

RÖCHLING GROUP
2017/2018

SIMPLY
CLOSER

KEY FIGURES



SALES
in EUR m



EBITDA
in EUR m



SHAREHOLDERS'
EQUITY
in percent



EMPLOYEES
as of 31 December

2017	1,841	228	42.2	9,733
2016	1,657	212	44.0	8,800
2015	1,555	209	42.0	8,400
2014	1,364	164	41.9	7,880
2013	1,283	149	40.0	7,463



— Executive Board of the Röchling Group (from left):
Steffen Rowold, Prof. Hanns-Peter Knaebel, Franz Lübbers and Erwin Doll.

Dear Sir or Madam:

We all live in a networked world, more so than ever before in human history. A brief click is all it takes to be informed of events taking place almost concurrently at the other end of the world. You can communicate just as conveniently with work colleagues who are in the office, in the plant or on the move 5,000 kilometers away. We are no longer separated by physical distance.

But are we actually closer to one another as a result? Do we understand the news, the messages or our work colleagues better? The removal of physical distance is not synonymous with greater proximity. Even in this networked era, it is a challenging undertaking to establish a genuine and lasting connection, to really understand people.

GENUINE CLOSENESS IS AN IMPORTANT SUCCESS FACTOR FOR COMPANIES

Our 2017/2018 image brochure is entitled “Simply closer” and highlights how Röchling creates a closeness that makes us different from others. One thing is for sure: genuine closeness is an important success factor for companies. Close ties to customers, suppliers, partners and employees mean understanding their requirements and issues, challenges and wishes, concerns and needs. This is the prerequisite for creating added value for our customers and having motivated, confident and committed employees in our ranks. We see in this closeness the great opportunity to become even better, even more innovative, even more effective and even faster. All of this paired with the reliability that people value so much about Röchling.

Closeness is based on trust: only people who trust will allow others to get close to them. This type of trusting relationship is not created from one day to the next. It becomes firmly established over time. For Röchling – as a family company that is almost 200 years old – stability is an important value. It is the basis on which our employees and our partners give us their trust. We take great care of this precious gift because trust is very difficult to regain once it has been lost.

In times during which great changes need to be overcome with great speed, trust is a special quality. At present, the topics of ubiquitous digital transformation, international growth and global competition call for a great deal of willingness to change. We continuously enhance our organization so that we can use these changes as an opportunity in close partnership with our customers. We actively shape the future and respond quickly to changing requirements. Our highly qualified employees show respect and appreciation to our partners and can communicate as equals with them on matters of content. In this way, we ensure productive exchanges for all participants.

For Röchling, closeness means moreover a targeted and responsible approach to internationalization. We want to maintain a presence on site in order to optimally serve our customers and to better understand the relevant issues. We also deal with this aspect in our current image brochure, which contains, moreover, the most important company figures. Many partners have placed their trust in us during the 2017 financial year too. The Röchling Group recorded further international growth. We have again increased our sales and our profitability, established new locations, acquired companies, expanded our production capacities and launched new and enhanced materials, products and systems on the market. We have worked hard to ensure that we also remain closer in the future.

We look forward to your continuing loyalty and we hope you enjoy reading the interesting and exciting articles below.



Prof. Dr.
Hanns-Peter Knaebel
President & CEO



Erwin Doll
Vice-chairman



Franz Lübbers



Steffen Rowold

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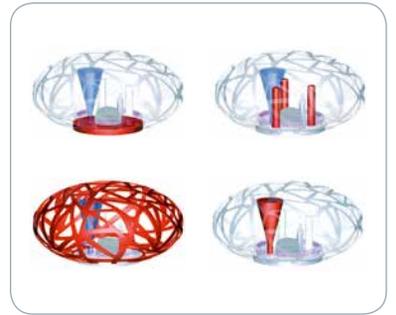
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CLOSENESS AMONG
PARTNERS

“OUR CUSTOMER PROXIMITY GROWS WITH THE DIVERSITY OF OUR TEAMS”

Interview

with
Prof. Hanns-Peter Knaebel,
President & CEO
of the Röchling Group

Generating benefits, for the customer and all partners – this is one of the most important goals of the Röchling Group. To achieve this, a company must understand the types of challenges the customer is facing in its industry. Only then can solutions be developed that are smart, effective, unique, improve the process and are cost-effective at the same time. All of this requires a close partnership and proximity. Prof. Hanns-Peter Knaebel, President & CEO of the Röchling Group, explains in the interview what customer proximity means for Röchling.

How has Röchling positioned itself as a plastics specialist with close contacts to its customers in recent years?

There are various aspects to be mentioned in this regard. When one hears the term “closeness,” one of course tends to think of physical proximity, and if one wants to be close to customers everywhere, one quickly arrives at the issue of internationalization. Röchling has a long tradition of international business. Our roots are in the Saarland region, on the border between Germany and France, where Röchling was founded almost 200 years ago. As far back as the 19th century, there were branches and subsidiaries in France, England, Scotland, and Italy. As a plastics



— “As part of our corporate activities, we are always focused on being present in all key global markets” – Prof. Hanns-Peter Knaebel responds to interview questions regarding the customer- and partner-focused orientation of the Röchling Group.

specialist, Röchling has increasingly seized the opportunities presented by globalization and systematically driven its internationalization forward. In the meantime, we generate 60.6 percent of our sales outside of Germany and 29.6 percent outside of Europe.

Apart from internationalization – what other aspects does a customer-oriented outlook include?

For all relevant sectors, Röchling has experts from within its own ranks who can discuss technical matters with customers on an equal footing. Our employees know almost everything there is to know about plastic as a material and its various potential applications. They also have their

fingers on the pulse, due to their close ties to universities and other research institutions, for example, and they maintain direct and intensive contact with clients. This results in closeness to customers. Our employees listen carefully, they lend a sympathetic ear to our customers and have a feel for what they need. The diversity within our teams is also important in this respect. Different nationalities, cultures and mentalities are one of Röchling's strengths. They enhance the creativity of our approach to finding solutions and bring us closer to our international customers.

What guides Röchling in the process of internationalization, which are the most important principles?

As part of our corporate activities, we are always focused on being present in all key global markets. The experts in our three divisions – Industrial, Automotive and Medical – follow developments in global markets closely and know where new potential can be found. Before we bolster our global orientation by investing in a new location, a plant expansion or a company acquisition, we examine all the framework conditions in detail. In recent years, we have operated very successfully in this way, from Brazil to China. And this does not only involve production. It is also very important to establish international development capacities. But regardless of which country we are present in: we always use our know-how and wealth of expertise to maintain the loyalty of our existing customers while continuously attracting new ones.

How important are acquisitions in this context?

We grow organically, but also through company acquisitions that can advance us in terms of technology or open up new market segments. However, there are certain hard factors that must be right. The takeover candidate, for instance, must provide a useful addition to the range

Europe

15 countries
55 locations
7,031 employees

Asia

6 countries
18 locations
1,213 employees

America

4 countries
15 locations
1,489 employees

—— Röchling is at home throughout the world.

of services and products that the Röchling Group offers, fit in with our focus and strategy and be economically sound. Buildings and machinery should be state of the art, and the location must also be right. Added to this are soft factors, which are every bit as important. Ultimately, the question is: How will cultural integration succeed? How does one bring the employees on board? We have had excellent experiences here with owner-managed companies that operate in niche markets and have a lean structure. In most cases, they have a very similar mentality and culture to us. If a company has this type of fit, it makes the integration process so much easier. This is an important factor for the success of our Group.



— The right material at their fingertips: Dotmar is the preferred choice of engineering plastics dealers and machinists in Australia and New Zealand. Röchling's semi-finished products make a significant contribution to this success.

THE BEST IN STOCK

INDUSTRIAL DIVISION:

Far off, but Never Far Away –

Röchling and Its Partner Dotmar in Australia



Halfway around the world – this is how far away Haren, Germany, a location of the Industrial division is from Sydney, Australia. There, down under, is where Röchling’s customer, Dotmar Engineering Plastics, is based – the geographical distance could hardly be any greater. But the business relationship, on the other hand, is extremely close.

Dotmar celebrated its 50-year anniversary in 2017. In recent decades a close connection between the companies has developed. Dotmar has established itself as the number one engineering plastics machinist and distributor in Australia and New Zealand, with Röchling semi-finished products making up the majority of this success. The company employs around 110 people across eight locations.

“Röchling works closely with us to develop new solutions for our customers. We provide a much higher level of technical support than our competitors with a range of innovative developments, and this is the key to our joint success,” says Kevin Stainer, Executive General



— The quality must be up to scratch: Andrew Windsor (on the left), Dotmar Profit Center Manager in Melbourne, and Röchling National Sales Manager Darryl Johanning take a closer look at a plastic product and are pleased with what they see.

Manager of Dotmar EPP Pty Ltd. The company advises customers in many varied industries on all technical issues relating to the application of thermoplastics, resulting in customized products and related services – all from a single source. The company has established a deep level of expertise over a great many years and has cultivated strong partnerships with internationally leading thermoplastics manufacturers, explains Stainer. “First and foremost on this list is Röchling. And Röchling is synonymous with quality – not only in terms of products and systems, but employees as well.”

New Markets and Applications

The experience and partnership that have been built up jointly over the years form the basis for a full exchange of ideas, which ultimately culminates in innovative developments, states Stainer. The strategy adopted by both companies is to understand, to the letter, the needs of end users in the specific industries. What does a mining company require, what are the key requirements for chemical engineering and

tank building, what challenges does the transport industry face? In Australia and New Zealand, Dotmar has managed to continuously penetrate new markets and establish new applications using thermoplastics to replace conventional materials like wood, steel, or aluminium.

“Röchling has supported us to a great extent in this respect with its expertise and innovative product developments,” reports Stainer. “We work hand in hand, which explains why we are always so close to the customer,” states Darryl Johanning, underlining the close collaboration. Röchling appointed him National Sales Manager for Australia and New Zealand in 2012. Dotmar has spent a number of decades working closely with Röchling to develop the market for tank building. Dotmar is also the number one in lining technology, which is hugely important in Australia, a country rich in raw materials. Röchling brands such as Polystone® for tank building and Matrox® for lining technology have a very strong reputation throughout the continent.

Warehouse is a Challenge

The first contacts between the two companies were back in the early 1970s and concerned the material Lignostone®. Now, and back then, Dotmar faced a particular challenge in terms of long-term planning in that the transportation alone of Röchling products from Germany to Australia by sea takes eight weeks. “Dotmar had to know precisely what they would need to have in stock three months down the line,” recalls Willy Bölscher, who was just a young exports employee back then. He went on to expand the Australian market in partnership with Dotmar, as Head of Thermoplastics and is now retired.

