

HORN BACH
S U S T A I N A B I L I T Y M A G A Z I N E
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MAKE IT BETTER

R E S P O N S I B L E B U I L D I N G
A N D D E S I G N

HORN BACH.
Holding

DEAR READERS,

Surprised by the title of our Sustainability Magazine? That would be understandable. After all, it could easily be seen as presumptuous or arrogant, or just another over-the-top advertising claim. “Make it better” is actually an appeal, and one that applies on two levels. Firstly, at the HORNBACH Group itself. Wherever we look, potential improvements are just waiting to be found. That holds true for the tiniest work processes that save paper and packaging waste and holds just as true for the efforts we make to identify trends and innovative product ranges that match changing customer expectations in terms of sustainable lifestyles.

Secondly, it is an appeal to the “inner customer” within each and every one of us. Every purchasing decision we customers make has an impact on the product range offered by retailers. Products no

longer in demand soon disappear from the shelves. Put simply, when shopping we all decide ‘for or against’ high-emission products, ‘for or against’ conventional agriculture, ‘for or against’ timber from unsustainable sources, and ‘for or against’ substandard working conditions...

HORNBACH has already taken many of these decisions, some of which keenly discussed and by no means always easy, and restructured its product range accordingly. Now that is done, we are not just sitting on our laurels. As a company, we have set ourselves the standard of always doing justice to our responsibility towards people and the environment. Our aim is not to do it well, but to make it better. You too can help us here!

Have an enjoyable read.



Axel Müller
Head of Group Communications and
Investor Relations



Anna Krall
CSR Spokeswoman and
Project Direction

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INTERVIEW

“A MATTER OF DECENCY”

As key drivers and sponsors of the issues involved, Albrecht Hornbach and Susanne Jäger are the points of contact when it comes to sustainability at the HORNBACK Group. For these two members of the Board of Management, economic efficiency, environmental awareness, and a commitment to society are not mutually exclusive, but rather complementary objectives. Anna Krall



Mr. Hornbach, family companies often think they are per se sustainable. Is it really that simple?

Albrecht Hornbach: I know where they are coming from, but you are right: It really is not that simple. Sustainability has far more dimensions than just consistency. We too have shown consistent growth, even if not always as smoothly as the capital market would like. In this respect, a stock market listing also has disadvantages, as companies are far too often assessed on their short-term results. That does not sound sustainable, does it? Having said that, the fact that HORNBACK's management is securely in family hands guarantees a certain independence. It enables us to look beyond individual quarters, focus on what really matters, and think in terms of generations.

What does sustainability mean for HORNBACK?

Albrecht Hornbach: At HORNBACK, we talk about responsibility and a sense of responsibility – not sustainability. After all, the term “sustainability” is everywhere and currently very fashionable. That is why we avoid it. We rather focus on the virtues of a “reputable businessman” – fairness, integrity, sincerity, and reliability. These virtues engender trust in HORNBACK and enable us to create long-term value. That might sound a little old-fashioned, but it is still relevant today. For us, that is the core of sustainability.

» *We rather focus on the virtues of a “reputable businessman”: fairness, integrity, sincerity, and reliability. These virtues engender trust in HORNBACK.* «

Albrecht Hornbach

Susanne Jäger: We are a retail company, so our key focus is on structuring our product range, i.e. the products we offer to our customers. We have set ourselves the standard and target of only selling products that actually convince us. Safety, quality, and usefulness are the top priorities here. It goes without saying that our customers' needs are very important to us. Within the limits set by our convictions, their demand therefore determines our supply.

Of course, there are other important aspects as well, such as the resources we use when building and operating our sites or our logistics. For us, acting with a sense of responsibility is a matter of decency.

Albrecht Hornbach: We are undergoing a process of transformation. The digitalization of our daily lives has also left its mark on the workplace. We have noticed that this process has occasionally led to insecurities among our colleagues. One of our main tasks here is

therefore to make sure we maintain a good working environment for all our employees. After all, we know we need satisfied employees if we are to inspire our customers.

How many employees deal with this topic, or are you – Ms. Jäger and Mr. Hornbach – lone wolves when it comes to this?

Susanne Jäger: We are certainly not lone wolves! There is no way that could work in a company of this size. In strictly organizational terms, this topic is mainly handled by the “Quality Management, Environmental Issues, and CSR” team at the Baumarkt Group. Having said that, we also have another key advantage. Many aspects of what is now known as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) have been in place at HORNBACK for many years. Previously, though, we referred to them as “common sense”. CSR components are anchored throughout our company, with different focuses in different areas, of course. In some cases, the motivation is economic efficiency, which then enables us to save energy as well. That is the ideal case. But there are also topics where social or environmental factors are the driving force – when it comes to structuring our product range, for example. In those cases, we are also prepared to accept temporary economic drawbacks.

What are HORNBACK's most important sustainability targets?

Susanne Jäger: Put simply, I would say to become even better – and that in all our activities. That means more cost-efficient and more resource-effective, while always remaining a reliable partner to our employees, customers, and business partners.

Albrecht Hornbach: The targets we set are qualitative, not quantitative. You can always meet quotas in purely numerical terms. Whether that helps the company is another matter. On the other hand, qualitative targets are often misunderstood, as if they were somehow less challenging. That is certainly not how we see it.

Based on school grades of 1 (best) to 6 (worst) – how well is HORNBACK implementing its targets?

Albrecht Hornbach: I would award us a “2”. I am convinced that many things already work very well at our company, particularly in our focus areas of procurement and employees. But there is always room for improvement, of course. And when we look at different European countries, we also see the differences in what our customers, employees, and business partners expect of us and how they perceive our efforts.

What particular differences do you see in the various European countries?

Albrecht Hornbach: When I look at the countries where HORNBACK operates, I basically see more commonalities than differences. In terms of regional product mixes, however, the rate of home ownership does make a difference. People who own their own properties make different investment decisions from those who are tenants.

Susanne Jäger: Requirements also vary widely between individual countries. In Switzerland, for example, lawmakers and consumer organizations require a particularly high level of transparency when it comes to sustainability. Among other aspects, that involves labeling products and including information about their origins, components and contents. We then have to make sure we at least meet these requirements. That kind of requirement also influences customers' awareness of sustainable product ranges.

Albrecht Hornbach: And the debate surrounding sustainability takes place in all kinds of different ways. That is why it is very important for us to be in dialog with our customers throughout Europe. But our interest does not just stop there. What do our employees think about these things? And what about our suppliers, capital providers, the media, and environmental protection associations? Maintaining an ongoing dialog with all our stakeholders is the only way to check again and again that we are still on the right course.

Where do you see the greatest challenges – or opportunities – for the future?

Albrecht Hornbach: Developments within society in the countries where we operate clearly show the way forward. People's awareness of CSR is rising all the time. Surveys and references abound on so-called LOHAS (Lifestyle of Health and Sustainability). Members of the Y and Z generations are mostly also very sensitive to sustainability issues. For HORNACH, that means we have to make sure we always think one step ahead so as to satisfy consumers' rising standards – and that will be what counts most in future as well.

Susanne Jäger: At present, we are giving a great deal of thought to issues such as waste avoidance. How can we reduce the volume of packaging we use, for example? And then there is recycling and

upcycling. Why not make new products out of old materials and offer these to our customers? That also means making sure that the products and packaging on offer at our stores are easily recycled. It is a complex cycle. Not least, we also have to maintain transparent supply chains in future as well. That will remain a challenging task.

» *Not least, we also have to maintain transparent supply chains in future as well. That will remain a challenging task.* «

Susanne Jäger

Albrecht Hornbach: We are noticing that in our recruitment as well. Applicants often specifically ask about CSR topics. The younger generations want to work for companies whose values they share. And who is better placed to communicate that than our colleagues? They are our source of pride, they inspire our customers, and they earn the money. Our job is to support them in their work – and even outside work – and that too presents a fantastic opportunity for the future. All in line with our motto: "There's always a job to be done".

Thank for your thoughts!

FACT BOX

Albrecht Hornbach has worked at the HORNACH Group for nearly three decades now. A graduate in construction engineering, HORNACH gained experience outside the family company before becoming head of the construction department at HORNACH Baumarkt AG in 1991. In 1998, he became CEO of HORNACH Baumarkt AG, a position he handed over to his brother Steffen in 2001. At the same time, he took over as CEO of HORNACH HOLDING AG (now HORNACH Holding AG & Co. KGaA). Since 2011, he has also been Chairman of the Supervisory Board of HORNACH Baumarkt AG.

When **Susanne Jäger** joined the HORNACH Group in 1984, her task was to introduce the first computer systems. The qualified office management specialist nevertheless quickly showed her instinct for structuring product ranges and in 1987 she became a purchaser for the Paints, Wallpaper, Flooring and Decoration division. She ultimately became Group Procurement Director in 1997. Susanne Jäger has been a member of the Board of Management of HORNACH Baumarkt AG since 2006 and is now responsible for Procurement, Store Development, Quality Management, and Environmental Issues.



IMAGE STORY

BETTER SAFE THAN SORRY

As a retailer, HORNACH is responsible – together with manufacturers – for ensuring that all products it offers comply with statutory safety and health protection requirements. Samples of all products are therefore tested for their safety, for harmful substances, and for their suitability for use, and suppliers are regularly audited. For many products, however, the company's quality standards go beyond statutory requirements. That is especially true of private label products, where HORNACH's reputation is directly at stake. Anne Spies

Overall, HORNBAACH stocks more than 40 private label brands which contribute around a quarter of the company's total sales. One of these is J.C. Schwarz – a premium own brand for power tools targeted at professional tradespeople. To satisfy the expectations of this sophisticated target group, the J.C. Schwarz

tools are put through a particularly tough testing process specially designed for power tools by KIT Campus Transfer GmbH in Karlsruhe and declared as conforming to the relevant requirements by the inspection body VPAZert (Prüf- und Zertifizierungs GmbH).



1. DESIGN ANALYSIS

The first step involves assessing the inner values of the test candidate. To exclude the possibility of any design weaknesses, the tool is completely dismantled. The design is documented with absolute precision in a structural overview. The tester also photographs all the individual components for the before/after comparison.

2. USER TEST

In the user test, the power tools have to prove their abilities and their suitability for practical use. Ten independent users assess subjective factors, such as ergonomics, handling, work results, and vibrations. The results are recorded in a standardized survey and compared with figures for reference appliances.



3. ENDURANCE TEST

In the endurance test, the tools are pushed to their limits. They are required to drill, chisel, or mill their way through reinforced concrete, lime sandstone, and steel plates for 30 hours. Around half the candidates give up after two hours already and leave the contest prematurely. To make the test as realistic as possible, the testers at KIT Campus Transfer GmbH regularly visit building sites to look at how the tools are actually used in practice.



4. ABRASION TEST

Tools that pass the endurance test without malfunctioning are fully dismantled and the abrasion of all their components is investigated. If no critical weaknesses are identified and the test performance is comparable to that of reference appliances, then the tools are recommended by KIT Campus Transfer GmbH. If they comply with all of the VPAZert test criteria, they are awarded the "Tested Application Quality" seal.



