

**Press release****Plastics and Rubber Machinery**

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**“Good solutions require bringing together every player within the value chain”**

**Interview with Dr Torsten Schmitz (Managing Director, Extrusion Business Unit) and Hermann Veismann (Managing Director, Printing and Finishing Business Unit) at Windmüller & Hölscher.**

**Why will W&H be represented at the next K with both its extrusion division and printing division?**

**Hermann Veismann:** Many of our customers are active in both fields; that is why we have decided to showcase our capabilities in both areas for the first time. The range of products and services in both the printing and extrusion sectors is certainly a unique selling point for W&H.

**Dr. Torsten Schmitz:** Our customers are facing radical change: multiple demands, including more mono-material packaging, and the processing of new raw materials, are forcing them to look at the entire global value chain. At every step of the process, it is necessary to consider what any subsequent step entails, which is simply driving the pace of change. We are noticing that our holistic focus on the overall application is very well received. This has always been a key factor at our in-house Expo exhibition, and we are now looking to make this even more visible in Düsseldorf.

### **Why is everything now happening at a faster rate?**

**Dr. Schmitz:** The new EU Packaging Regulation PPWR is certainly an accelerator, but there are other constraints as well, such as the replacement of PFAS substances for example. In the end, you have to convert your entire raw material base and use different additives. In addition, there are supply chain issues - all changes that are coming at a very fast pace. This, in combination with very strong cost pressures, is forcing our customers to question their current methods of operation and driving forward innovation.

**Veismann:** This is also true for the printing sector. These new material compositions go hand in hand with new material properties, which we have to master. This highlights how important a cross-discipline approach is. The developments resulting from the shift towards greater sustainability make this absolutely essential.

### **The motto of K is confident: Green – Smart – Responsible. Do you feel this is appropriate?**

**Dr. Schmitz:** The keywords Green, Smart, Responsible are certainly appropriate. They exude a sense of confidence, and confidence is an important sign for any business. However, we must all jump on board. Our daily contact with our customers shows that everyone is facing major challenges: in product development, in product development cycles, in investments. Our job is to cooperate with our customers to find a solution for them; something we are good at, as we know all the players involved.

### **What are the specific challenges?**

**Dr. Schmitz:** Everyone is facing their own individual problems. Many are wondering, for example, what the future holds for PCR, how much PCR content they will need, how recyclable it is, and what requirements they need to consider in terms of export markets. Many of the framework conditions are still unclear, which is causing a great deal of uncertainty among our customers. We want to advise them in this environment with an open mind towards technology, so that they will still have a competitive edge in five years' time and, if possible, grow faster than the market. Once again, the key here is cooperation between the different divisions.

**Veismann:** Modularity is very important to our customers looking ahead, with the keyword here being retrofit capability. If a machine is optimally designed for a particular material, we are already considering how we can adjust, retrofit or convert it at little cost to meet future requirements. Customers invest a lot of money in a machine and are naturally concerned if they and their suppliers have uncertainties concerning where things are heading.

### **Are there any materials that pose a challenge for your machines?**

**Dr. Schmitz:** Basically, our machines can process all materials. It is important to advise our customers. We need to understand what their needs are and where they want to go. When it comes to MDO, for example, we have customers who are already in 24/7 production. But what

won't work is trying to cover a very broad product portfolio with a single machine; you can't run PCR today and MDO-PE tomorrow. It's about producing sensibly and economically on one machine and selecting the right one.

### **How does the density of regulations in the EU compare to other markets?**

**Veismann:** In the growth markets in Asia, i.e. in India and China, we find different regulations that are being adapted at different speeds. But the regulatory density in the EU is particularly high. This applies both to the requirements for commercial enterprises themselves and to the requirements for the packaging market. Just think of the sustainability reporting obligations or the Supply Chain Due Diligence Act, which are all accompanied by considerable costs for European companies; costs that are naturally passed on to customers and therefore render a competitive disadvantage.

**Dr Schmitz:** The rules in the EU are all well-intentioned. When it comes to sustainable packaging in particular, everyone is looking to Europe for guidance on mono-material composites and the overall life cycle of packaging. This pioneering position is appropriate for Europe, but there are also requirements that are completely unrealistic. Why, for example, should food packaging be required to be turned into food packaging again?

### **The European Green Deal seems to have taken a back seat in favour of a more business-oriented mindset.**

**Veismann:** There is hope that there will be a shift in political priorities. Despite all the good intentions behind the regulations, the speed, consistency and leap we are taking in Europe are a threat to our location, and that naturally concerns us. I am convinced that it will not help anyone if we take Europe out of the game because it becomes uneconomical.

### **What do you expect from the K?**

**Dr. Schmitz:** For me, the K is like a family reunion, an opportunity to exchange ideas and provide guidance. These personal meetings are very valuable, and everyone takes away new ideas – not just our customers, but we also benefit greatly.

**Veismann:** Visitors to the trade fair are driven by opportunity. We want to convey enthusiasm for the machines and the opportunities they offer. We try to convey a vision. We define ourselves less by machine sales and more by the partnerships and the added value they offer.

Photos: Dr Torsten Schmitz and Hermann Veismann. Image source: Windmüller & Hölscher SE & Co. KG

Do you have any questions? Ina Hoch, VDMA Plastics and Rubber Machinery, will be happy to answer them: Phone +49 69 6603 1844, [ina.hoch@vdma.eu](mailto:ina.hoch@vdma.eu)

#### Industry interviews on the road to K

Plastics have become an integral part of our world and are indispensable when tackling the challenges of the future. The plastics industry develops solutions that enable a growing global population to live in safety and prosperity. This important role as an enabler is expressed in the motto of K 2025: The Power of Plastics! Green – Smart – Responsible. Green, because plastics help combat climate change and conserve resources. Smart, because digitalisation helps increase efficiency. Responsible because people are at the centre of everything we do.

To get in the mood for the industry gathering in October 2025, the VDMA is giving representatives of the plastics machinery industry and all other stakeholders in the sector a chance to have their say through a series of interviews.

#### VDMA Plastics and Rubber Machinery

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

The VDMA represents 3,600 German and European companies in the mechanical and plant engineering sector. The industry stands for innovation, export orientation and medium-sized businesses. The companies employ a total of around 3 million people in the EU-27, more than 1.2 million of them in Germany alone. This makes mechanical and plant engineering the largest employer among the capital goods industries, both in the EU-27 and in Germany. It accounts for an estimated turnover of around 870 billion euros in the European Union. Around 80 percent of the machinery sold in the EU originates from a manufacturing plant in the internal market.