but has not been in the hands of the founders since 1971. What is the present structure?**

**Iwan Tresch:** The Fischer Family withdrew from the business when it sold the company to Etimex Interplastic in 1971. In 1980, a new group of shareholders consisting of four families took over Fischer Söhne AG. These shareholders are connected to the company and members of the Board of Directors.

**What does Fischer Söhne AG look like today?**

**Iwan Tresch:** We employ approximately 100 people and are active mainly in the Swiss market and the EU-area. The export share is 25 to 30 percent, which is somewhat atypical for a highly specialised company in Switzerland. This is due to the extrusion-blown products. With the large containers in particular, we are subject to effects limiting the delivery distances. Fischer Söhne AG supplies the packaging, medical, pharmaceutical and other industrial fields. We are certified to comply with the standards ISO 9001 and ISO 13485 as well as the food standards BRC/IoP.

**What production equipment do you use?**

**Adrian Gerber:** We produce on about 30 injection moulding machines with clamping forces from 50 to 500 tonnes and approximately 10 extrusion-blowing machines. The clean-room

production in GMP C environment runs on seven days per week around the clock. Extrusion blowing and the remaining moulding machines run in three shifts from Monday to Friday, if necessary also on Saturday morning.

**What products do customers buy from Fischer Söhne AG?**

**Adrian Gerber:** In the area of medical and pharmaceutical mouldings: tubs, nests for RTU syringes (ready-to-use) and pistons. On the packaging side in the majority canisters and technical extrusion-blown parts. To this segment belong also the white street posts with the integrated reflectors for which we are the exclusive producer in Switzerland. For the remaining industry we make various thin-walled articles like cartridge tips, valves, boxes and closures. In some cases, we provide complete subassemblies which we assemble manually or in-line for our customers.

**You refer to the clean-room production as your USP. What do you mean by this?**

**Adrian Gerber:** On the one hand the moulding machines with up to 500 tonnes clamping force. They allow us to operate moulds with large numbers of cavities. In spite of higher investments for the moulds, the effect on the price of the end product is positive. We want to expand our competences and capacities in the area of cleanroom production. At the moment, about 20 percent of our total production area is of the



clean-room type. We plan to increase this percentage during the months ahead with major investments

**To what extent are the remaining areas of the company affected by such a highly sensitive production environment?**

**Iwan Tresch:** This is indeed a major challenge. For the medical and pharmaceutical industries, we work in a clean room of category GMP C, where we have to comply strictly with the regulations. Other standards such as e.g. BRC/loP apply to the fields of packaging and the remaining industry and must be adhered to. This can only be guaranteed if the corresponding production lines are accommodated in separate premises. Additionally, the employees are appropriately trained and periodically retrained.

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**"WE WANT TO EXPAND OUR COMPETENCES AND CAPACITIES IN THE AREA OF CLEANROOM PRODUCTION."**

Adrian Gerber, Sales- und Marketingleiter

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**A hundred people work for Fischer Söhne AG. Considering this specialisation, how do you achieve the required flexibility in job planning?**

**Iwan Tresch:** This can be explained at the example of the Quality Department. On the industrial side or where extrusion-blowing is concerned, the criteria are completely different from the ones that apply to clean-room production. To reconcile the various technologies and regulations requires clearly defined processes, expert knowledge and much flexibility. The organisation must be very lean to work efficiently. In other words, we need a very well-trained workforce with outstanding levels of self-responsibility and a high engagement.

**Switzerland is an export nation, but you achieve more than three-quarters of your sales on the domestic market. To what extent do the products you sell at home go abroad via your customers?**

**Adrian Gerber:** Let us first break down the three quarters. The canisters take the lion's share which we make for customers in Switzerland. These customers supply mostly to customers within our country. Among them are also international corporations, via which a portion might leave Switzerland. We do not have any exact numbers. When it comes to the medical and pharma products, about three quarters of our customers are domiciled abroad. Of the one quarter of products we make for our Swiss customers in the medical and pharma industries, a big portion is also exported.