P O R T R A I T

GIVING UP IS NOT AN OPTION

Is it fate? Or just bad luck? Either way, if your life is suddenly upended you need support. From family and friends – sometimes from your employer as well. Like Marcel Milloth, who turned almost blind in no time at all. Anna Krall, Ben Krischke

It began without warning during the first theory section of his studies in October 2014. Marcel Milloth, then a member of the dual study program combining university business administration courses with practical training at HORNBAACH, was sitting in the lecture theatre at university while the lecturer wrote on the board. “His writing is unclear”, is the young man’s first reaction. And yet, no-one else seems to notice. No-one clears their throats or rolls their eyes, neither are there any hints that the lecturer should write more clearly. Marcel quickly notices that he seems to be the only one in the room having trouble reading what the lecturer has written. Just a few days later, he can no longer read the text on a sheet of paper held right in front of him. It is suddenly clear. He is gradually losing his sight – and that in no time at all.

» *It might sound strange, but I was almost relieved when the results arrived. I finally knew what was the matter with me.* «

Marcel Milloth

A DIFFICULT TIME

In March 2014, just over six months earlier, Marcel had graduated from Edenkobener Gymnasium, his high school, with flying colors. And that despite several operations he had faced due to an accident. As if that was not enough, his father had died in December 2013. “It took me a good while to come to terms with the death of my father. I had my school leaver’s certificate in my pocket but hadn’t done anything to plan the next steps. I actually thought, that’s it for this year”, says Marcel when looking back in February 2018.

We are sitting on bar stools in the recreation room in Bornheim. Tracking Marcel down was not easy, but in the end he agreed to give an interview for HORNBAACH’s Sustainability Magazine. A slim young man with brown hair and a shy grin. “That was a really difficult time”, he says in a calm and matter-of-fact way. He does not find it hard to tell his story.

IT ALL SEEMED TO BE GOING RIGHT AGAIN

During this difficult time he recalled the careers’ day at school and in particular a HORNBAACH employee who had presented the dual study program. He had a quick rummage and soon found the business card. Not long after that, on September 1, 2014, Marcel began a four-week internship at the Bornheim store and shortly afterwards set out on his dual study program for a Bachelor of Arts in business administration majoring in retail. It all seemed to be going right again – until the day his sight suddenly faded. The first point of contact is the optician, but all he can say is that the eye looks healthy. The second port-of-call is the University Hospital in Mannheim, where he spends three weeks. “They did virtually every test you can think of, from an MRT to exclude a tumor, to taking a sample of spinal fluid – but they couldn’t find anything”, explains Marcel. By then, his sight had deteriorated to two percent. He was practically blind.

A GENETIC DEFECT HARDLY KNOWN TO RESEARCHERS

The quest for answers led the young man to the University Hospital in Tübingen. There too, it was soon clear that none of the tests would produce any results. “They narrowed it down to two final possibilities. Either the problem with my eyes was psychologically motivated or it was a very rare genetic defect”, continues Marcel. The doctors perform a gene test and Marcel and his family wait another ten weeks for the results. “In the meantime, I also visited a psychologist to be on the safe side. But he sent me packing”, he grins. Ten weeks later, there is a diagnosis: Lebers Hereditary Optic Neuropathy, or LHON for short.

LHON is a very rare genetic defect, and one hardly researched to date. The condition mostly begins in one eye with a so-called “acute painless reduction in sight and central scotoma”. In most cases, the second eye is also affected within weeks or months. What is known is that the condition can only be passed on by women, but mostly occurs in men aged between 19 and 35. And not everyone who has the genetic defect is subsequently affected by it. The findings surrounding the risk factors are still not fully clear, but psychological stress – such as that suffered by Marcel upon the loss



of his father – could be one reason. “It might sound strange, but I was actually almost relieved when the results arrived. It was finally clear what was the matter with me”, says Marcel today.

SLOW BUT SURE SUCCESS

Research of their own soon took Marcel and his mother to Munich. The University Hospital there is home to the Friedrich Baur Institute – one of three international scientific centers researching LHON. The first visit made it clear that Marcel was a candidate to take part in a new pharmaceutical study. “The medication only worked on slightly more than half the participants. And even within that group, it had very different effects in terms of how well and how long it worked”, explains Marcel. Now 22, he has taken the medication for three years – and his success is slow but sure. His sight has improved to a pleasing eight percent. “I can see better at the edges of the pupils than in the middle. And colors are no problem, apart from red and blue which are slightly blurred”, he explains.

» *I don't want any special treatment. If I have a problem somewhere, then I say it. My condition has never been a problem with colleagues. Absolutely nowhere.* «

Marcel Milloth

SUPPORT FROM HORNBACH

The condition has become part of Marcel's everyday life and he copes with it better all the time. He could no longer afford to take up his dual study program at HORNBACH, but nevertheless remained at the company. “In Munich, they showed me the option of starting a normal study program and being accompanied by a kind of supervisor or assistant. I didn't want that. I wanted to return to HORNBACH because I was supported here from the very outset”, explains Marcel.

The HORNBACH Foundation “People in Need” provides him with financial assistance and his colleagues at the Bornheim store help out in other ways. At the beginning of his dual study program, for example, Marcel's car broke down so he financed a new one. Then the genetic defect reared its head and the car was no longer any use. What was to be done?

The director of the Bornheim store and a colleague from the garden center came to his aid and were soon in talks with the car dealer. In the end, the dealer was willing to take back the car in return for a small charge.

DECISION TO TRAIN AT HORNBACH

For Marcel to stay on at HORNBACH, which was what he most wanted, a few questions still had to be answered. What options were still open to him? What measures would be needed at his workplace to enable him to work quite normally?

Marcel informed himself about all the training programs on offer at HORNBACH and thought about what he might like. He was in close contact with the HR department, which promised to do “all we can to make it work”. Marcel finally decided to train as an office management specialist. His condition made it necessary to install special equipment at his workplace, as well as special hardware and software which he can use despite his disability. It goes without saying that he had to get used to all of this. “These days, the equipment is part of my life. It's no longer anything special. It basically makes me the same as anyone else”, he reports.

Thanks to his high school graduation, Marcel can shorten his training by a year. Despite his disability, he has been through all of the usual head office departments. “I didn't want any special treatment”, he said. “If I have a problem somewhere, then I say it. But my condition has never been a problem in my dealings with colleagues. Absolutely nowhere.”

RESTRICTIONS REMAIN

Marcel is making great progress and has come to terms with his condition. But there is one thing he cannot get used to. “I can't drive a car. That means I am dependent on others, and that's really not me”, he says. One consequence of this dependency is that he needs nearly an hour and a half for the journey to work by bus and the same for the way home. And that for a distance of less than five miles.

Here too, HORNBACH is helping out. Marcel's working hours are agreed in advance and a regional taxi service collects him from home each morning and returns him in the late afternoon. Not only that, the HR department, disabilities representatives, and works council help him fill out application forms and coordinate the conversion work needed at his workplace. And whenever and wherever else they can.

IT'S MY EYES, NOT MY BRAIN

Marcel is currently working in the Imports department, where – as he says himself – he can put his strengths to very good use. “I like dealing with numbers, working in and with systems, and having contact to other people. This is somewhere I can really develop my professional and personal skills”, he says. Even now, it is clear that this impressive young man will be offered a job when he completes his training. Marcel is thrilled: “I am grateful for the opportunity. After all, it's my eyes that are the problem, not my brain.” ◀



SELF-EXPERIMENT

FAREWELL, BOX-TREE MOTH!

A small green caterpillar has been causing much grief among gardeners for several years now... and has also driven up demand for pest control solutions at DIY stores. At his wits' end, our author also recently headed to the information counter at his local HORNBACH garden center. Florian Preuß

I too was struck in April 2017, and that completely out of the blue. I had been away for a few days and could hardly believe my eyes when I came home. The pretty little box-tree hedge that adorns my front garden and marks the boundary to the street had literally been gobbled up. The damage was clearly visible from quite a way off. I stood in front of the hedge and reached out to touch the leaves and twigs. Just then, everything around me was suddenly in motion. Well over 200 green caterpillars were scuttling around in my fifteen-foot hedge.

UNDER ATTACK FROM INSATIABLE LITTLE GLUTTONS

The box-tree moth is a small East-Asian moth that was introduced to Central Europe just a few years ago. Due to a lack of natural predators, it has been able to spread rapidly through Germany as well. It has already taken control of gardens in the south and west, but so far there have only been individual sightings in the north and east of the country. The moth itself is harmless, but the caterpillars which hatch out of its eggs are insatiable. Having gobbled up all the leaves, they go on to chew away at the bark. If not discovered in time, it is often too late to save the plant. It dies and all the gardener

can do is throw it away. This hungry caterpillar had already left a trail of destruction in my street in the years before. When I bought the house and garden a few years ago, I also inherited a small collection of chemicals in the toolshed. The previous owner had been nice enough to inform me about the caterpillar problem. In conversations held over the garden fence, virtually all of my neighbors had also told me their tales of woe. In spite of all this, all was quiet on the caterpillar front in 2016. No problem in my garden. As if to make up lost ground, the attack the year after was all the more ferocious. I immediately thought of the remedy recommended by the previous owner, went to the toolshed and read the handwritten label on the spray flask.

“NOT HARMFUL TO BEES” – NO WAY!

“Calypso” was what stood on the label. Sounds like a dance-till-dawn beach party with Caribbean music, I thought. A brief internet search nevertheless soon revealed that this product was a chemical pesticide with a slightly tarnished reputation. Environmental associations such as BUND had repeatedly pointed out that the product contained thiacloprid. This is part of the group of neonicotinoids which are said to be harmful to various insects – and especially to bees.



In March 2015, Düsseldorf District Court had ruled that BUND could continue claiming that two products manufactured by Bayer (one of which “Calypso”) were harmful to bees and that the “not harmful to bees” logo printed on the bottle was misleading to consumers. At the end of the year, Bayer ultimately announced that it was discontinuing Calypso production.

Having read all this, it was clear to me that I would have to find an alternative. I had already burnt my fingers once when it came to poison in gardens, so I was going to be more careful this time round. This is what happened. At my old school, all school leavers had long been encouraged to select a tree. Back then, I chose a traditional field maple, which I was allowed to plant in my parents’ large garden. Even though the tree received tender love and care, just six months later it showed the first signs of having lost the will to live. Most of its leaves fell off and the tree was visibly wasting away. One of the lateral shoots died off completely and it was then – thankfully – that my mother recalled an event from long ago. “That’s exactly the spot where grandmother sprayed poison to deal with persistent weeds ten years ago. Nothing has ever grown well there.” I immediately dug up the tree and replanted it at a new site. That decision was spot on. Today, the maple tree is more than thirty feet tall and has a splendid crown.

NEAR-NATURAL GARDENING IS IN FASHION

More than twenty years have passed since that brief episode. Over the years, attitudes among many consumers have changed. These days, they look more closely to see what agents their plant protec-

tion agents actually contain. Before purchasing products, they inform themselves online about the agents included and their potential side-effects, scrutinize the information printed on the packaging at the store, and also confront sales staff with critical questions. “The more the merrier” – that old saying is taking a back seat, and hardcore, broad-spectrum sprays are ever more rarely to be found in consumers’ shopping trolleys.

