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Way2K 2025

"We create added value for the customer "

Interview on the road to K 2025 with Georg Kiesel, General Manager at Billion

Mr. Kiesel, economic development is sluggish in large parts of Europe. Do you still see location advantages?

The advantages we have in Europe, especially in France and Germany, are basically the advantages that characterise the SME sector, of which high flexibility is one. We are very good at recognising situations and adapting to the actual needs of each customer to a very high degree. Other advantages are a flexible organisation and an intact ecosystem within plastics machinery manufacturing. This means that there are many companies that are similarly positioned, and there are corresponding organisations and structures. As a whole, this enables us to recognise new topics and trends very quickly and adapt to them.

Do these advantages outweigh the disadvantage of generally higher costs?

I think so. We pursue the goal of satisfying customer needs in the best possible way. In doing so, we create real added value for them. If we maintain that focus on added value in the future, things will continue to go well for us. At Billion, for example, we can clearly see that standard products are no longer in demand. Customers want customised machines that are tailored to their specific needs, and we are able to meet these very specific requirements. When we look back over the past two years, we can clearly observe that these value-added applications work. At a competitive level, this means we can stand our ground very well, even internationally, including China. It's not all about price; it's about special applications, responsiveness and production efficiency across the entire production cycle. We have a customer that produces plastic parts for household appliances, in other words, mass products. You might assume that this customer prefers low-cost machines from the Far East to ours, this is not the case however: that particular customer chose us because we generate added value for them when they consider their entire production chain, and due to the fact that we are close to them. This proximity is still highly valued today.

How do you define the added value for the customer?

We ask ourselves what we can change so that customers can find a way to depart from their standard applications. We look for additional functionalities and additional efficiencies. We ask ourselves whether we can simplify assembly steps, how we can improve the stabilisation of processes, whether the customer could operate better with other materials, and how we need to adapt our machines accordingly. Our multi-component technology, the sandwich process, plays a major role here. It has been available for a long time, but today it is providing increasing numbers of customers with added value; for example, if they want to use recyclates but the surfaces of their products have to be absolutely flawless. We then virtually hide recyclates inside a part and surround it with virgin material on the outside. In another application, a customer wanted to give polypropylene roof tiles better protection against UV radiation by adding an expensive additive. Using the sandwich process, they now only use the additives in the outer layer. On the inside, only polypropylene is used.

How do you keep your production costs in check?

We have a platform approach. We still have our basic machines, one all-electric machine and two types of hydraulic machines. However, these machines are very customisable. A large part of the machine can be easily reproduced, such as the chassis, the clamp and the injection unit, but everything else can be customised. Thanks to the platform approach, we have the opportunity to adapt each machine to the customer on the one hand, and on the other we can still remain within a competitive price range; that is absolutely essential. After all, the customer must be able to afford the added value.

Will the momentum of the circular economy continue?

The circular economy has now reached a high level of maturity. At K 2022, the main focus was on presenting the new technologies. These technologies are now much more mature. Now people are talking more about how and where these technologies can be utilised. It's not quite as spectacular, which is why you won't hear the word circular economy as often as you did three years ago. However, the basic idea of moving from a linear economy to a circular economy is becoming increasingly important. We can see this very clearly in our technical centre, where around three quarters of all experiments concern the sandwich process. This involves the use of various recyclates and the saving of valuable resources.

How do you see the future of plastics?

Plastic will play an important role in the future. Climate change, the greatest challenge of our time, cannot be tackled without plastics. Let's take electromobility as an example, which should lead to a reduction in the CO2 footprint: The cooling systems, batteries and battery trays required for this are only economically feasible with plastic. What's more, plastic has major advantages over many other materials: It is lightweight, recyclable and the energy required to produce it is lower. Plastic should therefore be viewed from a macro perspective, as its advantages will then soon become apparent.

Video Statement Georg Kiesl:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gh3QjghG1Wc&list=PLN1k-IPccLmHTYB1hQyiJlIdtUDF5JrxA&index=3>

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Industry interviews on the way to the K:

It is impossible to imagine a world without plastic. And plastics are indispensable for mastering our future challenges. The plastics industry develops solutions so that a growing world population can live safely and prosperously. This important role as an enabler is expressed in the motto of K 2025: The Power of Plastics! Green - Smart - Responsible. Green, because plastics help to combat climate change and conserve resources. Smart, because digitalisation helps to increase efficiency. Responsible, because the focus is on people. To get in the mood for the industry meeting in October 2025, the VDMA is giving representatives of the plastics machinery industry and of all other stakeholders in the sector a chance to have their say in a series of interviews.

VDMA Plastics and Rubber Machinery

More than 200 companies are members of the trade association, covering over 90 per cent of industry's production in Germany. Ten per cent of our member companies come from Austria, Switzerland and France. The German member companies account for a turnover of 7 billion euros in core machine construction and 10 billion euros including peripheral technology. In terms of value, one in four plastics machines manufactured worldwide comes from Germany; the export rate is 70 per cent. Chairman of the trade association is Ulrich Reifenhäuser, Managing Partner of Reifenhäuser GmbH & Co KG.