**To what extent does the Swiss origin of the products play a role?**

**Iwan Tresch:** In our business field, whether products are Swiss-made or not plays a rather unimportant role. We are facing a very competitive international environment, also as regards the prices, of course. To be able to participate as a Swiss producer, it is important to do one's homework. For us, this means to develop innovative and clever solutions for our customers, to permanently improve the existing infrastructure and to optimise the installed processes all the time. True to our motto: "Fischer Söhne AG, excellent solutions in plastics".

**How do you ensure this quality in the long term?**

**Iwan Tresch:** For one thing, with the required infrastructure. In addition, with the knowledge and experience gained in decades of successful production, as well as motivated and professional workers. A further must is the permanent and uncompromising monitoring of the quality in the ongoing production.



**"TO BE ABLE TO PARTICIPATE  
AS A SWISS PRODUCER,  
IT IS IMPORTANT TO DO ONE'S  
HOMEWORK."**

Iwan Tresch, CEO Fischer Söhne AG

**According to your company principles, quality is generated at each and every workstation through engagement, high identification and self-responsibility. How do you guarantee that your employees implement this?**

**Iwan Tresch:** Many of our employees have been working at Fischer Söhne AG for years. Their loyalty is evidence of their identification with the enterprise. We inform our employees regularly on the course of business, developments in progress and planned activities. We also involve them in the decision process concerning larger projects across departments. By this, we try to obtain wide and lasting support for changes. Looking at our fluctuation rate, the overall package seems to be right.

**With a basic training as a polymechanic and your present job as Sales and Marketing Manager, you are a shining example of the Swiss education system. How important is this system for quality?**

**Adrian Gerber:** The training as a polymechanic – at Otto Hofstetter AG, by the way – has given me a practical perspective. In my present function, this makes me better able to understand my colleagues from the production side and accordingly to motivate them more easily. During my pro-

fessional career so far, from trainee right to Member of the Management, I have experienced all levels of the hierarchy. This is a background which would not have been possible without Switzerland's dual education system. This is also a reason why Fischer Söhne AG trains young professionals.

**Comparing Otto Hofstetter AG of the time when you were trained there with the present company, what has changed?**

**Adrian Gerber:** The progress is similar to the one at Fischer Söhne AG. It was a top operation then and it is a top operation now. The company has grown and numerous processes have been automated. I am not aware of any other enterprise in this industry which relies on such a high-grade infrastructure as they have in Uznach. I have been familiar with Otto Hofstetter's philosophy since the time of my apprenticeship, and countless aspects are still fully present despite the fact that nearly 20 years have passed since then.

**According to current public opinion, the sustained protection of the environment and plastic are incompatible. How do you cope with this pressure in public?**

**Iwan Tresch:** As a matter of principle, it is important to me



that we urgently return the public discussion of plastics to an objective level. Plastics as such are not dangerous. Littering is the problem that calls for solutions worldwide. What can we as Fischer Söhne AG do? We try to save every gram of plastic we can. For example, by optimising the wall sections or by grinding up surplus material from production and adding a certain percentage of it to the cycle again. In the field of medical and pharma mouldings, however, our hands are tied because hygiene takes top priority, i.e. recycled material may not be used.

**Fischer Söhne AG have been injection moulders for many years, but only started using moulds from Otto Hofstetter AG two years ago. What are the underlying factors?**

**Adrian Gerber:** The cooperation goes back to a large order from a producer of special chemicals who desired a reorientation. To hold on to the order, we had to improve the cycle times and reduce the wall thicknesses. This was a task which we believed only a mould from Otto Hofstetter AG could fulfil.

In the meantime, this first project resulted in an intensive cooperation with the experts from Uznach. Today, we also entrust Otto Hofstetter with the overhauling of moulds made by other manufacturers.