REALIGNMENT OF PLANT PROTECTION PRODUCTS

HORN BACH has monitored these developments very closely and proactively accompanied the debate surrounding glyphosate and bee protection. Together with suppliers, HORN BACH’s procurement department acted in 2015 to realign its plant protection product range. It then implemented the new approach the following spring. “HORN BACH gardens close to nature” – this was the key message when the company delisted all plant protection products containing the herbicide glyphosate or insecticides classified as harmful to bees or as part of the neonicotinoid group of products. Alternative pest controls were included in the product range. Customers wishing to find out how to use them can seek advice from competent specialist sales staff at the store.

Six weeks after the launch of this new approach, my moth problem takes me to my HORN BACH store. I want to find out more about alternatives to “Calypso”. “Many customers miss that product”, the colleague at the service counter in the garden department confides in me. She had repeatedly had to console agitated customers who,



faced with the devastation of their priceless box-tree topiaries, were desperate for powerful solutions to deal with the problem as quickly as possible. For these customers, she recommended “Lizetan”, Bayer’s successor product for “Calypso”. The new product is based on the chemical agent azadirachtin, which is classified as “not harmful to bees”. Having said that, gardeners who use the product on vegetable or fruit plants should nevertheless wait several days before consuming the vegetable and fruit.

I ask the colleague to show me alternatives. These include moth traps, which catch the moths and prevent them from laying eggs. It is too late for that in my case, as the caterpillars are very much on the move already. In the end, I go for “Raupenfrei XenTari” offered by Neudorf. That is a biological spray powder which protects beneficial organisms and is also permitted for use in organic farming. That all sounds gentle and harmless enough. According to the colleague, however, the product should nevertheless be handled with care due to potential allergies and eye irritations. That means wearing gloves, protective glasses, and a breathing mask when applying the product.

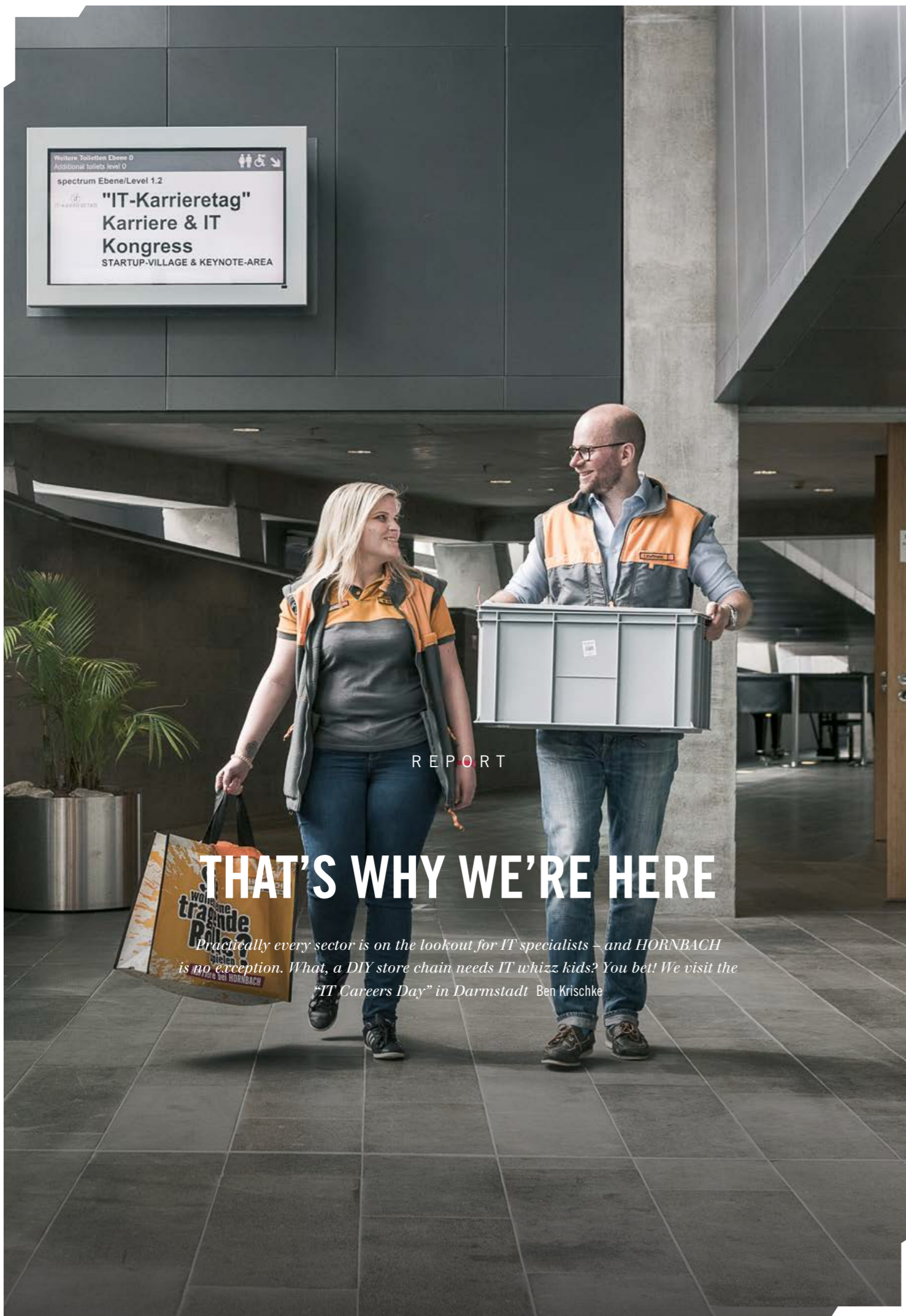
SMELLS BAD BUT DOES ITS JOB

A couple of hours later, my ecological approach to plant protection looks more like a dangerous chemical experiment. The young family that recently moved in across the way looks on skeptically, and they are not the only ones. With their gentle wafts of something half-way between compost and cow dung, the sprays might also not be the favorites of those with sensitive noses. None of that matters to

Our author seeks advice at the HORN BACH store (left), describes the damage to his hedge (center) and receives tips about how to use the pesticides (right). Protective gear is a must when spraying (previous page).

me, not least because the effects are overwhelming. Just two days later, my hedge is actually free of caterpillars. The little beasts turn black, shrivel up and fall to the ground. Even better, just a few weeks later – after another round of spraying and a gentle trim to bring the hedge back into shape – the box trees are clearly on the road to recovery. Visibly damaged areas are now home to fresh green shoots.

Motivated by last year’s success, I want to be on the safe side this year. As soon as temperatures rise above 7 degrees in early April and the first moths’ nest appear in the hedge, I immediately grab the spray flask. Two weeks’ later, I repeat the process. And just look! Not a single caterpillar to be seen crawling round my hedge. Quite the reverse, this year the only green things are fresh new shoots. “Be sure to keep at it”, recommends the HORN BACH merchant responsible for plant protection when I enthusiastically relate my success story. “You will probably still need a third and fourth round of spraying this year”. That takes me around 30 minutes and costs just over ten euros for the spray. That is certainly a price worth paying given the results, I think to myself cheerily. But my neighbor Peter is up the wall. The caterpillar has just gobbled up four large box-tree balls in his garden. “In this neighborhood, we normally warn each other about the beast”, he grumbles. I do not feel guilty in the slightest. After all, given my mask, glasses, and gloves, he can hardly have missed me on my plant protection mission. ◀



REPORT

THAT'S WHY WE'RE HERE

Practically every sector is on the lookout for IT specialists – and HORNBACH is no exception. What, a DIY store chain needs IT whizz kids? You bet! We visit the “IT Careers Day” in Darmstadt. Ben Krischke

The ceiling of the conference hall is more than thirty feet high, full of ornate wood patterns, and bathed in spotlights. It all seems more like a concert hall. Illuminated from above, numerous fair booths snuggle side by side. Like miniature theatres ready to stage their shows from 10 to 5, all equipped with individual stages designs and supported by information packages and give-ways of every conceivable kind, from pencils to popcorn.

At booth R5, three HORNBACH employees are making the final adjustments. Just half an hour ago, Ingo Kleffmann and his colleagues Ramona Hoffer and Christoffer Köhler were stuck in traffic. Behind them, an eight by nine foot and unmistakably orange partition is nevertheless already in place, flaunting the motto “Make your breakthrough with HORNBACH”. In the foreground, a few skilled moves turn a large black transport case into the counter. “In the early days, that was tricky with the various components of the booth. We were always getting it wrong”, says Ingo Kleffmann and laughs. It is 10 o’ clock and the IT Careers Day in the Darmstadtium – the congress center at the Technical University in Darmstadt – gets going.

WANTED: PRETTY MUCH EVERYTHING WHEN IT COMES TO IT

Anyone wandering through the congress hall this April morning will pass booths advertising companies from virtually all corners of the economy – financial institutions to automotive players to energy suppliers, everything from small start-ups to the German Federal Criminal Police. And HORNBACH right in the thick of things.

Shortly after the doors officially open, Ingo Kleffmann, Head Office Recruitment Manager at HORNBACH, is already holding his first meeting at booth R5. A computer science student – black leather coat, light blue contact lenses – has a question which Kleffmann has answered many times before: “What is a DIY store doing at an IT recruitment fair?” he wants to know. “When it comes to IT, we’re looking for pretty much everything”, Kleffmann answers.

Four sheets advertising jobs are on display on the counter: “SAP Developer ABAP 00”, “IT In-house Consultant – Digital Media”, “Frontend Developer React”, and “IT In-house Consultant – Master Data Management”. A glance at Kleffmann’s tablet shows that 36 IT jobs, including internships and dual study programs, are currently on offer at HORNBACH. The student thanks Kleffmann for the information with a handshake. And Kleffmann thanks him for his interest with a give-away: a hammer that is somehow actually a pencil and an eraser.

LIVING THE SME DREAM

A few dozen conversations later, Kleffmann is sitting in the spring sunshine in front of the Darmstadtium. The baroque façade of Darmstadt’s residential palace is reflected in the glass front of the congress center. “It’s always quiet at the booths at lunchtime. The afternoons are also generally quieter than the mornings”, says Kleffmann. The IT Recruitment team goes to ten to 15 careers fairs a year. The team discusses the dates and then allocates them to its members. For Kleffmann, an IT recruitment fair held on site at a technical university is basically the dream deal. “At HORNBACH, we have so many areas where we need IT. We have a large online



Left: At the IT recruitment fair in Darmstadt, the HORNBACH team is on the lookout for potential employees. Center: Assembling the HORNBACH booth. Right: Giveaways, like the hammer that is actually a pencil and eraser, are essential at jobs fairs.



store. And we have more than 150 stores across Europe, all of which need supplying with technology, from logistics through to checkout systems", he explains. And all that needs suitable personnel.