Warehousing remains one of the major challenges today. The distributor is required to invest massively in local product stocks. “This is the only way that we can be successful against local competitors and Asian manufacturing sites,” says Stainer. Dotmar has developed a very good market image for itself over the past few decades. But one thing has stayed the same, and that is the close and trusting relationship between the people involved. From Röchling, Willy Bölscher was the man of the first hour,



— A good reputation in the plastics industry: Dotmar has been active in Australia and New Zealand for over 50 years.

and from Dotmar the young Australian engineer Bruce Armstrong. He came to Haren for the first time in 1986 and took a huge amount of inspiration and new ideas back to Australia with him. “In Germany, he saw all the things that you could do with Polystone® in the industry and was impressed,” notes Bölscher.

Open and Transparent Partnership

In a twist of fate, Armstrong became one of the owners of Dotmar in 1994 and was then able to put his ideas into practice. The company developed at a fast pace. It is now part of the Australian MM Plastics Group. Bölscher believes that the key to ensuring shared success is the communication of ideas and applications, and above all good personal relationships – not just at management level. Darryl Johanning shares his opinion: “We have an open and transparent partnership, which has allowed us to create an incredibly successful business in this part of the world.”



— Andre Hackmann is the quality assurance officer for the machining of composites in Haren. The 3D coordinate measuring machine that he works with uses a tactile measurement sensor, making it possible to measure parts accurately down to hundredths of a millimeter.

KEEPING A CONSTANT EYE ON QUALITY

INDUSTRIAL DIVISION:

How Röchling Ensures Optimum Internal Processes

CONSTANTLY ON THE MOVE IN QUALITY MATTERS

At the international locations of the Röchling Group, the same high quality standard, on which customers can rely one hundred percent, should apply everywhere. Johannes Mohs, Head of Quality Management in the Industrial division of the Röchling Group, is constantly on the move in pursuit of this mission. “He travels as much as Genscher,” say his colleagues. Former German foreign minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher was renowned as a tireless traveler. In the interview, Mohs reports on the requirements of customers, but above all about how Röchling ensures optimum processes internally.

How can the quality of a manufacturer of engineering plastics be measured at all? What are the key issues for customers?

Technical values are clearly a priority. However, the issue of reliability, for example with regard to adherence to schedules, is becoming increasingly



— Johannes Mohs is Head of Quality Management in the Industrial division. He travels a lot and is responsible for ensuring that the various locations meet the same high quality standard.

important. Added to this are expertise and conduct. Customers must sense that they are dealing with a partner that can actively support them in accomplishing their tasks.

As a company, does one have to be certified these days?

Without ISO 9001, which is relevant to the area of quality, you can't do anything. It provides the fundamentals for systematic working methods. In addition, however, it is essential to identify the specific customer requirements each time in order to gain a close awareness of the needs and expectations of the customers. As well as quality, the topics of the environment, safety, compliance and sustainability are playing an increasing role. We must also demonstrate that we have a firm grasp of all processes, such as procurement, production, packaging, and inspection.



— Quality seal: an integrated management system is the basis for ensuring that requirements in the areas of quality, environmental protection and occupational safety, for example, are fulfilled.

Are you also audited by your customers?

That is common practice. Many customers come to our locations and conduct audits, sometimes lasting several days, based on their own specifications. Above all, they want to see that we have our processes under control and to qualify us as a supplier. Ultimately, it is extremely important to them that they can rely on the timely delivery of flawless products. Otherwise, their own production process would be derailed, which is an absolute deal-breaker in terms of the continued cooperation with the supplier in question.

How do you measure the internal Röchling quality standards?

For us, there are five key points: How many complaints and instances of substitute performance do we have? How punctual are our deliveries? What is the level of customer satisfaction? How well do we do in customer audits? And what is the situation regarding documentation and traceability? The trust that customers place in us by sourcing their products from various Röchling locations is extremely important to us. They only do this if they can rely on our ability to deliver consistent product quality from all our locations.

How do you ensure close communication, even across location boundaries worldwide?

We have a quality manager at virtually every location. As a general rule, however, all employees must be made aware of this topic – from the top manager through to the project manager and all the way to the



— Helena Meyer, apprentice process mechanic for plastic and rubber, uses a digital microscope to check the quality of a material chip from a pressed sheet.



— CNC milling technician Heinz Tieben (on the left) and Frank Dickmann, Head of Quality Management in Haren, use a vernier caliper to determine the contour accuracy.

employee at the production plant. We have compiled a quality manual that sets out all our processes – and everyone is required to abide by these rules. My team is in close contact with the locations, and in some cases we visit them multiple times per year. We also conduct unannounced internal audits. We communicate new policies and process instructions regularly and systematically. And for specific products, the employees receive additional training.

What skills must employees who work in the area of quality management have?

Technical expertise and a good understanding of the process form the basis. Certification as an auditor is also helpful. You must be able to read, understand and implement contracts, standards, legislation, and policies. In some cases, the subject matter is extremely dry. At the same time, the employees must be good communicators, self-confident, have a good grasp of the English language and be willing to travel extensively. Suitable young employees are introduced to quality issues during their training. We have young colleagues who work completely independently and are already fully-fledged professionals. They are an excellent group.

RÖCHLING GROUP 2017

1,841

million euros
sales



228

million euros
EBITDA



9,733

employees



Three corporate principles have been the foundation of Röchling's rise to the leading international ranks among plastics companies:

Competence, quality and innovation.



737

million euros in sales

Industrial
division

3,511

employees

40

locations

The **Industrial division** supplies almost every sector of industry with optimal, application-oriented materials. To achieve this, Röchling has probably the world's biggest product portfolio of thermoplastics and composite materials. The company manufactures a range of semi-finished parts such as sheets, rods, tubes, flat bars, finished castings and profiles as well as machined and assembled precision components.

991

million euros in sales

Automotive
division

5,463

employees

43

locations

The **Automotive division** designs and engineers components and system solutions in the fields of Aerodynamics, Powertrain, and New Mobility. As part of our customer-focused and global development approach, we focus on the current challenges facing the automotive industry, including reducing emissions, weight, and fuel consumption.

114

million euros in sales

Medical
division

718

employees

4

locations

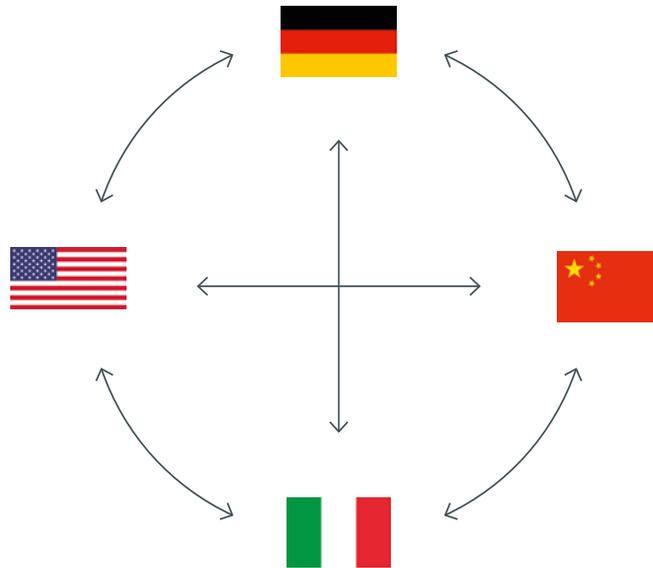
The **Medical division** offers its customers a wide range of standard and tailored plastic products in the fields of pharmaceuticals, diagnostics, surgery, and life sciences. These high-quality products are used in innovative drug delivery systems, primary packaging systems, surgical instruments, and disposable diagnostic items.



— In Germany: customer-oriented solutions are developed across departmental boundaries at the Technical Center in Worms.

ONCE AROUND THE WORLD

AUTOMOTIVE DIVISION:
How Röchling Supports Its Global Clients
on Their Way into the Future



Röchling Automotive wants to be close to the customer – in geographical, thematic and conceptual terms. This is how Röchling supports its global clients on their way into the future. It supports them with global thinking, local development and flexible production. This becomes apparent in the following short reports from Silicon Valley, from a valley in South Tyrol, from the banks of the Rhine and from the new Chinese Silk Road.

Röchling Has a Presence in Silicon Valley

Anyone who is anyone these days is present in Silicon Valley, the key growth region for the future and the Eldorado for start-ups. This also applies for the automotive industry and its suppliers. In the native country of Google and Apple, many visionaries already see the car today as a smartphone on four wheels. Röchling Automotive also wants to be close to topics such as the self-driving car and therefore opened an office in San José in 2017. “Our customers welcome our presence on the ground and are looking forward to our ideas,” says Jermel Jones, Director of the Customer Team West Coast in San José.



— In Italy: Rafael Farfán, Luca Marini, Francesca Brunori and Claudio Nava (from left) from Advance Development and Product Management in Laives confer on a SCR tank test.

Röchling Automotive has a strong and steadily growing customer base on the west coast of America for which the company is creating genuine added value in the immediate vicinity. That is the first thing. The other is the close contact to new, emerging customers, trends and technologies, especially in the field of new mobility. In this way, Röchling Automotive wants to help shape the next generation of mobility solutions, for instance, by developing components and systems for electric and hybrid vehicles. The New Mobility product area already includes battery housings made of Stratura® Hybrid, a material that offers high rigidity, high energy absorption and an impressive lightweight design. The company is also carrying out intensive research into a variety of charging systems.

By engaging with its customers locally and observing local trend markets worldwide, Röchling Automotive is gathering extensive expertise and numerous ideas. Both are pooled at the European development centers in Laives in South Tyrol and in Worms on the Rhine. The experts there research and develop innovative systems and products for all international locations. This creates a kind of circular flow, a never-ending stream



— In China: Jackon Huang (on the right) discusses technical solutions with a colleague from Production at the Röchling plant in Kunshan.

of communication in line with the Röchling Automotive slogan “Driving Efficiency Home.” Röchling brings efficiency to customers – no matter where they are based.

“We opened a Technical Center at these two locations in 2017 in order to meet the individual needs of customers and the markets as effectively as possible,” reports Vincent Mauroit, General Manager Innovation & Business Development. These Technical Centers promote close cooperation across departmental boundaries. “We can develop solutions even more efficiently and with an even greater focus on the customer,” says Mauroit.