**Where do you see optimisation potential in the cooperation?**

**Iwan Tresch:** We are very happy with the performance of Otto Hofstetter AG. I would have a suggestion, though, in the area of development. The products become ever more complex, the expectations are higher and the time-to-market decreases steadily. To be able to support our customers in this early phase of development, mould-flow studies would be helpful. Also useful in this phase would be to create 3D samples to enable first handling tests.

**Mr Tresch, Mr Gerber, many thanks for the interesting insight into Fischer Söhne AG. On behalf of the entire team of Otto Hofstetter AG, I wish you continued success.**



**Fischer Söhne AG**

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 Specialist in extrusion blowing and injection moulding,  
 partly in clean rooms  
 Application areas: Medical/pharmaceutical, packaging  
 and industry  
 Employees: Approx. 100  
 Infrastructure: 30 injection moulding machines and 10 extruders

# RECYCLING FOR LIFE.

Picture: © wildtrust.co.za

In **South Africa**, a new entrepreneurship is about to get established: independent but registered **collectors of waste** who earn their livelihood by gathering **recyclable materials**. In doing this, the “**waste-preneurs**” fight the pollution of the environment, recover **valuable raw materials** for the recycling industry and, at the same time, earn a living. This is a model in which all those involved are **winners**.

The wastepreneurs in South Africa create benefits for themselves, the environment and the circulatory economy.

South Africa is drowning in waste, warns the Institute of Waste Management of Southern Africa (IWMSA). The statistical facts compiled in 2017 and published by the Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) reveal that the approximately 57 million inhabitants produce about 54.2 million tonnes of waste per annum. This equates to up to 2.5 kilograms per person daily, depending on income. A maximum of 10 per cent is recycled or used for other purposes. At least 90 per cent at best end up in a dump or, ever more often, are simply thrown away anywhere in the surroundings.

**Bad job prospects.**

A total of 60 per cent of all South Africans live in urban areas. They want to be near the towns to improve their chances of finding work. This has a questionable effect: In the KwaZulu-Natal province on the East coast of South Africa, for example, more than 40 per cent of the population are jobless according to official statistics from spring 2019. This number is made up by the officially reported 25.1 per cent of unemployed people and the many thousands of others who have given up looking for work and, therefore, are no longer registered by the authorities.

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"WASTEPRENEURS IMPROVE  
THEIR LIVING  
ENVIRONMENT AND ENSURE ORDER  
IN THE QUARTER."

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**Self-employed, but official.**

It is against this background that the wastepreneurs movement emerged. They are "self-employed" collectors of waste who register themselves officially as such. In return, a special identity card is issued to them and they wear a light-green jacket and a cap. Apart from their function as "official" waste collectors, they support the local security companies. While constantly touring the suburban roads, they keep their eyes and ears open to contribute to everybody's security.

**Business model gains momentum.**

The wastepreneurs have meanwhile spread all over South Africa. In the KwaZulu-Natal region, they are supported by Wildlands. This South African NGO relies on a network of 60 communities in six provinces and initiated the project Recycling for life to assist the wastepreneurs. It focuses on supporting communities and individual persons to enhance

their living environment by collecting waste in and around their quarters to get it recycled, for example, in Cato Crest, a small part of town in an outer district to the west of Durban. The Umkhumbane river flows through the settlement, joins the Umbilo and runs into the ocean. The land on both sides of the river in Cato Crest is scattered with plastic and glass. When heavy rainfall and flooding raise the water level of the Umkhumbane, it carries all the rubbish along and flushes it into the sea.

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"THE EARNINGS  
OF THE WASTEPRENEURS  
ENABLE THEM  
TO LEAD A BETTER LIFE."