HORNBACK's hands-on mentality and punchy commercials means it scores highly with applicants. The location in Bornheim, where HORNBACK has its headquarters, is a more difficult matter, Kleffmann admits. "For people who live or grew up in the Palatinate, or who studied somewhere else and want to return to their home region, the location is an absolute plus. But there are also those who were born in Frankfurt and studied in Munich. They ask themselves of course why they should come to the Palatinate rather than anywhere else."

The strongest argument, according to Kleffmann, is this: "If you work for us, then you have all the advantages of a large listed company with more than 19,000 employees and numerous locations across Europe – but the work climate certainly does not feel like a large group. Based on my own experience, I can say that HORNBACK has flat hierarchies and an uncomplicated approach to decision making. My experience at other employers was very different."

PALATINATE SLANG AND HORNBACK VESTS

Lunchtime is over and the number of visitors at booth R5 has visibly picked up again, even though, as Kleffmann predicted, it is not quite as busy as in the morning. While a small white goggle-eyed robot doing its rounds at the booth opposite, Kleffmann's IT colleagues Ramona Hoffer and Christoffer Köhler are already absorbed in new conversations.

Hoffer is the team leader for Training and Next-Generation Promotion. Köhler is the recently appointed team leader for SAP Development, focusing on logistics. With their Palatinate dialect and HORNBACK vests, Hoffer and Köhler offer a refreshing contrast to all the suits at other booths. That

Left, top down: Ingo Kleffmann, Head Office Recruitment Manager, Ramona Hoffer, Head of Training and Next-Generation Promotion, and Christoffer Köhler, Head of SAP Development for Logistics **Right:** Practically all sectors are at the IT fair. From finance to automotive, from small start-ups to the German Federal Criminal Police

all goes down well with the IT goths with their light blue contact lenses, the techie nerds in hoodies, and female IT aficionados, often from the Far East. It also appeals to Lukas.

This lanky 21-year-old comes from the Lower Rhine region and is studying psychology and IT. "My school grades weren't quite good enough to do just psychology, so that's how I got started. But then I noticed that IT interested me more than I thought", he explained. He is fascinated by the interaction between psychology and IT: "There are ever more connections between people and computers. And that's where the psychology comes in as well".

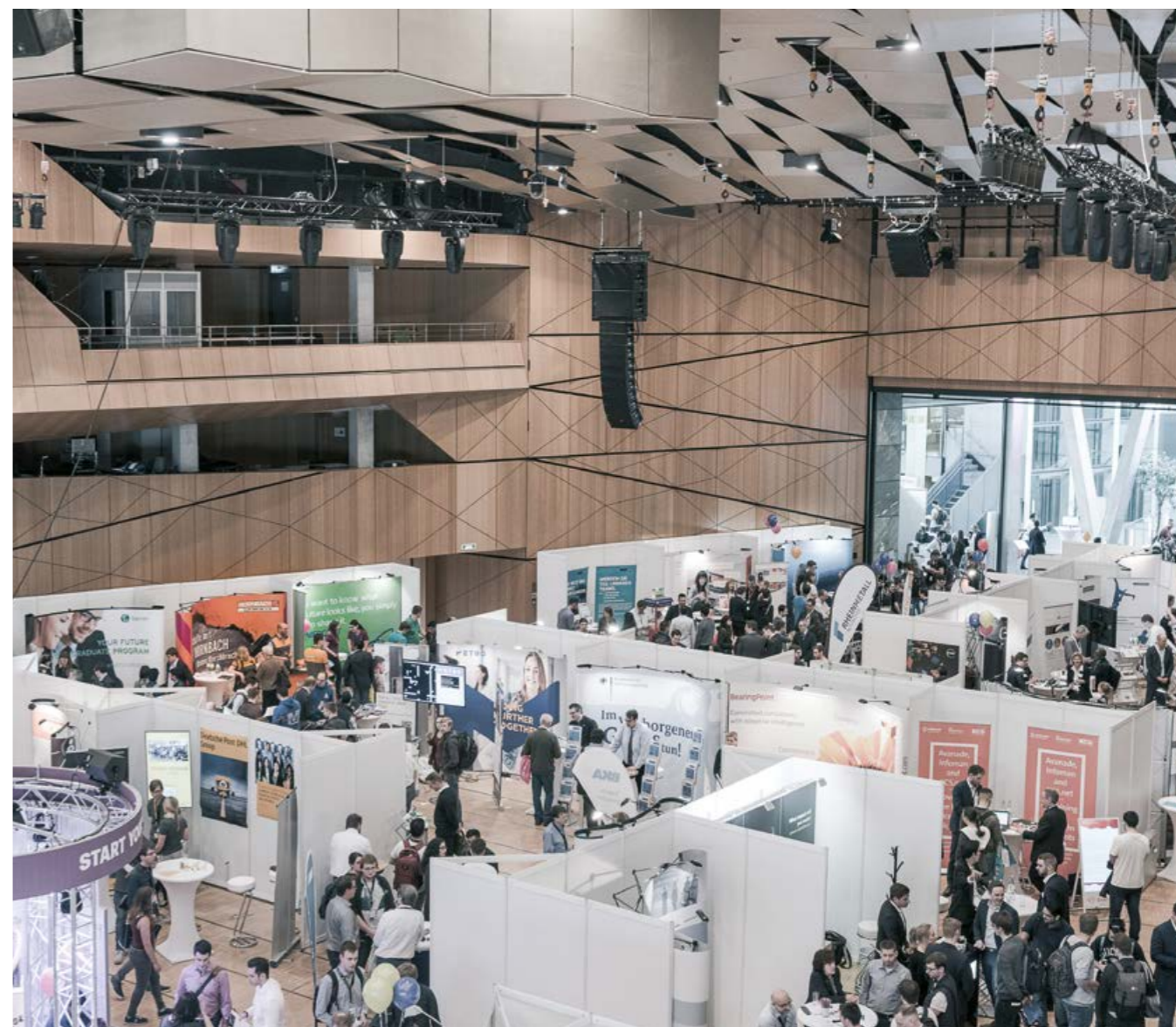
Asked if he can explain his study program based on practical examples, Lukas responds in no time: "If you use a smartphone, then you want to understand what the individual keys do or how to download something. I look at what users do with their smartphones, what they look at first, for example, and then try to design a smartphone to make it as intuitive as possible. But there's also a lot of psychology in artificial intelligence, for example when it comes to creating human-like awareness in robots", he adds. Lukas is currently in his 4th semester and on the lookout for an IT internship.

Maybe at HORNBACK? "That would certainly be an option", he says. While Lukas is already a few booths further, Hoffer and Köhler are still discussing what opportunities might be available for Lukas at HORNBACK. "Maybe something in IT security", says Hoffer. Köhler nods.

RAISING AWARENESS

Shortly before 5 o' clock, just before the doors close for the day, the remaining visitors can be counted on two hands. The recruitment trio has been banging the HORNBACK drum for seven hours now and Kleffmann seems satisfied: "What counts for us is for HORNBACK to be noticed as an IT employer in the first place", he says. That was currently the main mission.

By the time all the spotlights on the ceiling are extinguished, the booth has long been packed into the counter, and the counter has turned back into a transport case. And HORNBACK is now a potential employer for several IT students. ◀



- DIY stores with garden centers
- Administration centers
- Logistics centers

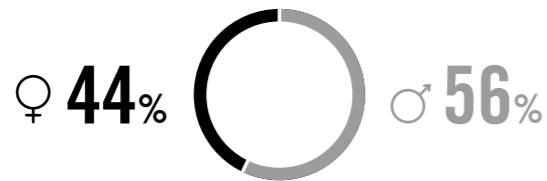
THE HORNBACH MAP

HORNBACH has been serving DIY fans, homebuilders, and the professionals for 50 years now. And that in nine countries across Europe.

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES 2017/18

BAUMARKT GROUP TOTAL

18,721



GERMANY

10,520

OTHER EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

8,183

NET SALES 2017/18 in Euro billion

TOTAL

3.891

GERMANY

2.071

OTHER EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

1.820

NETHERLANDS

13 1

LUXEMBOURG

1

SWITZERLAND

6 1

AUSTRIA

14 1 1

SWEDEN

5 1

HONG KONG

1

GERMANY

98 2 7

CZECH REPUBLIC

10 1

ROMANIA

6 1

SLOVAKIA

3 1



REPORT

DIY STORE TURNS SCHOOLMASTER

Qualified retail staff are in short supply in Romania. To tackle the problem, HORNBACK joined forces with other German retailers to call for the reintroduction of dual training programs. Since September 2017, the companies have offered a joint training program. HORNBACK began the new training year with 27 dual program trainees at five stores.

Anne Spies

Imagine you have one week and an unlimited budget. What would you do?" Training supervisor Andreea Feierstein looks expectantly at the six trainees at the HORNBACK store in Sibiu/Romania. Working in pairs, they now have ten minutes to jot down their ideas on a flipchart. The trainees have no shortage of ideas. They want to visit Hawaii, Dubai, and Paris. They also want private jets, cars, or yachts – the things all ninth-graders basically dream of. This exercise is fun, but Andreea Feierstein has a specific objective in mind. The trainees should learn how to work together and present results to the group. That takes some courage for most of them, as they are more used to traditional teaching where the teacher does all the talking. "HORNBACK's training is first and foremost about promoting social and team skills to prepare the young people as well as possible for their job. It not just about filling shelves and learning about products", Feierstein explains.

In the first year of training, the young people still spend around 80 percent of their time at the college and 20 percent at the store. By year three, that ratio has reversed. Upon completion of their training, the trainees receive two certificates – a Romanian vocational training certificate and a German certificate issued by the German-Romanian Chamber of Industry and Commerce (AHK Romania).

» *HORNBACK's training is first and foremost about promoting social and team skills to prepare the young people as well as possible for their job. It not just about filling shelves and learning about products.* «

Andreea Feierstein

AN ALTERNATIVE TO UNIVERSITY

For the Romanian trainees, this week marks the beginning of the second semester and the first of five practical weeks at the stores. They proudly sport their work clothes for the first time. Kitted out in bright orange polo shirts and with tool bags strapped to their belts, Anamaria, Cătălin, Cristian, Cristina, Isabela, and Mesut are finally part of the HORNBACK team in optical terms as well. They all come from the Sibiu area and commute up to 40 minutes every morning by bus to reach the store or the vocational training college in the city center. All in all, trainees spend six semesters at HORNBACK.

In parallel to this, they attend a state-run vocational training college. Here, they form a class together with trainees from the other German partner companies. Alongside the usual subjects, the training plan also includes retail-specific contents, such as accounting and merchandise quality. If desired by the company where they are being trained, the trainees can also opt for German rather than the usual alternative of French.

This body is supporting companies in implementing the program and checking the quality of training on location. The Romanian state subsidizes the dual training program with a monthly bursary of 200 Ron, while HORNBACK pays the same on top. Not only that, HORNBACK also covers the trainees' travel expenses to the store during their practical weeks, as well as giving them a warm lunch on practical training days.