Röchling Follows Its Customers

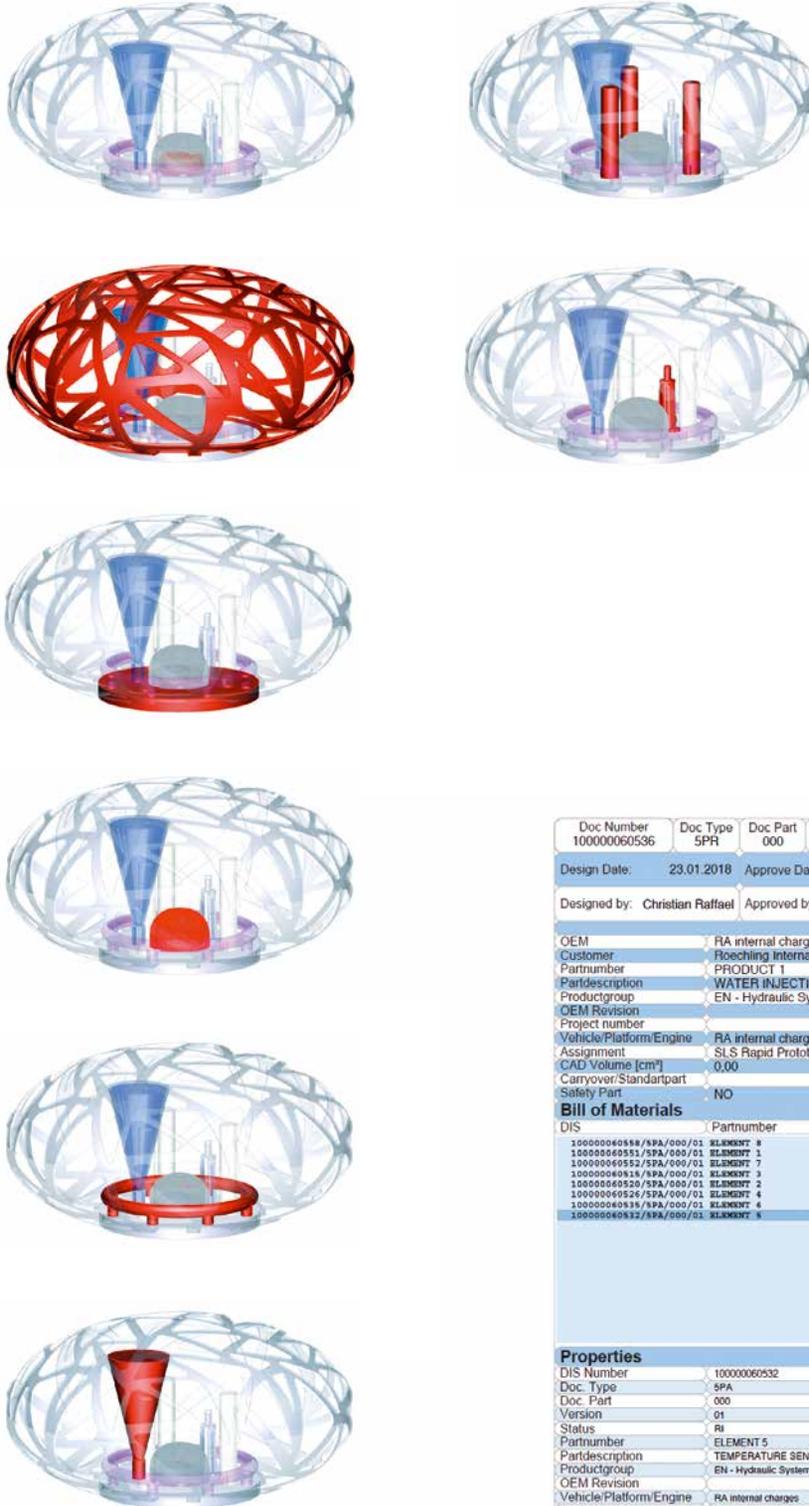
This also benefits Röchling customers in Asia. Given its status as an automotive superpower, China has been a key market for Röchling Automotive for many years. The plant in Chongqing, which is due to be officially opened shortly, is part of the internationalization strategy: wherever new markets present themselves with a good environment, Röchling Automotive is present and follows its customers. The new plant in Chongqing is just 20 kilometers away from the largest production site operated by Changan Ford.



— In the US: Jermel Jones heads up the Customer Team West Coast in San José and is convinced that “our customers are looking forward to our ideas.”

Chongqing with its 31 million residents is the economic center of southwestern China and one of the largest locations for the automotive industry. The metropolis is considered to be an important centerpiece of the “One Belt, One Road” Initiative by the Chinese Government. This project, which is also referred to as the “New Silk Road,” envisages the construction of ports, railroad lines and roads that will link the major economic centers of China with Europe. “This offers us enormous potential for further growth,” says Denis Viaro, General Manager Röchling Automotive Asia.

In Chongqing, Röchling is close to the customer, but also to the latest trends. The issue of sustainability is becoming increasingly important in the Middle Kingdom – in the area of electric cars, the country has long played a leading role on the international stage. The country is working intensively on activities relating to Industry 4.0. “In China, we can see better than anywhere else that the future of the automotive industry lies in innovative plastic solutions that feature integrated electronics expertise,” says Jackson Huang, Plant Manager at Chongqing. Röchling Automotive will be there at every step along the way.



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Carryover/Standartpart				
Safety Part		NO		
Hide	One Level	Isolate	Show All	Next Level
selected	up	selected		Structure List



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How a water tank is created, the first step: Röchling uses the latest digital tools such as interactive PDFs to distribute design data including information about current parts from the product life-cycle system internally. This makes it easier for employees to exchange ideas directly. Customers can also be included.

FAST, FASTER, DIGITAL

AUTOMOTIVE DIVISION:

How New Technologies are Changing Working Methods
and Production Processes

SHARING IDEAS WITH THE HELP OF DIGITAL TOOLS



The wheel is turning faster. Doing things faster is a central characteristic of the digital age. Suppliers are required to create and roll out new smart systems, products and materials as well as seamlessly functioning automated processes and interfaces to automotive manufacturers extremely quickly. Röchling Automotive consistently and continuously optimizes all elements along the value-added chain – from developing an idea to creating and manufacturing the product all the way to its end of life as a replacement part. The use of digital technology throughout the company is also noticeable. The key players in the digital transformation process are the employees, the most valuable resource in any company.

The digital initiatives launched by Röchling take employees on a journey from Berlin via Tel Aviv to Silicon Valley. In these creative locations, they are exposed to the digital expertise and the courage of the start-up companies, which they bring home both as an inspiration and as a challenge. “Of course, Röchling itself is not a start-up company, but we analyze and scrutinize our products and processes just as thoroughly as a start-up



— The second step on the way to the water tank: using the simplest structural elements, the basic functions are demonstrated as part of a Minimum Viable Product (MVP).

company,” says Vincent Mauroit, General Manager Innovation & Business Development at Röchling Automotive.

Engineers Work Closely Together

At Röchling Automotive, there is also no shortage of innovative ideas. However, since even the best ideas are of little benefit if nobody knows about them, if they are not adopted or if they are poorly implemented in the end, Röchling gives all employees worldwide the opportunity to share their ideas with colleagues, supported by modern digital tools. Whereas design drawings were used in the past, interactive PDFs are distributed today. A simple click on a single part of an assembly is all that is required to immediately display all the part-related information, which is stored in a central database system. The same process also applies in reverse: click into a bill of materials to highlight the associated component in color in the design drawing. With the help of intuitive software, the engineers can work closely together at an early stage – using what is called a Minimum Viable Product (MVP) to exchange ideas and work



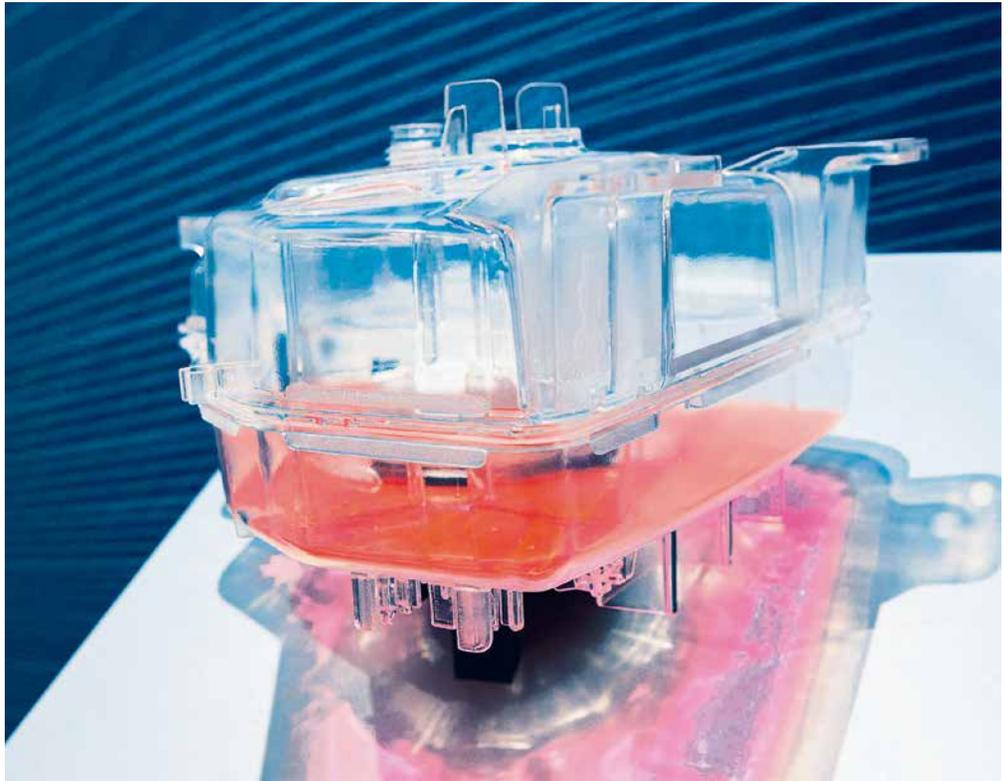
— An initial demonstrator can be constructed quickly based on the approved data. Walter Kral, Christoph Ganthaler and Vincent Mauroit (from left) use it to exchange new ideas to flesh out the proposed solution.

together to develop more advanced solutions. Thanks to digital tools, employees enjoy secure access to all important data – anytime and anywhere.

Even a layperson can imagine how important it is to avoid misunderstandings and misinterpretations in these types of creative processes. Assistance is provided here in the form of the digital stamp, which controls the approval of the design elements. The process is trouble-free and is even fun. Regardless of the CAD software used, conversion servers at all Röchling Automotive development locations guarantee standardization and speed. In this way, the company is actively driving the digitalization of its engineering activities.