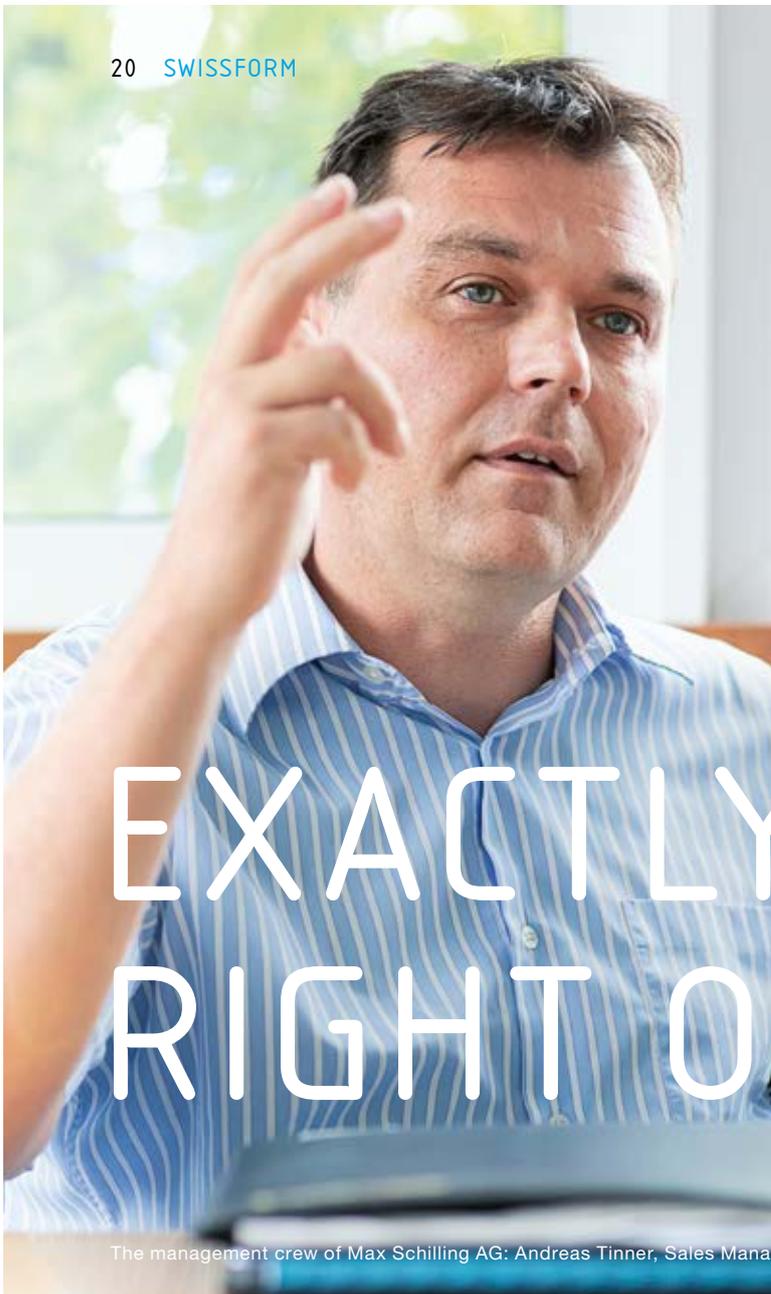
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**Dreams are fulfilled.**

Mrs Sindisiwe Sebotsa fights this. She has been acting as a wastepreneur in her area since October 2017 and busily collects plastic bottles and other recyclable materials. Thanks to the recycling point set up by the NGO Wildlands in the centre of Cato Crest, she collected more than 4000 kilos of valuable raw materials for the recycling trade within one year. Sindisiwe Sebotsa and her colleagues collect more than 1.2 million kilos of waste in Cato Crest every year, much to the delight of wastepreneur Sebotsa. Her intervention for the benefit of the environment earned her enough money to build two tiny houses in her backyard, which she now lets. The resulting income and what she earns from Recycling for life made one of her long-held dreams come true: she got her driving licence.