You would think this all adds up to an attractive option for the trainees, who are mostly aged 15 to 17. Having said that, finding applicants for the training program is no easy matter. Most young people in Romania still opt to study at university as they hope this will offer access to better paid positions in the longer term. It took a great deal of persuasion to convince pupils and their parents of the benefits of a training program at a DIY store. HORNBACK's team visited five training fairs and 104 schools together with other partner companies. And then there were the radio commercials, leaflets, and



Previous page: Isabela and Cristina proudly sport their new work gear
Above: Training mentor Alexandru Ivan explains processes at the store

FACT BOX

TRAINING AT HORN BACH

Each year, HORN BACH recruits around 400 trainees and dual program students across Europe for its DIY stores with garden centers, administration centers, and logistics centers. Of these, around 70% are trained as retail specialists or sales staff. To meet the needs of its growing online retail business, HORN BACH also requires increasing numbers of IT, logistics, and e-commerce specialists. It will therefore be offering a new “e-commerce specialist” training program for the first time in 2018. As a general rule, the company trains sufficient numbers of trainees to meet its own needs. Outside Germany, HORN BACH offers dual training programs in Austria, Switzerland, Luxembourg, and Romania.

posters. But the greatest problem was the fact that dual training is new to Romania. The country only reintroduced vocational training colleges in 2012. New legislation underpinning the dual training system has been in place since 2017, and this was due not least to pressure from companies desperately looking for suitably qualified specialists. “Very many companies are competing for suitable personnel, particularly in major economic centers like Sibiu”, comments Sebastian Metz, Managing Director of AHK Romania, which has been campaigning for a dual training system based on the German model for years now. Metz is convinced of the benefits: By investing in dual vocational training, companies gain access to a pool of employees who are superbly qualified in technical terms and capable of deployment at the company right from day one. Not only that, by offering training companies can also forge emotional ties to their trainees and retain them as employees on a long-term basis.

SUCCESSFUL PILOT PROJECT

How that can work is shown by a pilot project HORN BACH implemented together with the German-Romanian Foundation in Timișoara between 2009 and 2012. This initiative, which was co-financed by



Teamwork instead of up-front tuition: Practical workshops round off the training on the sales floor

the European Union, aimed to provide long-term unemployed people with a dual training program in the retail sector. Back then, there was still no legal basis for dual training in Romania. The contents of the program were therefore mapped one-to-one from Germany and translated into Romanian. One of the graduates of this program is Alexander Ivan, assistant store manager at HORN BACH in Sibiu. He has been a convinced HORN BACH employee for eight years now. To take part in the training program, he left his home city of Timișoara for three years. He then returned as assistant section manager in the garden department before taking on the assistant store manager role in Sibiu. As a training mentor, he is himself now the most important point of contact for new trainees. Not only that, he is responsible for all training relating to products, services, and processes at the stores. Overall, HORN BACH offered positions to 41 of the 61 individuals who completed the training program. Of these, 16 still work at HORN BACH, three of which as assistant store managers. “Given the extremely high rates of staff turnover faced by the Romanian retail sector, these figures are really good”, comments Gerhard Stolz, training manager at HORN BACH’s headquarters in Bornheim.

Andreea Feierstein is convinced that this vocational training also helps boost young peoples’ sense of identification with the employer. “Our trainees are here for three years and see every day what

FACT BOX

HORN BACH IN ROMANIA

Market entry in July 2007

6 locations with sales areas of 86,400 m²:
Bucharest-Berceni, Bucharest-Militari, Brașov,
Bucharest-Balotești, Timișoara, Sibiu

782 employees (February 28, 2018),
of which 27 dual program trainees

Online store with more than 30,000 articles
(since January 2018)



Top: Cristina, Isabela and Mesut in action at the store **Center:** Cătălin and Cristina hold a brainstorming session **Bottom:** The trainees are now part of the HORN BACH team in optical terms as well – and kitted out with the most important tool

the company can offer them and what opportunities the training can provide them with.” HORN BACH was certainly not the first choice for most trainees. Unlike other program partners, such as grocery chains with hundreds of stores in Romania, the HORN BACH brand is less familiar to Romanian school pupils. The company makes extra efforts to compensate for this. “With our training mentors and additional workshops at the stores, we offer optimal support to our trainees and convey expertise and skills that really benefit their day-to-day work at the store”, adds Feierstein.

THERE IS ALWAYS A JOB TO BE DONE

After their first months, the trainees seem very happy. “The colleagues are nice and highly motivated, and everyone helps each other”, they all agree. “There is always something to do and I enjoy the contact to customers”, adds Cristina. “You can learn a lot and it’s a secure job”, says Cătălin.

For him, it was clear from the start that he wanted to work in the construction materials department. “My father is a tradesman and I was often at his side when he installed doors and windows, so I already know my way round the products.” The other trainees first looked at all the product divisions and then opted for hardware and electrical goods and for paint, wallpaper, and flooring. They had never been shopping at HORN BACH before, but are now very familiar with their divisions. When a customer asks for LED lights, Christian and Mesut immediately find the right shelf and help the customer select the right product.

The stores in Romania can expect their next round of hands-on assistance in September 2018 already. That is when the new training year begins with a fresh intake of 30 new trainees and – who knows – future employees. ◀





PORTRAIT SERIES

ROADS TO SUCCESS

Nearly 20,000 employees currently work at the HORNBAACH Group. Of these, many have been with us for years already and have continually developed their skills and taken on new roles and responsibilities. The company is very interested in filling key specialist and management positions with highly motivated internal candidates. A whole range of promotional, training, and qualification programs is in place to facilitate this process. Having said that, a favorable situation, great dedication, and a good dose of courage certainly do not harm... Anne Spies, Florian Preuß

ALWAYS READY FOR NEW CHALLENGES

Ralf Behnsen has to make a tough choice before his HORNBAACH career even begins. When Behnsen, a qualified carpenter and retail specialist, applies to the new HORNBAACH store in Altwarmbüchen near Hanover in 1992, he is interested in the post of product division manager. But that job is already taken. “You either sign on as a sales assistant or we can’t help you” – that is the blunt, but honest recommendation he receives at the end of the job interview.

Behnsen has faith in his abilities and signs on. His performance soon convinces his managers and he becomes product division manager just a few months later. The management role suits him well, so in 1995 he takes on responsibility for familiarizing new employees with their roles at the locations in Münster, Herne, and Wuppertal, where he is ultimately promoted to assistant store manager.

In the first three years of the new millennium, Ralf Behnsen participates in a four-part “Leadership” program offered by HORNBAACH. He is warming up for the desired job of store manager. Specific preparations for this role begin in 2003 and by 2004 he is manager of the Hanover store. He stays only 13 months and subsequently manages the stores in Jena, Altwarmbüchen, and Hamburg. “I love challenges and find it easy to tackle new roles in new places”, explains Behnsen. To outsiders who know no better, this stage of his career might appear slightly restless. Within the company, however, managers appreciate his competence as a manager and problem solver, qualities he demonstrated also at several management seminars held in 2009 and 2010.

Two-and-a-half years later, the company is on the lookout for a new Regional Director for Austria. Behnsen can immediately visualize the excitement and challenges involved in the role – and indicates his interest. His managers press the point home: Can he

really imagine moving abroad for this position? Behnsen is certain: “I can do Austria!” In the job selection process, he ultimately wins out over five other applicants. He has now held the role for six years without interruption. Anyone familiar with his previous career might well be surprised at this consistency. For Behnsen, however, the explanation is obvious: “This job offers me an endless source of new challenges at a wide variety of locations. I’m out and about a lot and I just love Austria!”

Ralf Behnsen, 49,
Regional Director in Austria

GROWN WITH HORNBAACH

Thinking back 35 years, when Andrea Dreßendörfer begins her training as an office manager at the head office in Bornheim, HORNBAACH is still a small regional retailer with five DIY stores and garden centers in South-Western Germany. Her training complete, she starts out in the incoming invoice and invoice verification department. As the company expands into Northern and Eastern Germany, and later to other European countries as well, the volume of supplier invoices also grows continuously. A separate department for invoice verification is established and Dreßendörfer is appointed its manager in 2002. The same year, HORNBAACH opens its 100th store in Prague in the Czech Republic.



"I grew along with HORNBAACH and was at the right place at the right time", says Dreßendörfer. The new HORNBAACH countries brought numerous different legal requirements. They also brought new employees in administration centers in other countries, for whose work Dreßendörfer and her department are also responsible. Since 2010, the rollout of the online store has led to a further flood of smaller-scale supplier invoices. Fortunately, most aspects of invoice verification as well as now are handled electronically. "It is important to make sure you are always up-to-date and actively find your way round new topics", explains Dreßendörfer. "HORNBAACH gives its employees the scope they need to do that". Exchanging information and ideas with different divisions and departments, such as logistics, stores, merchandising, and technology, has also been a permanent source of fresh momentum.

Even after 35 years, she is not yet bored with HORNBAACH. "The company is changing continually, but never forgets to take its employees along with it."

Andrea Dreßendörfer, 51,
Director of Invoice Verification Department



METHODICAL CHANGE

Lean processes are Senad Sahinovic's passion. Back in 2001, HORNBAACH takes him on as a "REFA engineer" (Association of Work Design, Industrial Organization and Company Development) in its HR management department. The qualified car mechanic who previously spent several years optimizing production processes at manufacturing companies is now tasked with making HORNBAACH's stores more efficient. Sahinovic casts off his suit and dons the HORNBAACH outfit to scrutinize all the processes and activities performed by store employees. He conducts various REFA studies, questions employees and customers, and compiles methods and data to be used in HR deployment planning and process optimization. "At the time, 'lean management' had not yet really found its way into the retail sector. Nobody had given it much thought. Once you have understood what it is about, though, the methods can be applied at any company", explains Sahinovic. This fitness program for the company's stores is named 'HornbachPlus'. Continuous improvement becomes an ongoing task. As team leader, Sahinovic takes care of the organizational structure for HornbachPlus and organizes implementation workshops at stores and head office.

In 2011, the logistics department also begins to be interested in lean management. The department has set itself the target of saving transport costs of one million euros and brings Sahinovic on board as the project manager. The team is so successful that two years later Sahinovic is entrusted with developing the new import warehouse in his new role as Director of Soltau Logistics Center. "I had four employees and six months to get it done. It was also the first time I had to deal with containers from Asia – but we managed", reports a clearly proud Sahinovic. Today, Sahinovic has returned to the Palatinate region as Director of Essingen Logistics Center. In March, he additionally took on the management of Lorsch Logistics Center.

He makes sure all his employees regularly take part in lean management training, also trains his employees himself, and is still promoting the process of continuous improvement. "We have to adapt to new circumstances all the time and permanently question and optimize our processes. Anyone familiar with the right methods and 'lean tools' finds it easier to handle change."

Senad Sahinovic, 58,
Director of Essingen and Lorsch Logistics Centers

TAKEN SERIOUSLY RIGHT FROM THE START

"Just a few weeks into my training, I knew I definitely wanted to be offered a full-time post at HORNBAACH", says Stefan Vogel when thinking back to 1997. At the time, Vogel was 17 years old, interested in retail, and already knew his way round the HORNBAACH store in Bornheim having accompanied his father there on innumerable shopping trips. And it was in Bornheim that he began his training as a wholesale and international trade specialist at the central procurement department. He felt taken seriously right from the start and was allowed to accompany the merchant and sit in on talks with suppliers from the first year of his training already. "I was fascinated by their job and the scope they had to structure deals and influence the product range. I was also attracted by the close contact they had to stores and sales operations."

