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Fit^{to}
battle



Availability and Compatibility

Meeting with
Stefan Zatti, Chief Sales & Marketing Officer, Member of the Executive Board and
Markus Feldmann, Area Sales Manager PET
Otto Hofstetter AG, Uznach, Switzerland

by Barbara Appel

Of course, it was about the pandemic and its scope when we met Stefan Zatti and Markus Feldmann in Uznach, Switzerland. It was about the economy in general and PET and PAC, the two business fields of Otto Hofstetter AG, in particular. It was about customer relationships, availability and efficiency, requirements.

Zatti describes himself as an avowed market economist. It breaks his heart, "even as a private person", he adds when he thinks of the life at Zurich airport or in the 40,000 m² Glatt shopping mall that has come to a standstill.

Zatti is not used to spending so much time in the office. He is a salesman through and through, attentive, interested. He loves to be on the go, to visit customers, to listen to them, to take their suggestions home to refine their own products so that they can become even more efficient than they already have.

Efficiency is one of the important topics this afternoon. It is true that Otto Hofstetter, like everyone else, had to adapt to the circumstances and requirements of the pandemic, but

efficiency is one of the challenges that is present regardless of the pandemic.

97+ %

"No, the availability did not have to be increased due to the pandemic," says Zatti, "it was already very important before. There is no more than 100%." Customers expect 97+ % - and achieve them with the moulds from Otto Hofstetter AG on the corresponding PET machines.

Zatti speaks of the home straight when reaching 97+ %. "Getting from 97% to 98% takes an enormous amount of effort, and subtleties are required. Most of the time, our customers are looking for

closer contact than switching to a second source."

What makes the difference? The costs? Otto Hofstetter moulds are in the upper price segment. A disadvantage? "Something comes into play here that also helps us through the difficult times of the pandemic: experience, reliability, trust," said Zatti. Hofstetter customers know what they are getting into: everything is manufactured in Switzerland. "Despite ongoing currency pressure from the strong Swiss franc, Otto Hofstetter AG is sticking to Switzerland as a manufacturing location".

The location issue is not new. "During the pandemic, we again benefited from the fact that we only manufacture here in Switzerland," reports Feldmann. "Our





FACTS & FIGURES

OTTO HOFSTETTER AG

Founded in 1955

Family owned in 2nd generation

Specialized in injection moulds for
PET / preforms and PAC / thin wall

Branches in China, India and
Luxembourg

Around 220 employees

supply chains were and are stable. We have a high level of vertical integration. The relationship with our suppliers has always been significant to us. Our suppliers are our partners, and that's how we treat them." Hofstetter customers have had constant contact persons for service and advice for years, and the durability of the tools speaks for itself. Feldmann: "Usually, the hot sides come back for maintenance after 8 million shots, some even handle twice as much." "And the cold sides practically never come back - they are simply well built", Zatti adds.

Otto Hofstetter AG works with a high proportion of in-house production. The stainless steel comes exclusively from Germany. "Our steel dealer has always had a warehouse exclusively for Hofstetter in Switzerland, which covers consumption for six months. This ensures survival should the deliveries fail." Zatti is convinced that a high level of autonomy will be in demand again. "The buzzword of the 1990s "just in time" is about to be reversed."

There have been no cancellations of orders, said Feldmann. "But you can feel uncertainty expressed in reluctance." There were uncertainties even before the pandemic, according to Zatti. And he cites the tethered caps issue as an example of the fact that the industry is waiting for standardization. Zatti takes a critical view of the obligation to attach the caps: "Will it all pay off?" He doesn't even see investments as the main problem. Instead, he speaks of the goal of 3-4% more closures being returned with the tethered caps solution and compares the savings with the CO₂ and



Stefan Zatti

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energy balance: “Hundreds of systems have to be converted, the steel for the new tools has to be cast. If it were 30%, that would make more sense to me.”

Zatti and Feldmann rate the level of incoming orders for both PET and PAC, the two business areas of OHAG as good to very good. For PAC it is even better than for PET, there is currently little evidence of plastic bashing or bans. Now, margarine packaging is in great demand, and packaging for sauces, the latter also increasingly in PET. According to Feldmann, during the pandemic, the product protection provided by the packaging scored highly in the eyes of consumers while the rejection of plastic as a packaging material played a minor role. The fact that people eat less in restaurants and more at home also contributes to a shift in favour of plastic packaging.

Otto Hofstetter is also making progress with mould development. With OH Xport, it is possible to take measurements directly on the tool and, for example,

use the mould breathing to recognize whether the system is running stably or whether there are any indications of deviations (see article “OH Xport: Production Security and Investment Protection by IT Performance” on page 78). The brand new OH Xblow allows the operating time of the tools to be multiplied until the next cleaning. Zatti: “The first customer immediately converted all moulds to OH Xblow.”

For Otto Hofstetter, as a top entry mould maker, it did not go unnoticed that side entry technology was becoming more and more popular on the market. Customers also kept making inquiries. “We refused for a long time, wanted to remain loyal to ourselves and our partner Netstal, saw ourselves as a top supplier for top entry,” said Zatti. Since the beginning of this year, the tools from the Swiss company have also been available for side entry machines. The individualist Zatti can understand the customer’s desire for standardization: “It just simplifies”.

Despite all compatibility, differentiation remains an important point. Otto Hofstetter relies on its well-established design principle: Cavity Lock, while the connection dimensions are compatible. “We see great potential.”

We assume that Zatti and Feldmann are longingly thinking about acquiring new customers, about freedom of travel and discussions at trade fairs and with customers.

We wish Stefan Zatti and Markus Feldmann the best of success for this.

DIALOGUE PARTNER

Stefan Zatti
Member of the Executive Board

Markus Feldmann
Area Sales Manager PET



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