**Model knows only winners.**

The wastepreneurs and accompanying initiatives such as Recycling for life are shining examples of how the problems of environmental pollution with plastics and other packaging products can be coped with in a sustainable manner. It is a wonderful win-win-win situation that entrepreneurship is encouraged, unemployment and poverty fought and valuable raw materials gained for recycling. As a welcome side effect, people are made aware of the recycling economy, and this in turn improves their responsibility in the medium term.



# EXACTLY THE RIGHT ONES

The management crew of Max Schilling AG: Andreas Tinner, Sales Manager, Andrea Rutzer, HR and Finance, and Paul Oberholzer, Factory Manager.

**Max Schilling AG** have been **machining partners** of **Otto Hofstetter AG** for more than 25 years. The Swiss company located in Bilten (in the canton of Glarus) has a workforce of 30 and is **specialised in precision parts** of the highest quality. **Andrea Rutzer, Paul Oberholzer** and **Andreas Tinner** make up the **management** and see to it that the versatile workshop develops in the right direction and that the cooperation with the mould makers from Uznach continues successfully.

Bilten is one of the many Swiss villages that are not so well known. Notwithstanding that, a world-famous chocolatier and an international producer of PET preforms are domiciled here, among other capable companies. The community with about 2500 inhabitants is located approximately 50 kilometres south-east of Zurich, between Lake Zurich and Lake Walen. Much more important, however, is that Bilten is only just over 10 minutes away from Uznach by car.

#### Partners for 25 years.

Max Schilling AG has its headquarters at the entrance to this village. The company is specialised in the production of

precision parts for manufacturers of plants, machinery, appliances, moulds, tools and vehicles. In this function, it has been a partner of Otto Hofstetter AG for more than 25 years. "I'm unable to trace how the cooperation started." For Factory Manager Paul Oberholzer, one of the reasons was the geographical closeness, and another the distinct understanding of quality that reigns in his workshop. He is the one in the new management team who has served the company the longest, and looks back on nearly 35 years with Max Schilling AG.

#### Extended workbench.

What is remarkable about this partner of Otto Hofstetter AG is



the breadth of the performance portfolio. “We offer a solution to meet almost any need in metalworking, and we carry out no less than 95 per cent of the mechanical processes using our own infrastructure.” There are also hardly any restrictions as regards the materials that can be machined, says Sales Manager Andreas Tinner. This is why the colleagues in Uznach count on the competences of Max Schilling AG not only when small cooling tubes are concerned, but also for a variety of other small parts.