Having completed his vocational training, Stefan Vogel began training as a "Qualified Retail Specialist", a program facilitated by HORNBAACH in cooperation with the Chamber of Industry and Commerce. Numerous managers at the company took part in this program in their younger years. Vogel enjoys learning. While working as an assistant in the procurement department and then as assistant merchant, he continues to draw on training opportunities, for example to optimize his negotiation skills. In 2004, a merchant position becomes vacant at HORNBAACH. The only snag: It is not in Germany.

Stefan Vogel accepts the challenge. He leaves his home region for the first time to take up his "dream job". Just a few months later, he is amazed to realize that he really enjoys life in Switzerland. Today, he is Regional Procurement Director for this important region and



manages a team of 36 employees. Leaving the detail work behind was not easy, but he appreciates sharing high-level ideas with colleagues at headquarters and in the regions, working on the strategy for the overall product range, and for the company's price leadership. "Flat hierarchies, uncomplicated decision-making processes, and the fantastic feeling of being part of a team at HORNBAACH" – these factors all still mean a great deal to him. And he is making every effort to promote the next generation of talent. "It's important to fill any positions that become vacant with top performers from within the company", he says. Maybe he is also thinking about his own career to date.

Stefan Vogel, 38,
Regional Procurement Director, Switzerland



BEHIND THE SCENES

APPEALING TO THE GUT FEELING

In its efforts to avoid corruption and bribery, HORNBAACH relies on its own “HORNBAACH Foundation” – and its employees’ sense of right and wrong. But we also know that the world is not only black and white... Recorded by Ben Krischke

I have been responsible for compliance at HORNBAACH for five years now. The first thing I did back then was have a good look at what was already in place and find areas where we still had room for improvement. One important aspect for us was to find an approach that fits the “HORNBAACH mentality”, i.e. one that actively involves employees rather than creating authoritarian structures. If I may sum up our approach in seven points...

1. OUR APPROACH

What actually is compliance and what does anticorruption involve? To be honest, “anticorruption” is not a word I can really identify with. It suggests we are all potentially corrupt and so we urgently need measures to stop us going completely off the rails. The way we see things, the exact opposite is the case. We ask how we can help employees to avoid getting into awkward situations. We are convinced that our colleagues act responsibly – both for themselves and for HORNBAACH.

To promote this sense of responsibility, we have formulated a few practical principles in our “Code of Conduct for Accepting and Granting Gratuities”. What we really did not want was to adapt a set of rules from elsewhere, stick a HORNBAACH logo on them, and then say. “Those are the rules – be sure to obey them!”

2. OUR PRINCIPLES

The world is black and white, but also has many shades of grey. That is why we need practical principles to guide each and every one of us. At HORNBAACH, we base all our compliance activities on the “HORNBAACH Foundation”. Here, “Honesty and a team spirit are the foundations of our community” is the most important principle.

Photo: Arne Schaum is Head of Group Internal Audit and also Chief Compliance Officer at HORNBAACH Baumarkt AG

On this basis, we developed the “HORNBAACH Values” and the codes of conduct that serve as guidelines and give us a sense of orientation. This is what the HORNBAACH Values have to say about “Acting with integrity”: “HORNBAACH’s business decisions are not influenced by private interests or personal advantage. We do not tolerate corruption. Furthermore, we expect conflicts of interest, even the mere impression of such, to be avoided. Conflicts of interest may already arise when business relationships are maintained with another company in which a financial interest is held or at which a relative or friend directly or indirectly holds a material interest.”

We supplement these fundamental principles with more specific measures, such as: “For us, this means that business relationships are initiated or maintained solely on the basis of objective criteria, such as “quality”, “price” (costs), or “supply quality”. Or our appeal to all managers: “For us, this means that we demonstrate with our own conduct that we neither tolerate nor support corruption”.

3. BOOSTING EMPLOYEES’ SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY

The boundaries between what count as permissible gratuities, and what not, are sometimes blurred. That means colleagues are often uncertain as to whether they can accept an invitation, for example. To address this issue, the principles set out in the codes of conduct clearly show what HORNBAACH expects of its employees and managers.

We have two main goals here. Firstly, we want to ensure that a clearly formulated framework is in place throughout the Group, one that offers the same guidance to all employees. Secondly, we would like our colleagues, if uncertain, to be able to approach their managers and ask for advice whether – sticking to the same example – they can accept the invitation. This second goal is particularly important to us. After all, corruption takes place behind the scenes. If all employees can talk openly about invitations or offers of gifts, then we have already dealt with the greatest risk.

4. THE TEN EURO QUESTION

Our principles offer a very clear definition, namely that employees may only accept gifts intended as a gesture of politeness up to a “guideline value” of Euro 10. At the same time, we also appeal to the “gut feeling” of our colleagues and try to help them by suggesting a few specific questions for them to answer themselves. Could I give my manager a plausible explanation? Is my conduct in line with the HORNBAACH Values? What would the reaction of people close to me be if I told them about this? What would the public think if the matter became known?

5. WHEN WE GET SUSPICIOUS

It goes without saying that we investigate each case very thoroughly and talk to those involved. If the suspicions prove correct, then we are quite rigorous. As well as disciplining employees under labor law,

we generally also take criminal action. HORNBAACH takes a clear stand here and communicates this both within the company and in its dealings with the outside world.

6. THE BASICS

A few basic measures already go a long way toward enabling us to avoid corruption. I am a great fan of segregating functions clearly and making sure at least two pairs of hands are involved. Let me give you an example: If just one employee is responsible for all steps of a process – from initiating the business relationship, awarding the contract, ordering the goods, posting receipt of the goods, and approving the invoice for payment – then I get nervous. That set of circumstances clearly has the potential to cause problems

7. HOW CAN WE TELL WHETHER OUR EFFORTS HAVE MADE ANY DIFFERENCE?

By feeling the transparency. Noticing that the topic is talked about at our DIY stores and garden centers and in our offices. Any by looking to see whether colleagues can simply go to their bosses and ask whether to accept this or that invitation when they are unsure. Employees regularly receive invitations to attend fairs or seminars from suppliers and service providers. We then consult the codes of conduct and look at the agenda for the event to gain an impression whether the focus is on the specialist topics. If so, there is really no reason not to accept.

FACT BOX

„CHRISTMAS DONATIONS“

HORNBAACH has its own longstanding Christmas tradition. Each year, the company asks its suppliers to forgo sending presents and rather donate to the company’s own “People in Need” foundation. It always begins with a letter sent to all suppliers in November. The donations we receive are then recorded by a team that also issues receipts and sends out thank-you letters.

“We are delighted by every euro we can use for a good cause. What is amazing is that we even receive donations from suppliers based in the Far East”, comments Petra Spilker, who has been planning, managing, and implementing the project with colleagues for more than 10 years now. With its own Foundation, HORNBAACH supports people who through no fault of their own find themselves in situations of need. The basic idea – donations not presents – enables us to raise a five-figure sum every year. That can then be put to use immediately.

FEATURE

AAAAAAND ACTION!

The advance in digitization has not lowered customers' expectations in terms of advice – quite the reverse. More than anything, what customers call for is expertise and guidance with their various projects in their homes and gardens. HORNBAACH is dedicated to providing ongoing training to its specialist staff. Among other instruments, it relies here on compact training units. Florian Preuß

I am actually the timber specialist at our store and spent many years working in that product division. I have now moved to the drive-in facility, where I deal with other construction materials and projects in which I do not yet know my way round all the details. Renovating brickwork is one example", explains Holger Hörger from the HORNBAACH store in Pforzheim. "Of course, you can gain new project skills by reading the instructions and watching videos. The best way to really get a grasp of it, though, is to do it yourself – from start through to finish. That is why I registered for this training."

CUSTOMERS EXPECT TARGETED ADVICE

Nearly 90 percent of DIY store customers now rely on the specialist competence of sales staff when they visit a stationary store. That was the finding of a major survey performed by the Cologne-based retail researcher IFH Köln in 2016. "Every second DIY store purchase is now preceded by advance preparation on the internet", explains the IFH's Managing Director Boris Hedde, but despite that there is a growing need for "targeted advice with no technical mumbo-jumbo". That means customers go online to find out about products, prices, and quality, but then head to the store to obtain a precise explanation as to how they can implement the project, what they need to look out for when processing materials, and what mistakes they should try to avoid.

The key advantage conventional DIY stores have compared with online pure players such as Amazon is their ability to sell the whole project – and not just an individual product. That is also the opinion of Eva Stüber, a colleague of Boris Hedde, who makes the following recommendation in the latest IFH study dated April 2018: "What is needed is an all-round view of the project. Companies can begin by providing their own DIY store staff with even better training on advice and customer focus."

INTO THE OVERALLS AND DOWN TO WORK

Hörger, who has been a specialist salesman at the company for six years, sets out to Bavaria at the beginning of April to take part in a full-day HORNBAACH training session at a supplier there. Together with several colleagues from other German locations, he slips into his white overalls and blue work gloves. Today, the group will be sawing, drilling, mixing plaster mortar, and applying it with the trowel. This training aims to familiarize participants with various ways of renovating damp brickwork and let them try it out themselves. The walls are already in place, but the team has to deal with all the other aspects itself.

"I am a qualified carpenter and roofer and worked on building sites for many years, where I also had to renovate older walls. But suppliers are always developing new procedures which I am not familiar with", explains Mario Gemp from the Pirmasens store. He has only been at HORNBAACH for a few months and is attending today's training at the recommendation of his store manager. One thing new to him is mold control using calcium silicate board, a procedure that convinces him right from the start: "Basically, this is a project any normal DIY enthusiast could tackle. The board is easy to cut, stick, and process. And it quickly absorbs large volumes of damp."



Before mixing the plaster mortar (left), the HORNBAACH sales staff slip into their snow-white gear. It's going to be dirty work...





Trimming the calcium silicate board (above) is new to many participants, but actually surprisingly easy. As well as numerous practical exercises, the training also includes a theory module (right)

INSPIRE CUSTOMERS WITH SOUND TIPS

HORNBAACH has seen itself as the DIY store for projects for many years now. Its product range is consistently aligned to construction, renovation, and garden projects and is not diluted with peripheral assortments such as bicycles or TVs. The advice it provides should always focus on the customer's project, rather than on any individual product. To this end, sales staff have to be able to picture the individual project and find out exactly what materials, tools, and services are needed. That is not easy, given the numerous product innovations newly included in the product range each year. So what is the best way to maintain an overview?

"Together with our suppliers and other organizations, such as Chamber of Trade, we regularly offer our colleagues professional training on project topics", reports Lucien Dellwo, who directs HORNBAACH's specialist staff development activities. "Employees who take part can boost their sales and advisory skills for the relevant product range and then go back and inspire their customers with sound tips on how to implement the project."