Increased Use of Sensors and Software

New technologies are changing not only the working methods of an automotive supplier, but also the vehicles themselves. Sensors and software are key concepts in conjunction with the self-driving car – and are absolutely indispensable. As a system supplier, Röchling Automotive

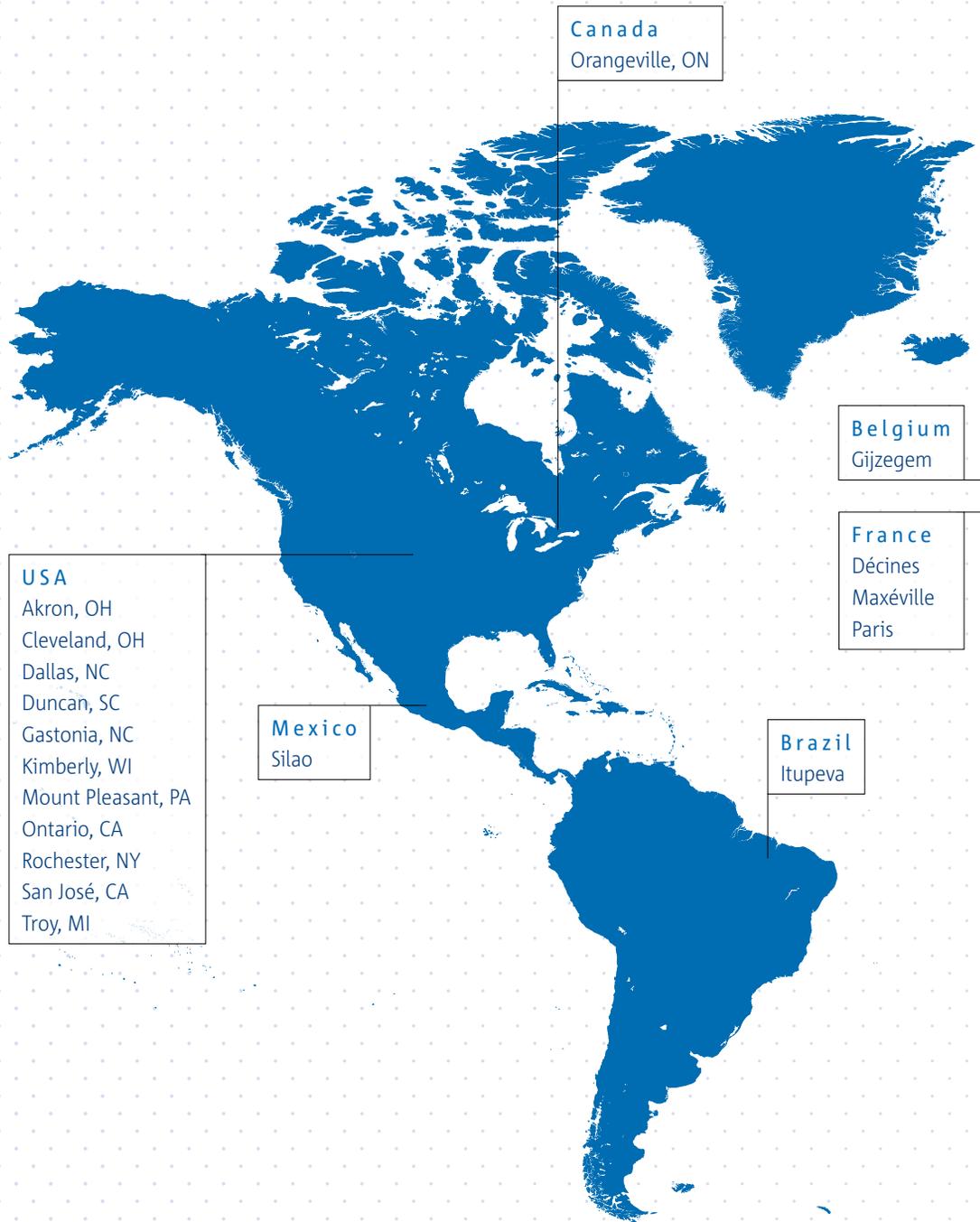


— The third step: just a few weeks later, Röchling can present an initial prototype to the customer.

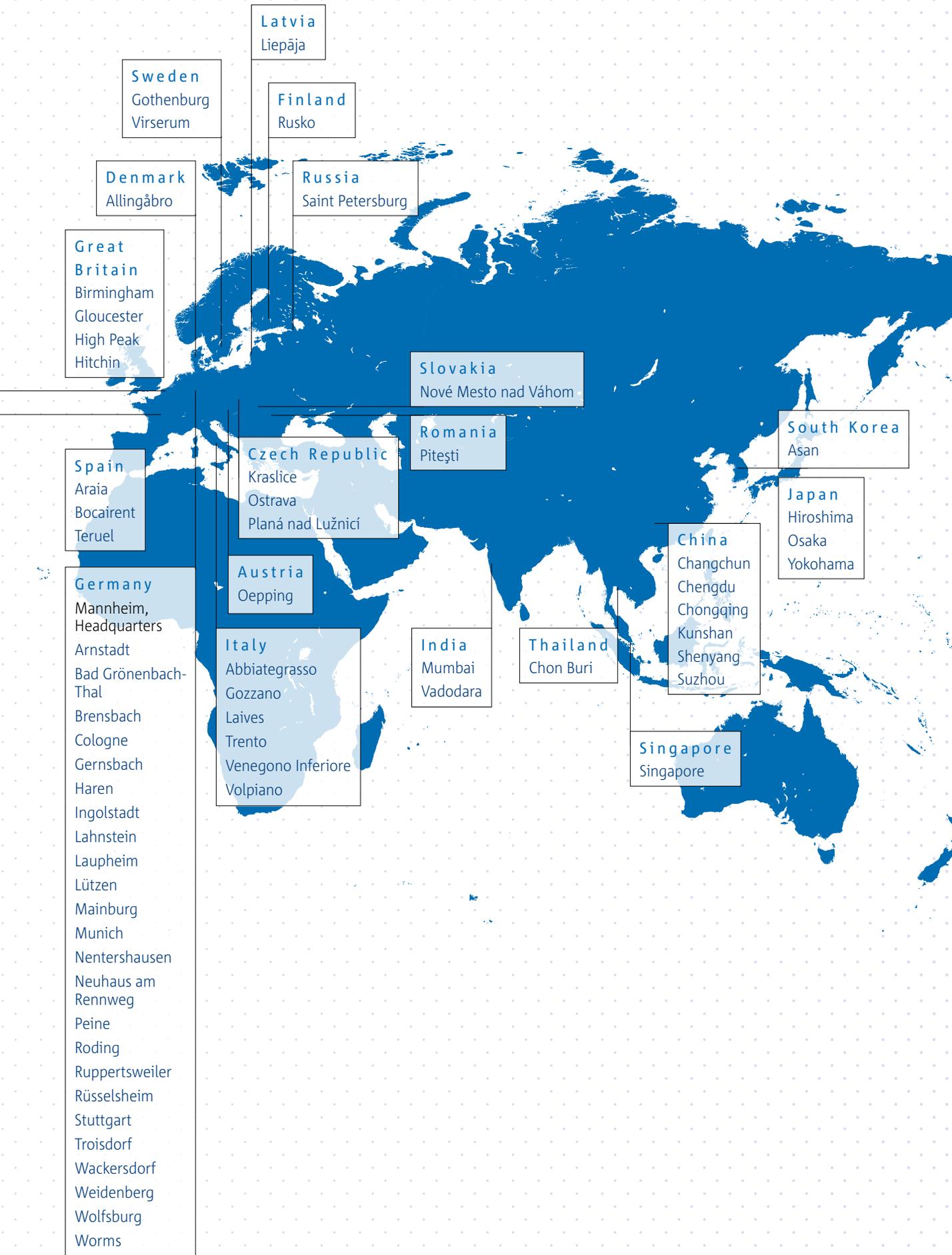
is also using them to an increasing degree. Vehicle sensors detect, for example, whether the quality of a fluid is okay and whether a tank is still sufficiently filled. Valves on tanks and reservoirs then respond to high temperatures by opening up a new path for fluids, if required. Software updates “over the air” ensure that systems are always up to date.

On the Way to the Smart Factory

One challenge is the digitalization of production, which is referred to as Industry 4.0. Above all, it is intended to help Röchling Automotive respond swiftly to changing demand – in other words, bringing the company even closer to the customer. All machines in the Röchling Automotive plants across the globe have IP addresses that allow them to communicate with one another, and all planning is already automated. Röchling Automotive is already operating pilot plants that have been attested by external experts as setting a benchmark. By mid-2019, all machinery will be intelligent, networked and digitalized. At that point, the smart factory will be a reality at Röchling Automotive.



A GLOBAL PRESENCE: 88 LOCATIONS IN 25 COUNTRIES



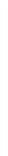


— Small, but extremely challenging: Marco Vey (on the right) and Joachim Lehmann inspect a vial that Röchling will manufacture for Aseptic Technologies. The primary application of these vials is for filling with oncological medication.

CARE IS OUR TOP PRIORITY

MEDICAL DIVISION:
Röchling Manufactures Vials in ISO Class 5 Clean Rooms
Using a Two-Component Injection-Molding Procedure

METICULOUS PREPARATION FOR THE NEW TASK



The clue is in the name: Aseptic Technologies supplies the pharmaceutical industry with equipment that ensures medications are bottled aseptically. The plastic ampules needed for filling, known as vials, will be produced and supplied by Röchling Medical in the future.

Aseptic Technologies was founded in 2002 and is based in Belgium. The company has now awarded a contract to Röchling Medical for the first time. Even if the contact is still new, a phase of intensive mutual acquaintance and understanding over the past few months has already led to close and trusting collaboration. “Customer employees visited us several times in Brensbach, Germany, observed our production, our processes and our systems and got to know the employees who will be involved in this project in the future,” reports Marco Vey, Deputy Project Manager of Röchling Medical Europe.

In the future, vials, which will later be filled with liquid medication by the pharmaceutical industry, will be produced for Aseptic Technologies in Brensbach. The vials are made up of four parts: a container for the active ingredients, a stopper that seals the container and two plastic rings that surround the container at the top and the base, known as the top and bottom rings. In clean room conditions in Brensbach, the vials



— On the machines at Aseptic Technologies, the stoppers are pierced with a special needle. A laser is used to reseal the puncture site immediately.

are injection molded, closed straightaway and then delivered to Aseptic Technologies. From there, the vials are supplied to the pharmaceutical manufacturers, who use gamma radiation to sterilize them before they are filled. Aseptic Technologies has developed a special system for this. A special needle pierces the stopper, allowing the liquid medicine to be injected into the vial. A laser is used to immediately reseal the puncture site in the stopper. The contents of the vial will be removed in clinics or medical practices using a syringe, which pierces the stopper, and then injected into the patient.

New Process, New Clean Room Class

Producing vials under clean room conditions is, in principle, nothing new for Röchling Medical Europe. However, the plastic specialists are entering new territory with the manufacturing process for Aseptic Technologies. The vials will not be made with injection blow molding, but will instead be manufactured using a two-component injection molding assembly process in an ISO class 5 clean room. “The manufacturing process and this category of clean room are new to us. We are currently preparing meticulously and will master the new challenges professionally,” says Project Manager Vey.

Two-component injection molding assembly process means that two parts made from different materials are produced in just one tool. In this case, the active ingredient container is made from a transparent cyclic olefin copolymer (COC) and the stopper is made from thermoplastic elastomer (TPE). Two robots remove the finished parts from the tool cavities and then join them together. This process takes place entirely under ISO 5 clean room conditions, preventing the vials from being contaminated. Scratches, spots and increased tensions in the transparent copolymer must be prevented at all costs. Therefore, the very scratch-sensitive COC parts must be handled as so with kid gloves throughout the entire production process and be held by the robots only in the outer sections. “In order to avoid surface irritations, our tool cavities must also have a particularly high-quality surface finish,” explains Project Manager Vey. Each individual vial will also be turned 360° and subjected to a reflected and transmitted light inspection with a camera system, reports the 39-year-old.