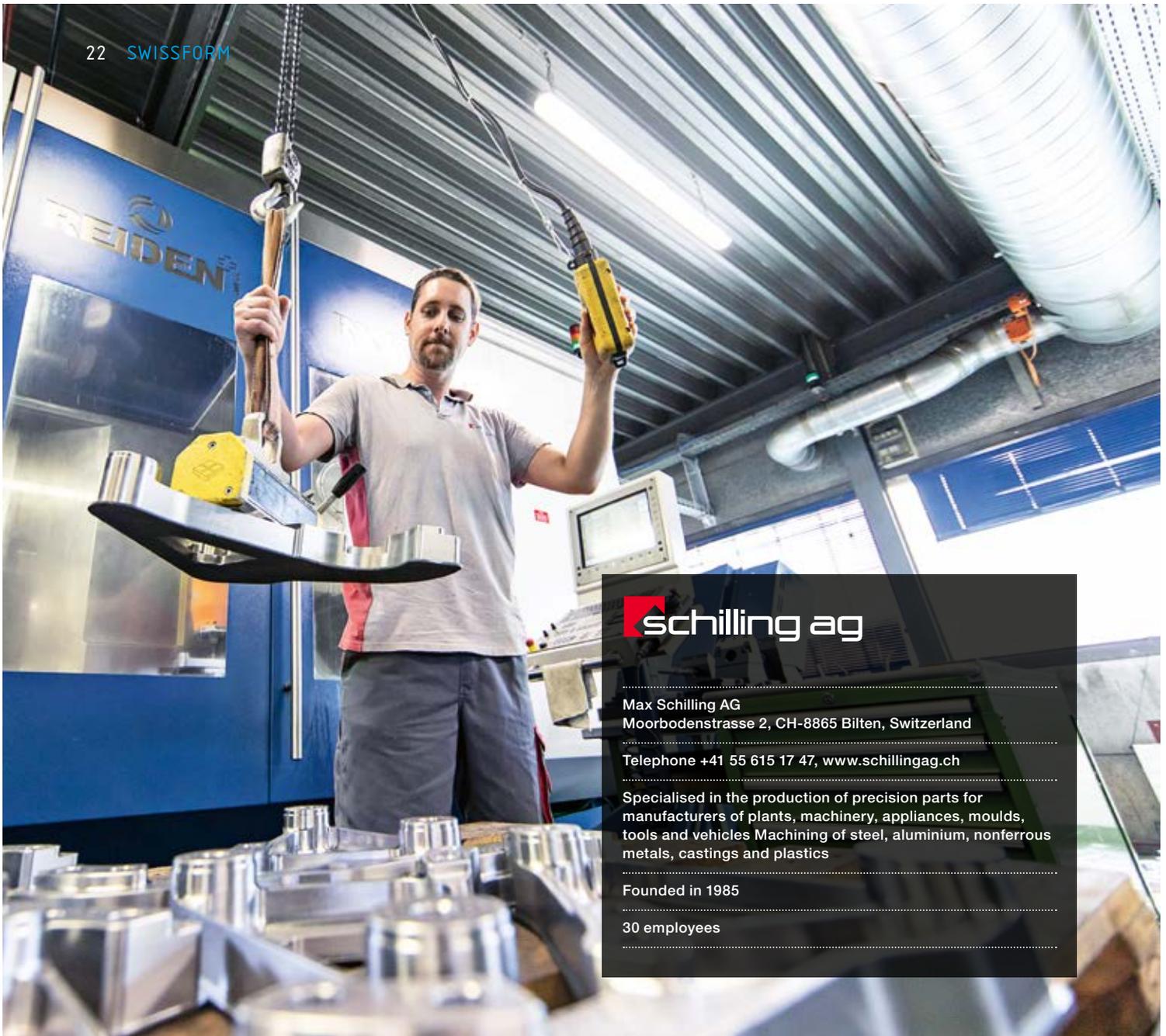
**Everything except monotony.**

As a customer, Otto Hofstetter AG is in the best company. Many well-known, internationally active Swiss enterprises rely on the precision parts from Bilten. Accordingly varied are the tasks for the workshop personnel, comments Paul Oberholzer. “With orders from Otto Hofstetter AG, we have to divide a hundredth of a millimetre by three, whereas the tolerances for other customers are somewhat more generous.” The members of his workshop crew know each customer

and the expectations to be met. And these are not the only individual requirements. “We process about 1000 new articles per year. Looking closer, it’s actually even more, because certain parts are made up of several components.” For anyone working at Max Schilling AG, therefore, monotony is not part of their vocabulary.

**Loyalty is much appreciated.**

Professionals who accept such general conditions are not easy to find. This is why Andrea Rutzer’s maxim is to hold on to good workers. Being in charge of personnel, she knows how difficult this can be. “Our company’s success stands and falls with the team we have on board. We’re very happy that many of our employees stay with the company for a long time.” Since recruiting new specialists is so difficult, Andrea Rutzer and her two colleagues in management rely on training. “We offer apprenticeships every year and try to keep the young professionals after they complete their training.” It is only natural that they don’t always succeed in this, because



**schilling ag**

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Specialised in the production of precision parts for manufacturers of plants, machinery, appliances, moulds, tools and vehicles Machining of steel, aluminium, nonferrous metals, castings and plastics

Founded in 1985

30 employees

anyone who has received training at Max Schilling AG for four years is already highly versatile and experienced, which is not generally the case with other young professionals.