"I KNOW EXACTLY HOW IT WORKS!"

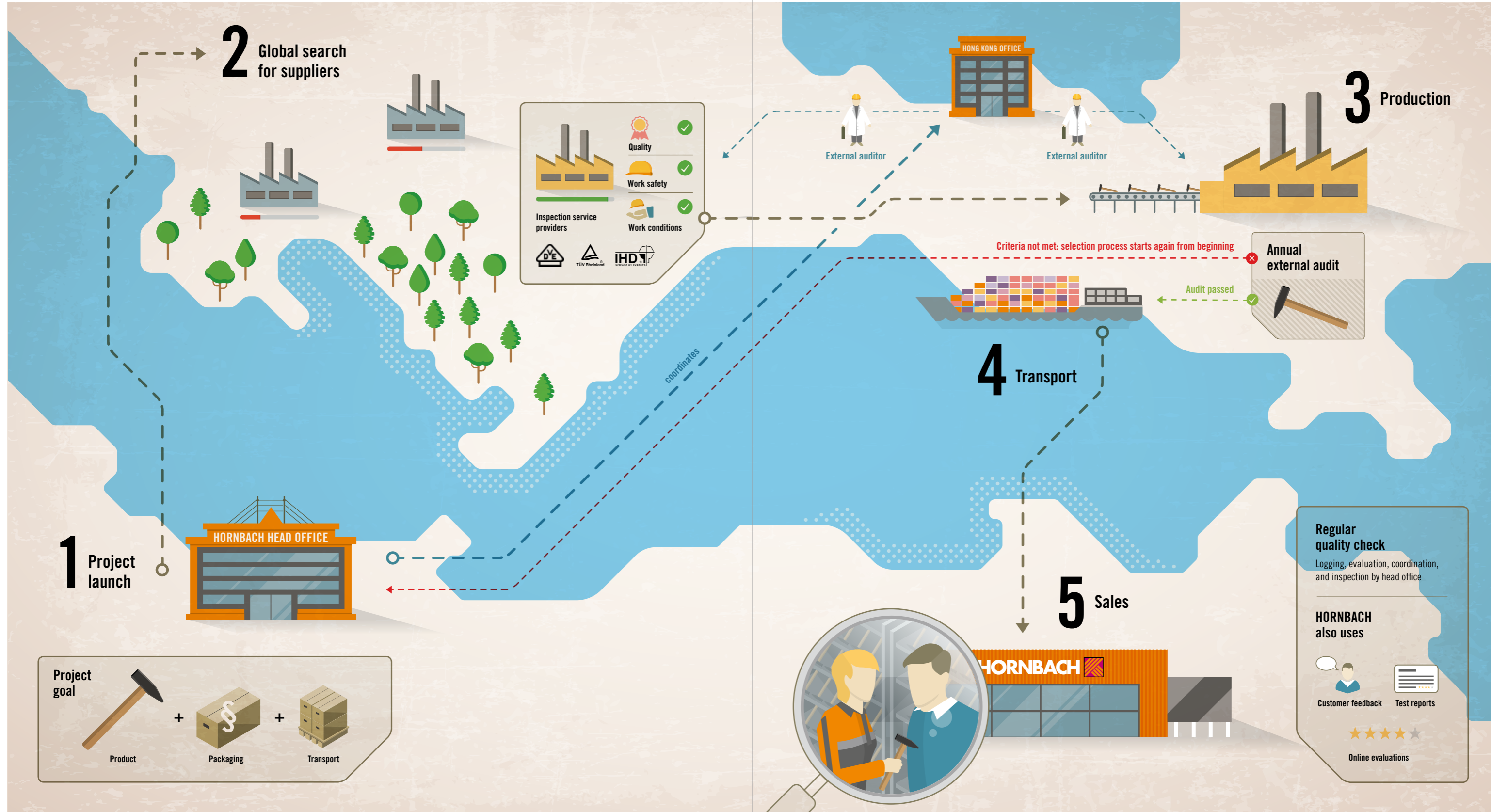
It goes without saying that – even today – there are still customers who basically do not trust the quality of advice provided at the DIY store, or even base their judgment on the gender of the employee advising them. That is something Brigitte Brenner is all too familiar with. The qualified draftsman design engineer has been at HORNBAACH's central customer service for four years now. For the past two years, she has worked as a construction material specialist and advised DIY enthusiasts by phone or mail. In this supposedly male preserve, she sometimes receives questions, particularly from older customers, such as: "Do you know what you are talking about? Can you pass me on to a male colleague!"

Brigitte Brenner basically ignores this kind of remark and responds with a dry "I know exactly how it works". And she really enjoys convincing even skeptical customers with specific tips. Now that she has completed the training, that is something she can do even better for all aspects of renovating brickwork. "Mold is a constant favorite here. During the season, I get at least two customer inquiries a week about that. And customers often want specific information about the injection method", she adds. At the training, she drills the holes together with her colleagues and lets the agent seep into the walls. Now she can explain to customers in detail how the barrier in the brickwork prevents damp rising and what steps are required for the overall project. Who knows? Maybe one day soon, the odd skeptical customer might actually ask to be passed on to the "female colleague who knows what she is talking about"...



QUALITY IS NO COINCIDENCE

From the product idea through to the sale.



HORNBACH sources around a third of its brands in Asia. "The chart illustrates the efforts we make to safeguard the quality of our HORNBACH brand products", explains Andreas Back, Head of the Quality Management, Environmental Issues and CSR department.

HORNBACH brand products are regularly inspected. Only if they meet our quality standards do we include them in our product range.

ESSAY

THE JOY OF GETTING IT DONE

“Werkstück 001”, or how to fall in love with hammers, screws, and saws. Ben Krischke

We humans have always been making things. Going back 2.4 million years, “homo rudolfensis” was already making the first tools. Since then, we domesticated plants in the Neolithic period and built the Colosseum in Ancient Rome. We are still at it today, in all our small, large, and gigantic projects – flowerbeds and landscape gardens, wooden chairs and stadium stands, tool sheds and skyscrapers.

Yes, people need their projects, they love forming things with hammers, screws, and saws – and the unique sense of triumph when an item is finally finished. At least until the next project gets going. This intrinsic desire to tackle projects, get down to it and do it yourself – that was what motivated “Werkstück 001” part of the

Left: Larsen and his team assembling the lounge chair **Right:** The “Werkstück EDITION 001” is an absolute eye-catcher – and should motivate customers to do it themselves



“WERKSTÜCK Edition” designed by the Danish architect, designer, and Berliner-by-choice Sigurd Larsen. “When HORNBAACH approached us to suggest cooperating, one of the main questions we had was what we could expect HORNBAACH customers to manage. And the key point here is the hands-on mentality. Building a shelf is about far more than building a shelf”, reports Larsen. He got down to work with his team.

They collected all kinds of products that can be found at every HORNBAACH store, detached them from their original function, and assessed them solely in terms of their aesthetic properties. All with absolute determination to create a piece of furniture worthy of HORNBAACH as a project DIY store. One that customers can re-create because they also want it. “In the end, we went for a lounge chair, not least because it fills its own space and has an effect on the whole room. And also because it is an item you can be really proud of”, Larsen adds.

“Werkstück 001” is complete. And “Werkstück 002” is set to follow. After all, every project leads to the next. In the meantime, you can do it yourself. For this, you will not need much – furniture webbing for the sitting surface and backrest, beech multiplex board, brass countersunk-head screws, sleeve nuts, and hard oil to make the wood look more valuable – and endless enthusiasm. That’s what the next project might look like. And all because man – and woman – is a maker. ◀



“SUSTAINABILITY CAN BE HIGHLY AESTHETIC”

The Danish architect and designer Sigurd Larsen talks to us about sustainable building.

Ben Krischke

Sigurd, on your website it says that your design studio “combines the aesthetics of high-quality materials with concepts focusing on functionality in complex spaces”. Can you explain that to us?

(laughs) That mainly refers to our architecture projects. We are often presented with very difficult problems to solve. In Denmark, for example, we have built several sustainable houses – these are especially energy-efficient and only require low volumes of construction materials – often working with a tight budget and the need to achieve a low square meter price. Then there is the standard we have set ourselves of creating exciting spaces. Reconciling these apparent contradictions – that is basically what we do.

What role does sustainability play for you?

We do a lot of building in Denmark and the Building Code there already includes numerous sustainability requirements. Despite all the restrictions that involves, it is a good thing. I firmly believe that sustainable building can be highly aesthetic. It certainly does not hem in our creativity. Quite the reverse. In Offenbach, for example, we are currently building a hall of residence for students out of solid timber. After all, the timber has a far better carbon footprint than concrete.

In 2017, you implemented a sustainable building called “The Green House” in Lejre in Denmark. Based on this project, can you tell us what sustainable construction can actually look like?

“The Green House” had to meet basic rules and requirements to count as a sustainable building at all. The same was true of “The Lighthouse” we built nearby. We were only allowed to use specific materials, and air and heating sources also played a major role. Here too, sustainable meant reducing the volume of materials used to an absolute minimum.

What materials came out on top?

The two most important materials were untreated timber for both the inner and outer walls, and wood shavings for the insulation. We also used special windows, which enabled us to do without an air exchange device. That would otherwise be mandatory in Denmark. That was the right approach. After all, we thought it would not make much sense to install a machine in what was supposed to be an ecologically sophisticated building. (laughs) ◀



Left: The Danish architect and furniture designer Sigurd Larsen is based in Berlin. His work can already be found in Berlin, Helsinki, Hong Kong, Copenhagen, New York, Tokyo, Seoul, and Shanghai
Above: Sigurd Larsen implemented the sustainable “Green House” in Lejre/Denmark



Left: Dr. Uwe Sayer, Sandra Hieke, and Andreas Back (left to right) deep in conversation while walking along the banks of the Rhine in Bonn.

DISCUSSION

ECONOMICS VERSUS ECOLOGY? AN UNEQUAL FIGHT?

HORNBACK has relied since 1996 on the timber certification system offered by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC®). Greenpeace International and Greenpeace Deutschland recently withdrew from this organization. We organized a discussion between Greenpeace employee Sandra Hieke, the Managing Director of FSC Deutschland, Dr. Uwe Sayer, and Andreas Back, who is responsible for quality management, environmental issues, and CSR at HORNBACK Baumarkt AG. These three have known each other for years. So what triggered this decision by Greenpeace and what impact will that have on the FSC and retailers? What can the FSC seal actually achieve? Anna Krall

Ms. Hieke, Greenpeace recently withdrew from the FSC. That move took some by surprise, while others found it cowardly. What factors were behind your decision?

Sandra Hieke: I have not yet heard our decision referred to as cowardly. We actually received the opposite kind of comment. Either way, the decision certainly was not easy for us. We have been in dialog with the FSC for many years now and often discussed those problems at the FSC that are close to our hearts: protecting primeval forests, the very different ways in which FSC principles and standards are implemented, especially in high-risk areas, transparency, controlled wood, and the FSC-Mix label.

And how was the decision received at the FSC? Was it a surprise?