High-Strength and Shatter-Proof

Vials made from engineering plastic have a crucial advantage over glass vials: the high-strength and shatter-proof material prevents the vials from being broken if they fall accidentally when in use. At the same time, the plastic has very good barrier properties, like glass. This means that liquids or gases cannot pass through it. In addition, thanks to their special design and material properties, the vials can be stored by pharmaceutical and healthcare companies and establishments in liquid nitrogen without jeopardizing the integrity of the container closure. The vials will be manufactured for Aseptic Technologies in three sizes. The “normal” vials hold a milliliter or two milliliters and a special version is suitable for less than one milliliter. It has a v-shaped base, which makes it possible to remove even the smallest remaining volume with the syringe. This is because the medications, particularly those used in oncological treatment, are very expensive and this complete emptying is an important factor.



— The vials manufactured in Brensbach, Germany, comprise four parts: an active ingredient receptacle, a stopper and two rings. Throughout the production process, the extremely scratch-prone plastic container is conveyed through the clean room with extreme care.

During the production process, no-one is allowed into the clean room. All of the steps are fully automated. If tools need to be replaced or other tasks carried out on the equipment, the most stringent hygiene standards apply to enter and leave the clean room. “For the first time, we are manufacturing in an ISO class 5 clean room. We have given our employees relevant training and demand a high level of discipline, which ensures that all our processes meet the very high requirements, and monitor it all with the appropriate monitoring systems,” says Joachim Lehmann, Director of the Medical Europe Business Unit. The packaging process, including sterile shrink-wrapping of the vials, is regulated precisely.

At Röchling Medical, a large team works on setting up the perfect processes. This involves employees from the Purchasing, Quality, Tool Manufacturing, Production and Technical Services for Plant Planning departments. Every two weeks, there are regular telephone conferences with the customer to coordinate the project status. In addition to this, there are meetings at the Brensbach location or in Belgium. For Aseptic Technologies, a smooth start to the project is important in order to be able to supply pharmaceutical companies reliably, as normal. They are on the right track together with Röchling Medical.



— Dimitri Dering, an applications engineer in the production department in Brensbach, Germany, at an injection-molding machine used to manufacture the oral syringe for the Sympfity system. Röchling has developed a tool prototype that is being continuously optimized.

CLOSENESS AMONG PARTNERS

MEDICAL DIVISION:
Röchling and HS Design Developing
a Ground-Breaking Drug Delivery System

A COMPLEX SYSTEM WITH TWELVE COMPONENTS



Developing and manufacturing plastic products for the medical and pharmaceutical industry is the Röchling company's core competency in the Medical division. The range stretches from precision plastic parts to high-quality packaging. Close communication between the divisions and across locations is needed so that the customer receives exactly what he is looking for.

This was exactly the same in the case of "Sympfyny." In mid-2016, Röchling Medical in Rochester, NY/USA, received a request from HS Design, Gladstone, NJ/USA, a user-driven product development firm providing innovative design solutions in medical and pharmaceutical environments. HS Design was looking for a new partner with which to take part in a tender by a worldwide leading pharmaceutical company. Röchling Medical in Rochester immediately contacted its European sister companies, which had the desired expertise.



That's the way to do it: Multiparticulate medications were developed for children, who do not like swallowing bitter pills. These neutralize the taste of the active ingredient. The Sympfity drug delivery system enables safe and reliable administration of medication.

The pharmaceutical manufacturer's idea: In future, children who will not swallow bitter medicine can receive it in the form of multiparticulate medications. This involves tiny pellets that are about the size of salt crystals. These micropellets are multilayered, whereby the outermost layer neutralizes the taste of the actual active ingredients, without affecting their impact.

Looking for a Development Partner

The challenge: How to package the multiparticulate medications and orally administer them easily, reliably and in exact dosages to children when at home? HS Design had a range of ideas and designs but needed a development partner, with whom the ideas could be further developed and converted into a functional industrial design. This partner had to be in a situation to create prototypes and pilot parts as well as to produce and market the system in large-scale production if successful.

The solution: The Sympfny system comprises a container with a child resistant closure (CRC), in which the medication is kept. An oral syringe can then be connected precisely to the container, whereby two valves open automatically and are closed again when disconnected. This syringe removes the medication from the container and transfers a precise dose to the mouth. This easy handling allows the multiparticulate medication to be administered just as simply, exactly and safely as with liquid medications.

Optimal Functionalities

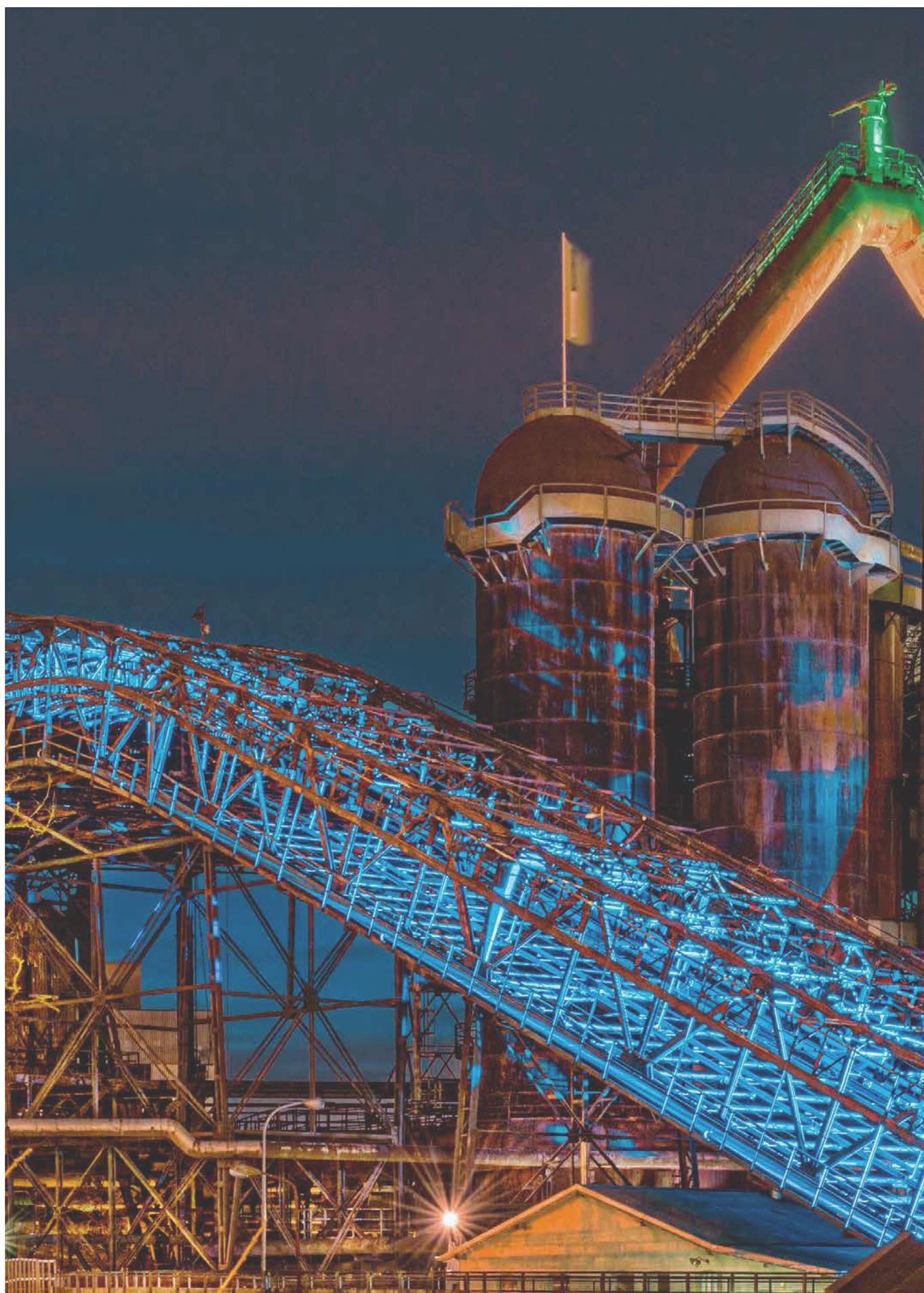
What sounds easy is hard work in development and implementation. The technical challenges started with the novel substance, with which there was little experience up to then. The optimal functionality for the syringe for administering the medication and, above all, the connection between the syringe and the container had to be honed to perfection. The project's level of complexity is shown not least in the fact that more than 80 companies took part in the tender but in the end, only two companies and their proposals were selected for further development.

“The whole project is a combined teamwork between the three Röchling Medical divisions' locations. Close communication and proximity between all those involved is required,” says Valérie Duval, Head of Global Sales at Röchling Medical. Before the start of the project, rules were defined, tasks were divided and responsibilities were determined, both within Röchling and in collaboration with development partner HS Design. Valérie Duval talks about a win-win situation, into which Röchling brings its knowledge and expertise in manufacturing and processing. The container is manufactured in Neuhaus am Rennweg, the oral syringe and closure are produced by injection molding and fully assembled in Brensbach, both plants located in Germany.



— Valérie Duval is the Head of Global Sales at Röchling Medical. “In the pharmaceutical industry, you must have a great deal of patience and be willing to build trust,” says the 52-year-old.

Within just eight months, Röchling succeeded in developing a system with a total of 12 parts and in making pre-series parts. “It was also an advantage for us that we could manufacture our tools by ourselves,” explains Duval, who has been familiar with the topic of plastic since childhood: In the 1960s, her grandfather, an apple farmer in Normandy, invested in a company that produced plastic plates for children, an extremely innovative business at the time. Duval has been employed in the plastics industry for 29 years and specializes in primary packaging and drug delivery systems for the pharmaceutical industry. The clinical tests with Sympfny start next. There is one thing that the 52-year-old knows well from experience: “The pharmaceutical industry is all about playing the long game – you need to have patience and build trust.”



COAL – STEEL – PLASTICS

TWO CENTURIES OF INNOVATIVE MATERIALS



From Völklingen to the world: In just two centuries, the coal trading company established in 1822 by Friedrich Ludwig Röchling has developed into a global plastics group. Röchling's motto is to conquer new markets and regions with innovative materials.

Steel as a Driver of Innovation

The coal business was the basis for the company's involvement with the rising driver of innovation of the Industrial Revolution – steel. The four nephews of the founder of the company – known as the “Röchling brothers” – began producing coke and processing industrial iron in 1849. The acquisition of Völklingen Ironworks in 1881 marked the beginning of the steel era. Over 100 years later, the Völklingen Ironworks were designated as the first industrial UNESCO World Heritage Site.