#### **Responsibility breeds commitment.**

Whoever promises their customers precision parts of the best quality, undertakes to deliver these parts at any time and without fluctuations in shape. Quality assurance, therefore, enjoys a high priority. "We are certified to comply with ISO 9001, of course, and abide by the defined processes," explains Paul Oberholzer. To the Factory Manager, confidence in the professional pride and the responsibility of each individual are at least equally important to guarantee quality. Operating an inspection department to check each individual component is expensive and impairs competitiveness. "We rely on the four-eyes principle. When the machine is set up for a part, a colleague is called to check everything. Moreover, every employee confirms the quality of the job with their signature."

#### **Parallels connect.**

"We have this confidence in the professional competence of the employees in common with Otto Hofstetter AG." Apart from this, Andreas Tinner sees further similarities with the customer in Uznach: the striving for the highest precision, the reliability and the fascination with the trade skill. "In the daily dealings with our contact people at the mould makers, it is soon clear that you are talking to people who spent or still spend their time in a workshop. The working steps or processing techniques don't have to be explained to them." This makes it easier and more efficient to implement a project.

#### **Partners at eye level.**

The closeness and friendly attitude make many tasks easier, even if, rarely, something isn't as it should be. "Both enterprises are interested in good solutions. There is no need for pages of reports. Instead, an open and constructive discussion is helpful." Paul Oberholzer doesn't know the cooperation with

Otto Hofstetter AG any other way. And, as long as top quality is the mutual objective, he can't imagine it any other way.

**In good or bad times.**

Although only five per cent of the products from the workshop in Bilten leave Switzerland directly, Max Schilling AG feels the tense atmosphere of international business. "If a customer gets under pressure in their market, we also notice it in Bilten. The consequences extend from shorter delivery times to the price, right to the loss of an order." If continuity is interrupted at any stage, Andreas Tinner doesn't interpret it as an omission of the partner, but as a sign of how unpredictable the demand can be or as an effect of geopolitical developments. This is why the Sales Manager is very grateful for an open and fair discussion between the partners. And, with the consultation at the end of the year, he usually takes this as a given.

**"STRIVING FOR THE HIGHEST QUALITY HOLDS OTTO HOFSTETTER AG AND US TOGETHER."**

Paul Oberholzer, Factory Manager

**Trade skills forever.**

The management of Max Schilling AG is open to automation or robotisation. However, the deployment possibilities and the resulting gain in efficiency or quality are very limited. "In view of our order structure for many individual parts and small lot sizes, we see little potential in our workshop to automate steps or complete production processes."



At Max Schilling AG, the company itself ensures young blood among its qualified specialists and offers jobs for trainees.

**Nothing doing without humans.**

Paul Oberholzer also sees the skilled trades playing a very important role in future. "No machine and no computer control runs without people. It takes the know-how and experience of a professional worker to define the most efficient and safest machining process for a certain workpiece." If the necessary information is programmed in the system, people can indeed delegate further processes to the machine. In this respect, in the opinion of the Factory Manager, the skilled trades are underestimated. "I feel that it is clearly more demanding to set up a machine with five machining axes than, for example, fill an Excel chart with data of any sort."



The passion for mechanical solutions and innovation at Max Schilling AG leads to unusual projects such as the bobsleigh for the international bobsleigh association.

**A passion for mechanical things.**

It would be completely wrong to reproach those in charge of Max Schilling AG for being a little scared of innovation. Anyone seeking proof should enquire about Tremola, an electric vehicle with three wheels that features an entirely novel, dynamic inclination technique. It is highly agile in curves, but stable when running slowly or at a standstill. Max Schilling AG designed Tremola and made it suitable for road use. And there is more to it: together with the designers of the Sauber Formula 1 motor racing team, the workshop in Bilten came up with the bobsleigh that juniors worldwide must use in the official contests. Anyone wanting more examples of the innovative capabilities of the precision-mechanics factory should head to the workshop in Bilten when the opportunity arises. A visit is most certainly worthwhile.



TOTALLY SWISS.

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