Uwe Sayer: I would say it is a brave step but not the right move. I absolutely respect the fact that Greenpeace believes we are not moving fast enough, not going far enough, or taking the wrong approach in some areas. I particularly understand when Greenpeace says we live in a world of excessive consumption and need to cut back. What is a pity, though, is that some players in our own community are now saying “thank goodness, they’ve finally gone.” The FSC is now missing a strong voice, one we will have to make up for from within our own numbers. I would have preferred to find a way that

enables Greenpeace to remain part of the system while at the same time upholding its pressure within the FSC community. Without Greenpeace, life will now be easier for some players. I find that regrettable.

Andreas Back: There is no doubt that some will be pleased. We have supported the FSC system for nearly 20 years now and Greenpeace’s decision to leave was a real blow. One of the most vocal critics within the system has apparently left the floor. We are part of the FSC because we want to promote sustainable forestry worldwide and thus also minimize risks within our procurement chain. The Greenpeace exit will weaken the FSC system, so our hope is that they will soon be back on board. That might not sound like a typical position for a member of the Economic Chamber. So be it, but that is how the FSC works – the fact it has three equally entitled chambers. You have to find a consensus, but also have to reach decisions that all parties can live with. As things stand, we will be missing a key voice.

Sandra Hieke: That is interesting to hear. After all, no one who has looked closely at Greenpeace and its role in the FSC could misinterpret the decision not to renew its membership of FSC International as being intended to weaken the FSC. Quite the reverse. We hope the FSC will regain strength. After all, it is still the best international certification system available. Not renewing our membership also does not mean we now support another certificate. That is clear. Having said that, it is interesting to note how others have long relied on Greenpeace to play the role of “calling a spade a spade”.

Dr. Sayer, how do you see this?

Uwe Sayer: It must be said that Greenpeace was not the easiest member of our community. As an organization, it has a clear approach and very little scope for alternatives or compromises. If that leads a member to say that everyone should adopt its position or it will leave, then leaving the organization is ultimately the consistent thing to do.

Sandra Hieke: You are right that we remained faithful to our positions, at least in the overwhelming majority of cases. But we also accepted some compromises within the FSC which required us to go as far as we possibly could. At some point it was clear that, to protect our credibility, we would no longer be able to accept some of those compromises.

Uwe Sayer: That is absolutely understandable. Having said that, our aim is to offer solutions for retailers and consumers. And these solutions sometimes involve approaches that, thinking along our own cultural lines, we might not understand, like, or view as fast enough. For us, however, the aim always has to be to find a solution. If we do not go into Congo, for example, then who else will? Is a boycott really the solution!? I doubt that.

PARTICIPANTS

SANDRA HIEKE

obtained a degree in forestry in Freiburg. She has worked at Greenpeace since 2000. Among other activities, she has developed highly publicized campaigns to protect and maintain forests worldwide. She recently became responsible for international project management for Nordic forests.

DR. UWE SAYER

has been Managing Director of FSC Deutschland for 18 years. Among other areas, he has worked on safeguarding credible forestry standards in Germany. He holds a degree in forestry and focused on vegetation ecology in his doctorate.

ANDREAS BACK

has been at HORNBACK for more than 20 years and has long dealt with quality management, environmental issues, and social responsibility at the Group. His areas of responsibility also include timber certification and HORNBACK’s cooperation on behalf of and within the FSC.

Mr. Back, how do consumers view the FSC?

Andreas Back: We operate in nine countries across Europe, so we do have a European perspective. What we see is that in some countries our customers are very much open to this topic and actively ask about it. In other regions in Europe, we find it far harder to communicate this topic. The people there have a different set of problems. Our job is to be as transparent as possible for our customers and raise their awareness of timber certification.

Uwe Sayer: I would even go one step further. Andreas, I would expect you at HORNBACK to increase the umpteen thousand products already on offer even further, to boost the volume of such products sold, and extend mandatory certification to all products. That way, we will see and feel the positive effects on forests.

Andreas Back: And you in turn would I hope show me a way to explain all that. After all, the FSC is still a highly complex topic, and one that is often difficult for consumers to understand. Let me give one example. Under the FSC system, a German product without a seal is supposedly worse than a foreign product with a seal. It is hardly surprising that consumers do not really understand that.

Uwe Sayer: For me, the product with the FSC seal is always one that transports a positive message to the forests. That means an annual audit takes place, an auditor actually goes there, stakeholder dialog takes place – all of these measures help to further develop and improve forestry.



Sandra Hieke: I would not stop there. After all, what you have described is not enough. Even if the product bears a 100-percent FSC seal, the consumer still does not know the background. An example: I am a salesperson at the DIY store and advise customers to buy beech wood because it is likely to come from somewhere round here. That is all very well, but the timber might actually come from Romanian primeval forests. There is no way of knowing that because the label does not clearly state where the timber comes from.

That is a good catchword. One timber supplier lost its FSC seal because it was shown in Romania that the supplier also provided timber from illegal, or at least disputed sources. Discussions surrounding timber felling and FSC certification are still ongoing. Is Romania a high-risk country when it comes to timber?

Uwe Sayer: In terms of illegality and forests particularly worthy of protection, I would say yes

Sandra Hieke: That's also what I would expect.

Andreas Back: We answered this question for ourselves with a yes. Romania is a high-risk country, with documented cases of illegal felling that would also still be possible today. In view of this, we have taken actions, such as introducing mandatory FSC certification for timber and products containing timber in cases where the timber was grown in Romania.

Sandra Hieke: Now, if we all agree that FSC certifications are extremely hard to implement in this kind of high-risk country and that suitable checks are also tricky, then the question is what more can companies do? How can we be sure that no timber from illegal felling reaches consumers? How much further can companies go in terms of their transparency, their supply chains, and their influence on suppliers?

Andreas Back: In that respect, I too can only provide momentum and give some examples of what we are doing. We now only procure FSC-certified products from Romania or from suppliers whose logging area is located west of Romania. We accept that we then have longer transport routes, even though that is a difficult balance in terms of CO2 emissions. This way, we ensure that the timber does not come from primeval forests or national parks in Romania and is not illegal. Within the company, we also perform spot checks, take samples, and have the timber tested using isotope methods.

Uwe Sayer: The remarkable thing is that you have a country where there are disputes concerning FSC certification and the integrity of this certification. I too then find it OK if a company adjusts its flow of goods and says to itself: "We need this FSC certification, so we have to help make it work." After all, what is the alternative? You withdraw from Romania and then there is no incentive to improve things there? Where else should the timber come from? If you change your flow of goods while upholding FSC certification, and



do that in such a way that the players in Romania have good reason to address environmental and social standards, then that is pretty much the kind of mechanism we want to see.

Sandra Hieke: It is very interesting that HORNBAACH should say: "Yes, we are acting on our responsibility". After all, someone has to take a stance, make critical inquiries, and make it clear that we do not want products in our stores that lead to the destruction of primeval forests in areas with human rights infringements and poor working conditions. Companies do have this responsibility, but they also have the opportunity to change things, and that is something they should communicate very clearly.

What is it like elsewhere in Europe? Does the FSC play a more prominent role in some countries than in others?

Andreas Back: We could take Switzerland, where the FSC is very well established and basically the best-known seal. Products are generally seen as being of inferior quality if they are not FSC-certified. In Romania and Austria, by contrast, the FSC is virtually irrelevant.

Uwe Sayer: You have to look more closely at the individual countries. Switzerland has traditionally had large areas of forest and state-of-the-art forestry. The Netherlands, on the other hand, do not really have any forests worth mentioning. The FSC is most relevant there

when it comes to house construction. As a country with one of the highest import rates for tropical timbers, its people are very aware when it comes to sustainability documentation, for example in the form of an FSC seal.

Andreas Back: Our experience in the Netherlands has been different. Our Dutch customers are not particularly concerned whether the timber is FSC-certified. That is not the case in Switzerland, where the timber has to be certified with a declaration of the type and origin of the timber. Swiss customers also check whether the timber is from Switzerland. An FSC-certified product from Switzerland – that is what they see as offering the best quality. That aspect is not so important to Dutch, Austrian, or Romanian customers. It is yet another story in Sweden. Customers there initially view all timber products that are not from Sweden as potentially dubious. There is enough timber available on site and no need to import any other timber, regardless of whether it is FSC-certified. These aspects underline the need for country-specific ways of addressing customers.

Sandra Hieke: We often assume that consumers are aware of the problems with deforestation, but that is by no means the case. Many consumers are still uninformed but nevertheless take guidance from certificates such as the FSC. Having said that, there are now so many certificates on the market that many consumers are unsure. When I started out at Greenpeace, we answered questions from consumers on the street and were able to give them a clear answer. When you buy a FSC-certified product, then you can be

sure that the timber you buy has not depleted primeval forests. Today, all these years later, that is no longer the case. That is one reason why we felt we could no longer stay on board. We would be pleased to see the FSC return to a stricter approach and up its game.

Economics versus ecology? Cutting consumption, the need for FSC certification, and pressure to generate sales – we have reached the point where these factors converge. How can retailers make the best of it?

Uwe Sayer: We at the FSC cannot solve that problem. What we can do is try to achieve a balance by way of our FSC standards and the FSC seals on products. Our role as the German representatives in the international FSC arena is possibly to lobby for consumer interests, as Germany has higher levels of consumption than many other parts of the world. That approach clearly has its limits. On the one hand, because we are not an instrument for consumers to cut their consumption and we have to concede that there are also other perspectives on forests. What we can say to the business community is this: Offer consumers FSC products based on a plausible and complex compromise that accounts for both socio-ecological and economic interests. That way, we do not comment on the need for various products or on cutting consumption. The FSC seal is and will remain a compromise, but one that is nevertheless an important part of the solution.

Sandra Hieke: Greenpeace also does not tell people not to buy timber. What we do say is that if you buy timber products, then make sure they are capable of use for as long as possible. “Reduce, reuse,

recycle” – that is the motto here. When I see how many takeaway coffee cups land in the garbage every hour, or how much fresh-fiber toilet paper ends up you know where, then I do ask myself whether it is really necessary for forests worthy of protection to be used or even destroyed for that? And does that become more acceptable just because the product flaunts an FSC logo?

Andreas Back: As a retailer, we will have to look even more closely in future at the composition of our products and at what sensible alternatives might be available. We will also have to deal more intensively with the topic of cradle-to-cradle and ask what secondary resources can be retrieved from the product at the end of its life-cycle. The aim has to be that of making products more durable. That way, we can work to reduce overall resource consumption.

Sandra Hieke: That approach is crucial, even if we see that the volume of timber and paper products consumed has risen consistently over the past years. That cannot go on like that, not least as it places an intolerable burden on our forests. I personally do not need a new paper cup every time I get a new coffee. I just take my own cup with me. I even have a cloth handkerchief with me once again. After all, that is easily washed. I am convinced that we all have to start with ourselves. What is clear is that some forests have to be protected. They are treasure troves for humankind and all future generations, for biodiversity, and the climate. That should actually no longer be up for discussion. We have enough ways to put forests to more sensible use – and that does not signal the end of forestry, or of HORNBAACH. We just have not yet looked into these possibilities closely enough. ◀

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