By 1920 – just 100 years after the company was founded – Röchling recognized the potential of a new material and became a pioneer in plastics processing. The aim was to step away from a dependence on steel. In 1955, Röchling acquired Rheinmetall Berlin AG, the supplier of the newly founded German Army, diversified into other new business fields and, in 1978, finally left the mining industry altogether. With regard to plastics, Röchling mainly focused on internal growth and strategic acquisitions in new industries such as automotive plastics. The company also increased its presence on international markets, particularly in Asia and the USA.

Focus on Materials Expertise

In the new millennium, Röchling once again focused on its materials expertise. The Group divested all investments not related to plastics. With its increased internationalization and diversification into new industries, it renewed its focus on its unique materials and processing expertise that it had acquired over the last century.

In the 21st century, plastic products by Röchling are at the cutting edge in all industries – just as it was two centuries ago for applications of Röchling steel. Today, the Röchling Group is the global leader in the processing of technical, high-performance plastics for industrial, automotive and medical applications.

THE RÖCHLINGS

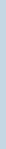
CONTINUITY AMID CHANGE



Responsible, long-term, sustainable and value-creating – these are the qualities that characterize the thoughts and actions of a family-owned company. They also paint an image of the Röchling family, which can be traced back to the 17th century and whose current family members are the eighth generation of shareholders of the company. The Röchlings have always regarded themselves as “family entrepreneurs” – regardless of whether they were in charge of the operational management of the company or – as they are today – setting the strategic course of the international Group as part of the Advisory Board, which is made up of family members and external experts. The Chairman of the Advisory Board is Johannes Freiherr von Salmuth, a sixth-generation descendant of the company’s founder.

Across almost two centuries, the family has closely steered its company throughout its eventful transition from steel producer to global plastics group. In good times as well as in difficult ones, the family provided continuity amid change and thus helped secure the success of the Röchling Group in the long term.

A CENTURY OF PLASTICS EXPERTISE



In **1916**, Holzveredelung GmbH in Berlin registered a patent for the completely new material, Lignostone. The material is made of wood but converted into a “plastic” with particular characteristics using a special compression process. In **1920**, the Röchling entrepreneurial family acquired the company. For the “steel barons of the Saar,” this was the starting point for the plastics activities of the Röchling Group.

In **1935**, Röchling relocated Holzveredelung GmbH to Haren in Emsland, which is now the oldest Röchling Group location.

The **1960s** and **1970s** were characterized by pioneering materials developments, with Röchling releasing the thermoplastic Polystone® and the glass fiber reinforced plastic Durostone® on the market.

In the **1980s**, the plastics business of the Röchling Group was also characterized by acquisitions. By acquiring the Sustaplast Group in Lahnstein, the Group gained a specialist in the manufacture of semi-finished products made of plastic. Röchling entered the automotive plastics industry through the acquisition of the Seeber Group in South Tyrol.

The **1990s** and **2000s** saw consistent internationalization, with the establishment of subsidiaries and production locations in Europe, the USA, China and India.

In **2008**, the company entered the field of medical technology with the acquisition of the Oertl Kunststofftechnik Group. This market presence was bolstered by the acquisition of the American company Advent Tool & Mold in **2012** and HPT Hochwertige Pharmatechnik in **2015**.

Since **2016**, Röchling has three independent divisions – Industrial, Automotive and Medical.

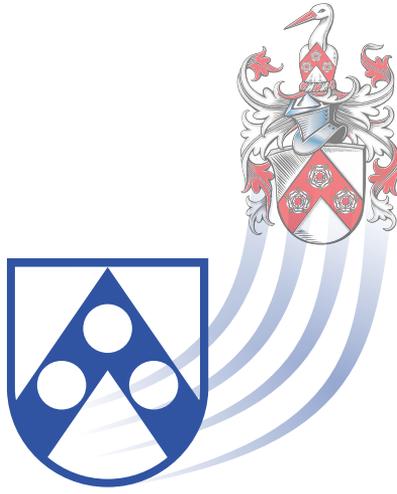
RÖCHLING ENKEL AWARD

AWARD FOR
COMMITMENT
TO THE
FUTURE



As a family-owned company, Röchling attaches great importance to preparing for the future. With this in mind, we have initiated a new award: In 2017, the Röchling Enkel Award, which focuses on the shared framework of values of the Group and of the Röchling family, was presented for the first time. In the future, it will be used to recognize the particular dedication and exemplary projects of Röchling employees that aim to prepare the company for the future.

For Röchling, it is important not only to be financially successful, but also to act with a sense of responsibility to society. In the future, such behavior by our employees both in the workplace and beyond will be honored accordingly with the Enkel Award.

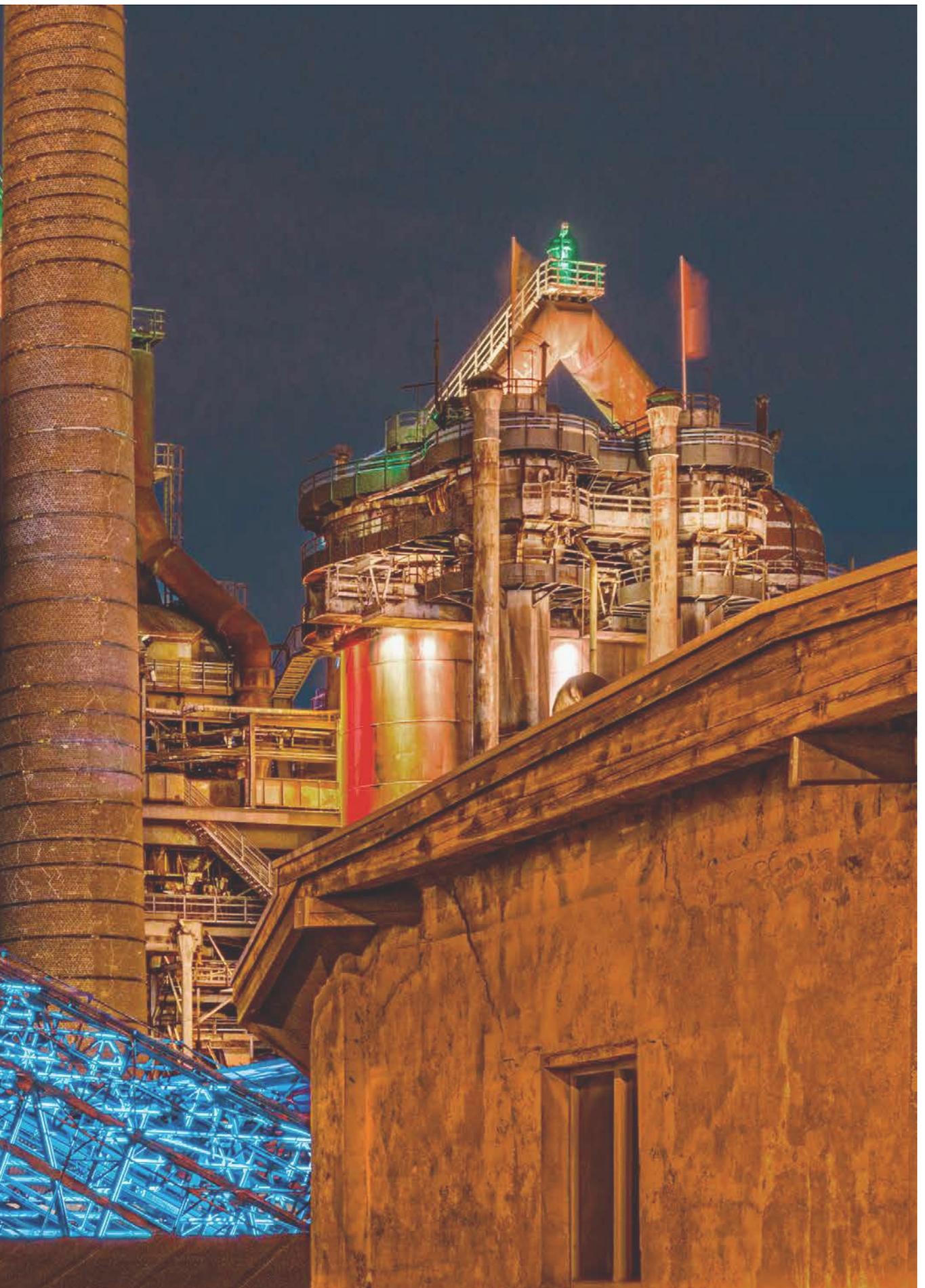


RÖCHLING
ENKEL AWARD

Family-owned companies plan in terms of generations, not years, and certainly not in terms of quarters. It is important to approach everything that is new with curiosity and an open mind, and to never forget where we came from and the framework of values on which was built what we have today. The new award recognizes outstanding performance that benefits the entire company, transcending the boundaries of locations and divisions.

It recognizes the “Röchling spirit,” which is the polar opposite of blinkered, division-based thinking. This spirit embraces the big picture. “It is not only our own short-term interests that count, but always the long-term well-being of the global Röchling Group, and therefore that of subsequent generations of employees and shareholders,” says Johannes von Salmuth, Chairman of the Shareholder’s Committee and a sixth-generation family member.

It is for this reason that this prize was christened the Enkel Award – although Röchling is now an international company that operates all over the world. “The German word ‘Enkel’ (grandchildren) establishes a direct link to our German founding family and furthermore, it also references the cross-generational business model that is so typical for German family companies,” says von Salmuth. This link is also echoed in the design of the award, which visually reflects the historical association between family coats of arms and the current company logo.





8,600 kilometers apart but united by a sense of fun: the team at Röchling Industrial in Suzhou, China (top), photographed by Vera Qian, and employees at Röchling Medical in the clean room in Neuhaus am Rennweg, Germany, photographed by Andrea Heyder.

THE EMPLOYEES ARE CLOSEST

“RÖCHLING IS EVERYWHERE:”

Global Recruitment Campaign and Internal Photo Competition

A HIGHLY RATED EMPLOYER

These days, the most talented junior staff can choose who they want to work for. That is because the shortage of specialist labor is noticeable everywhere. This means that companies must work harder than ever to raise their game as an employer. As such, they must set themselves apart from the competition and portray a certain image. Against this backdrop, the Röchling Group has created a new, global recruitment campaign. The employees who are already on board at Röchling play a key role in the campaign.

From Express Trains to Nasal Spray Bottles

With the campaign entitled “Röchling is Everywhere,” we are highly rated as an employer and “hidden champion” that is closer to many people than they may realize. Röchling is present everywhere in the world, with 88 locations on four continents. Röchling is also everywhere in everyday life, in virtually every industrially manufactured product. From express trains to wind turbines, from the engine shielding in cars to nasal spray bottles.

The campaign “Röchling is Everywhere” presents an authentic image of the company, close to the everyday working life of its employees. On various communication channels – for example in videos and brochures, in photos and on the Internet – the employees provide insights into their everyday working routine and into the location where they work.



— “The photo campaign helped all employees at Röchling worldwide to get a closer understanding of the different cultures” – Angel Xie, Röchling Automotive, Chengdu, China.

One thing is clear: Nobody is closer to Röchling than its employees. They are the people most familiar with the culture and values of our traditional family-owned company. They have mastered all processes and procedures, be they technical or commercial. They are fully in the picture when it comes to customer requests and products. They know the opportunities and possibilities that Röchling offers them. In short: They know the benefits of working for Röchling. They represent the best and most credible way to attract new staff.



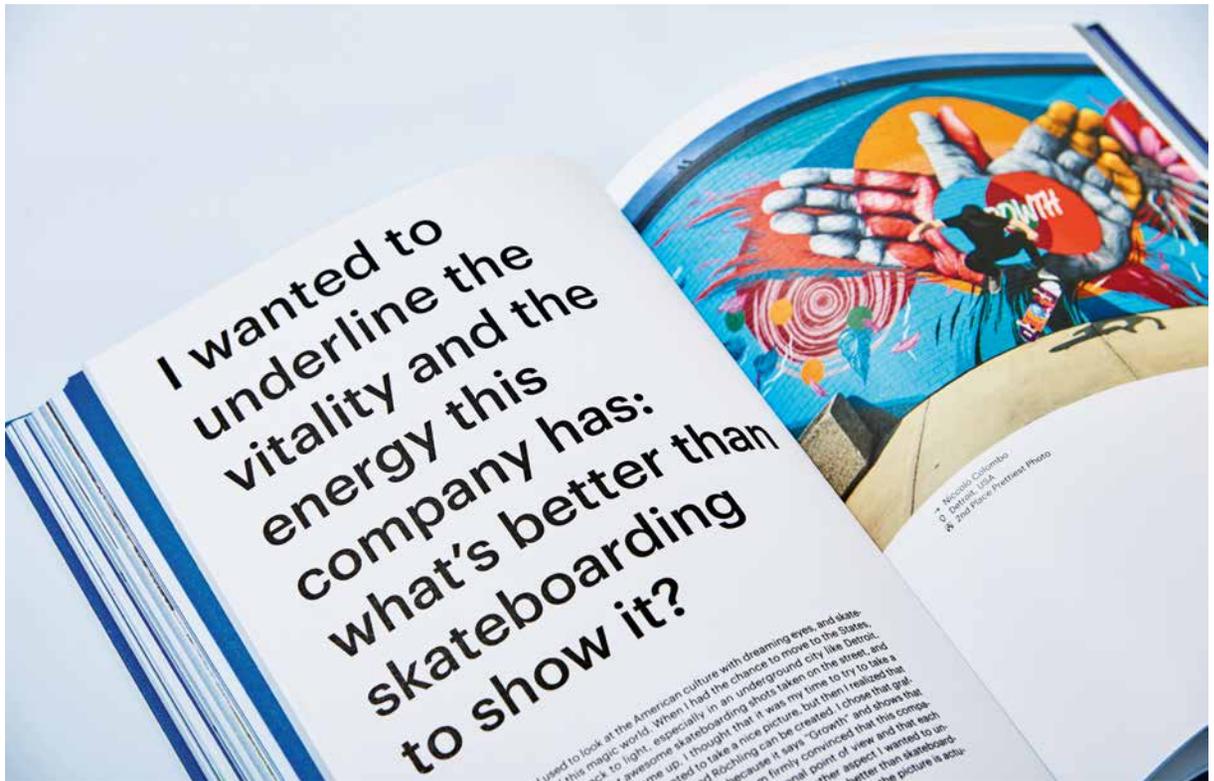
Special plants deserve special care, as demonstrated by Stefano Campo of Röchling Automotive in Laives, Italy. For his colleague Karin Steinkogler, it's not just the workplace that revolves around cars (small photo).



A prerequisite for this is that the team actually stands behind its employer and is happy to work for the company. In 2017, Röchling bolstered this internal cohesion and team spirit with the help of a photo campaign. Employees at all locations worldwide were invited to place a small location marker displaying the Röchling logo at places chosen by them and to take a photograph. The aim was to document the fact that Röchling is everywhere – in fact or in spirit.

Each Picture Tells a Little Story

The response was huge: almost 1,000 photos were submitted, and each picture tells a little story. It shows what the employees associate their company with and what they have in common – across national borders, cultures, hierarchies and working areas. Parents fly a “Röchling kite” with



“A Snapshot of Röchling” is the title of the book containing all the photos submitted, including the picture of the team at Röchling Industrial in Oepping, Austria (small photo). The employees recreated the Röchling logo on a green meadow.



their children, nothing gets done in the kitchen without a plastic chopping board, skateboards only work properly thanks to Röchling, and even the dentist’s chair relies on the technical plastics supplied by Röchling.

Winners in Five Categories

Unusual locations, interesting products, expressive group shots, funny motifs, and simply beautiful photos – awards were presented in these five categories. The photos were incorporated into the recruitment campaign “Röchling is Everywhere” and not least document how the employees feel about their company.

In the following three examples, we show what closeness in everyday work means, and how Röchling creates close connections to employees, customers, markets or new topics.

FROM SMALL FAMILY TO EXTENDED FAMILY

Röchling Maywo

The company color used to be green. Today, it is blue. What was once an independent family-run firm is now part of a group of companies. Some things have changed for the workforce at the plastics processor in the Allgäu region in Germany, others have not: employees are as proud to be working for “Röchling Maywo” today as they were when employed by Maywo.

The integration of Maywo GmbH in the Röchling Group in 2012 transformed what was a small family into an extended one. The employees of the plastics processor are now part of a global family-owned company with a history dating back almost 200 years.

In the case of Maywo GmbH, it was possible to achieve the one thing that so often fails during company acquisitions: ensuring that both parties profited. By general consensus, this was achieved largely because the management lent a particularly sympathetic ear to the new employees throughout the sale and in the ensuing period and kept a close eye on their needs, but also on their concerns.

A Convincing Offer

The sale of the profitable company was triggered by the withdrawal of its two shareholders. The employees feared for their jobs. In the search for a new owner, the Maywo managing director at the time quickly had the family-owned company Röchling in his sights. On closer inspection, Röchling’s offer was also the most convincing. “For example, Röchling agreed to take on all employees under the same terms and to strive for growth,” reports Florian Helmich, Managing Director of Röchling Maywo since 2012. Röchling turned rhetoric into action. Just three months after signing the purchase agreement, Röchling approved the first major investment. “This is how you get people on board,” says Helmich.



— The Röchling Maywo team in Bad Grönenbach: The old times were good, but the new ones are even better. As part of the global Röchling Group, the company from the Allgäu region has excellent development opportunities.

Intensive Persuasive Efforts

During this initial phase, it was important to communicate as openly as possible. The message was: We will continue as a family and a team but with much better opportunities to develop as a company than before. “It took a great deal of work to convince all employees of this,” recalls authorized officer Ingrid Teichmann, who has been working for Maywo for 21 years. The then Röchling CEO, Ludger Bartels, traveled specially from Mannheim to attend a works meeting. “Our employees saw that as a genuine sign of appreciation,” recalls the authorized officer. Not long after that, the entire Maywo workforce spent a weekend in Haren, where they inspected the production facilities. “That further reinforced the feeling that we have excellent prospects,” adds the native of the Allgäu region, who knows the company better than almost anyone else.

For Röchling, it was clear from the outset that somebody from within the company would be on site to introduce the new mindset and new rules but without imposing them on the Maywo employees. The ultimate decision was in favor of Helmich, who was working at Röchling Industrial in Haren. The native of the Emsland district in Lower Saxony is not known for keeping his opinion to himself. He ensured that Maywo was not immediately renamed after the takeover. “We had to convince the customers gradually that the familiar Maywo quality would remain the same under Röchling. We couldn’t simply gamble away the firm’s good image,” explains Helmich. That is why Maywo only became “Röchling Maywo” two years after the takeover.

Discussions Between Equal Partners

During the acquisition process, it was also important to allow time to resolve key issues and to develop common positions based on sound arguments. “Of course, there are points that are non-negotiable for the purchaser,” adds Helmich. “But in other areas, it is possible to reach compromises.” Authorized officer Teichmann also had similar experiences: “The Röchling management listened to our opinions and engaged with

— Natives of the Allgäu and Emsland regions respectively: Ingrid Teichmann and Florian Helmich work hand in hand in the management of Röchling Maywo.



us as equal partners.” She goes on to explain that the company profits today from its contacts with the other Röchling companies. This mutual exchange of ideas and expertise at every level was extremely productive, she adds. “Maywo benefited significantly from Röchling in the area of automation as well,” adds Helmich. In return, Maywo, which specializes in the production of semi-finished products made from thermoplastics for applications in vacuum forming technology, ensured that Röchling now also had a good reputation in the market in this segment.

Since the takeover five years ago, the headcount has increased from 83 to 121, and sales from EUR 25 million to EUR 40 million. The machinery was upgraded with seven-figure investments, and a new production hall is currently being taken into operation. With an investment volume of five million euros, Röchling kept its word: Maywo has a bright future.

HAVING FUN COLLECTING THE BEST INNOVATIONS

Claudio Fauni,

Sales Manager
Röchling Automotive

In times of digitalization, ambitious start-ups and rapid changes in business models it is more important than ever before for companies to act quickly and flexibly, support creativity, come up with new ideas and develop innovations. Röchling Automotive closely involves its employees worldwide in this innovation process, and with good reason – employees are closer to the topics relevant to Röchling Automotive than anyone else. Their ideas count.

Under the slogan “Boost our Future,” Röchling held an eight-month-long ideas competition in 2017. The employees were asked to use virtual game elements to develop a range of innovation and growth strategies that will help put the company on its future path to success.

The response was huge.

Departing from Beaten Path

Claudio Fauni, Sales Manager of Röchling Automotive, was part of one of the four teams that came out ahead in the end. “Right from the start, I enjoyed being part of the game and working on an idea that fits the company’s core competencies but, at the same time, gave me the opportunity to move away from current solutions and leave the beaten path,” says the motivated lateral thinker.



— The time has come: as part of the pitch, Claudio Fauni explains his team's idea to the Röchling Automotive Management Board.

Fauni and his teammate Edoardo Martelli, an employee on the New Business Green Car product line, pursued the idea of optimizing thermal energy management at vehicle level. “From the start, our development was quite close to the customer’s needs and can be integrated into the existing Röchling business very well because it combines several of the competencies available in the company,” reports Fauni.

This was not a compulsory factor in the 500 or so ideas that were brought together in an “inspiration” game at the start of the competition. “We also want to deal with approaches that reach far, far into the future, are completely novel and go in a direction that we have not considered before,” says Vincent Mauroit, General Manager of Innovation & Business Development at Röchling Automotive. More appetite for risk, trying things out more quickly, learning quickly from mistakes too and then continuing – for Mauroit, these are part of the new corporate culture.

From Idea to Business Plan

Over the course of “Boost our Future,” the most promising ideas were converted into specific business plans in virtual investment rounds. The six best teams then pitched their ideas to the Röchling Automotive Management Board and, in doing so, asked for time, resources and “real” money that would enable them to develop and implement their ideas. In the end, four teams got the nod. The pitch was an exciting experience, says Claudio Fauni. “It was like a TV show. You wouldn’t believe how difficult it is to condense an idea that has been developed over weeks into a five-minute presentation. The stress faded only after the pitch and we realized how relevant our idea is for the company’s future developments.”



Step by step: through the growth funnel toward innovation.

Erwin Doll, CEO of Röchling Automotive and Vice-chairman of the Röchling Group, is particularly enthusiastic about the widespread employee involvement. “The fact that even those who don’t have anything to do with technology in their day-to-day work were so committed to the competition shows the great passion with which we as a company tackle every challenge.” Martelli was also delighted by the close cross-departmental collaboration: “Colleagues from Purchasing or Logistics have an entirely different view on the topic than I do from Research and Development. This only makes for a better result in the end.”

The ideas competition created a protected environment, in which risk-free investigation, sharing and learning was possible. The participants appeared under fictional user names. Whether Superman or Donald Duck – the anonymous game atmosphere created a sense of fun and efficiency for everyone involved in developing customer-oriented ideas, true to the Röchling Automotive motto: “Enjoy Efficiency.”

MAKING LIFE EASIER FOR THE CUSTOMER

Fred Will,

Head of Project Management
Röchling Medical

The customer is headquartered in Belgium, the suppliers are based in Italy and Germany, the sales employee responsible at Röchling lives near Paris, production takes place in the Odenwald region – despite the distances involved, everything still runs like clockwork in a project like this at Röchling Medical. Project Manager Fred Will and his team are responsible for creating the right type of closeness.

The trained plastics technology engineer is in charge of project management at the German Röchling locations in Brensbach in Hesse and in Neuhaus in Thuringia. He is also responsible for several individual projects. The “robust project organization,” as the 52-year-old describes it, at Röchling Medical is fundamentally always the same. A main project manager holds all the different strands of the project, while several sub-project managers focus closely on individual topics such as quality, toolmaking, process technology, packaging or logistics. For Will, one thing is for sure: the key to success is the project organization.

Röchling Handles the Coordination

Röchling Medical is present internationally at four locations – two in Germany, one in Rochester, USA, and one in Suzhou, China. Customers expect these locations to adhere to budgets, quality and deadlines.

“That goes without saying. In addition, they want to reduce the need for coordination work to a minimum,” says Will. “Our most important task is very simple: we make life easier for the customer.”



— Fred Will sees robust project organization as the key to success. Employees who are willing to communicate and teams that work systematically are indispensable for this.

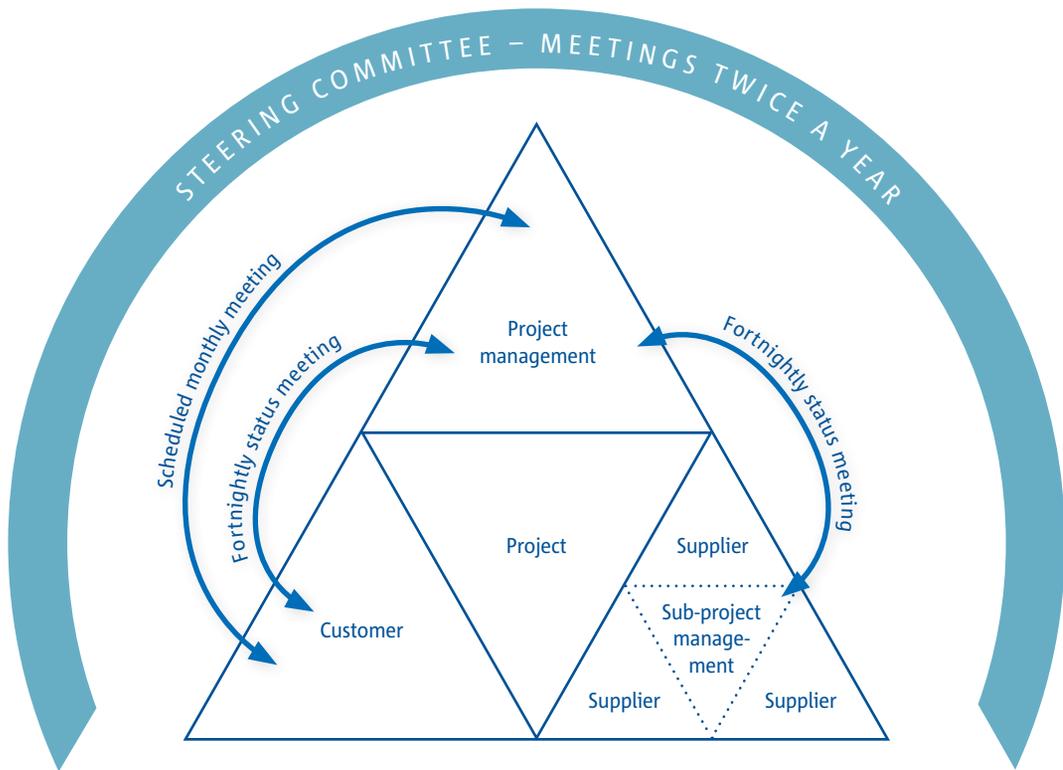
In the pharmaceutical and medical sectors, it generally takes three to five years to progress from the initial sales contact to the start of production. At the start of a project, Röchling “books in” all the employees that will be involved. From this point on, they all have regulated access to a central storage location that is used to exchange and archive data. The project list provides an overview of all projects and is meticulously updated on a weekly basis. A type of traffic-light system indicates the escalation level for each project, while its progress is tracked as a percentage.

Various Departments Represented in the Team

A project team consists of up to 20 experts representing various different departments. The aim is to consider questions relating to topics such as manufacturing, quality and packaging in detail early on. The risk assessment, which plays a major role in the pharma and medical fields, is extremely important: risks to the patient must be excluded at all times, and the hygiene requirements are generally extremely strict.

Standard communication includes a fortnightly status meeting involving all sub-project managers and the project manager as well as a meeting between the project manager and the customer – also every two weeks. These are usually held in the form of conference calls. Participation is mandatory because everybody needs to be on the same page. Once a month, the project manager meets the customer on site to discuss selected topics. The steering committee usually meets twice a year. It includes decision-makers from the customer and suppliers as well as the management of Röchling Medical. The exchanges are challenging, and discussions are conducted at a high technical level.

When asked about the profile of his employees, Will does not hesitate for long: “We deal with major customers and highly competent suppliers and development partners. Our employees must be capable of communicating with each of these on an equal footing.” This requires suitable technical expertise, excellent English language skills, a confident manner and strong communication skills.



— Meticulous updates, regular information, open communication:

Röchling Medical has implemented a structured project management system that focuses in equal measure on internal processes and on contacts with customers and partners.

“We have a large number of young people who can do just that – communicate openly and quickly, and work systematically. The team has made enormous progress,” says Will, praising his team. At the same time, Röchling is building on the expertise of its experienced colleagues to ensure that it is not lost, he adds. Röchling employs a variety of measures such as in-house training courses, specialist seminars and language courses to ensure that employees are kept up to speed and continue to develop – essential prerequisites when it comes to staying on top of things.



Simply getting closer to people and their needs – this is a fundamental principle of the Röchling Foundation. “Simply closer” also refers to the relationship between the foundation’s Board of Trustees and the organizations supported: each project is overseen by a member of the Board of Trustees, who acts as a sponsor.



— With the support of expert Marlene Biberacher (center), teaching staff at day-care facilities in Bayreuth gain the skills they need to deal with traumatized refugee children. The lively discussions certainly help.

One example of this extraordinary cooperation in the foundation sector is the trauma support provided for children. The Röchling Foundation supports an initiative of the Bavarian Red Cross that provides advanced training in the area of trauma pedagogy free of charge to teaching staff in nurseries and day-care facilities. The initiative helps these workers to respond competently to the special needs of traumatized refugee children.

People who have found refuge in Germany have escaped war, displacement and hunger only in physical terms to begin with. Mentally, these people – including many children – have to contend with post-traumatic consequences of the atrocities they have experienced. Staff in local care facilities are often unprepared for this.

“Traumatized children have an urgent need for care and accommodation where they feel protected and safe so that they can begin to process their horrific experiences,” says Regina Michaelis-Braun, a member of the Board of Trustees of the Röchling Foundation. She oversees the project as a sponsor and knows how important the appropriate pedagogical care is when it comes to emotional healing – it thus represents the opportunity for traumatized children to integrate in their new surroundings.

Children who have experienced war and violence are generally extremely fearful, sad, nervous, aggressive or completely withdrawn. Even physical symptoms such as insomnia, stomach aches, loss of appetite and headaches are not uncommon. “In the absence of professional treatment, highly stressed children are incapable of forming healthy relationships and experience a lack of understanding in social interactions,” explains sponsor Michaelis-Braun. “The more their sense of stability, emotional resilience and self-control over feelings are restored, the better the children are able to acquire a new language. This language acquisition is extremely important to enable them to adapt to a new and completely different culture and environment. This also relieves the burden on the supporting society.”

Day-care facilities in particular play an important role in helping families with a migrant background to settle in and integrate. They provide the children with a structured environment, stability, confidence and a feeling of security. In many cases, they are also the children’s first contact with the German language and culture. The earlier traumatized children are supported in their healing process, the sooner they will have the opportunity for a healthy and happy childhood.

Targeted Boosting of Multipliers

This is why the Röchling Foundation is supporting this qualification initiative of the Bavarian Red Cross in two projects with three advanced training courses each and is investing a total of 120,000 euros.



**Regina
Michaelis-Braun,**

Röchling shareholder,
member of the Board
of Trustees of the Röchling
Foundation and sponsor
of the “Trauma Pedagogy”
project

The example illustrates the strategy of the Röchling Foundation. By boosting the expertise of multipliers in a targeted manner – in this case, the teaching staff in nurseries and day-care facilities – the foundation aims to change the structures, thereby bringing about a lasting improvement in the opportunities for disadvantaged people. The Röchling Foundation advocates the areas of plastics and the environment as well as involvement and competence. It is also equally committed to supporting individual advanced and further training measures as well as interdisciplinary scientific platforms – it takes part in the public discourse, be it in the form of publications, panel discussions, dialogues or research projects.

The sponsorship model – that is, the partner-like support for the projects by a member of the foundation’s trustee committee – benefits both sides. The foundation gains a better insight into the project work while the supported organizations can expect advice and assistance at all times, in addition to the financial donation. In a nutshell: “simply closer.”

Close to People and Their Needs

This modern principle is founded on a long tradition. For the Röchling family, corporate responsibility has always included a sense of duty to society. As far back as the 19th century, the entrepreneurial family initiated a range of social projects including the provision of infant welfare, a day-care facility for children and affordable accommodation for its employees and their families. Listening to the concerns of employees and the population at the company locations, sharing in their experiences – being close to people and their needs: the Röchling Foundation continues this work today with its projects and sponsorship model.

<http://www.roechling-stiftung.de/en/>

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