

“Sales Benefits from Trustful Interaction”

In August 2022, when Pascal Schwindhammer started his job as head of sales at KABELMAT Wickeltechnik, a subsidiary of the HELUKABEL Group, he became an important contact for both his customers and team members. In this interview he explains what he finds particularly exciting about his job, how he goes about building successful relationships with customers – and why selling KABELMAT products is different from selling jelly babies.

Mr. Schwindhammer, before joining the HELUKABEL Group, you worked for many years at a worldwide leading mechanical engineering company. Tell us about your career and what attracted you to your new job.

My career began with a degree apprenticeship in business computer science. When I'd finished that, I started working in industrial engineering where my job was to plan and set up factories abroad. For example, I spent one year in India and two in China and was responsible for promoting business activities in these regions. On returning to Germany, I became involved with the overall strategy of the group. The move into sales has been an inspiring one for me because now I not only look at ways of optimising our own processes, but also those of our customers. I very much enjoy collaborating with users over long periods in order to help them find the right solution. KABELMAT was and is for me an exciting

place to work because it has big growth potential. We are suppliers of powerful and innovative products which our customers will use for decades to come. But many potential customers have never heard of us and that's where I see big opportunities in the future.

What do you particularly like about your job as head of sales?

For me, both sales and human leadership depend on personal and trustful interaction. Everyday I look forward to discussing and elaborating on upcoming topics with colleagues. Open and ongoing communication is very important to me.

What's your typical working day look like?

I don't really have a typical working day as I have a variety of tasks to tackle. A big part of my job consists of meeting customers on-site or via Teams. And then





there are office days when I'm very busy writing emails or making phone calls. On top of this, there are lots of exciting workshops at KABELMAT either with our engineering partners or organised by the HELUKABEL Group. They might be on sales training, product placements or marketing, for example. Then there are strategic topics such as new products, cooperations or the expansion of our sales network which we hope will boost growth at KABELMAT. So, it's never boring.

And how do you relax after a tiring day?

I like going to a good restaurant with delicious food, and combining that with a short walk – and I don't mean just from the car to the restaurant. This allows me to recharge my batteries quickly. My hobbies play an important role here too – for example, I'm a member of the voluntary fire brigade. For longer periods of rest, I like going on holiday and travelling around the world.

KABELMAT manufactures handling equipment for cables, wires, pipes, steel cables, hoses and profiles. What's the difference between selling such specialty equipment and selling, for example, jelly babies or sports shoes?

Consumer goods such as jelly babies are standardised and sold in large quantities to private individuals and the main aim is to satisfy personal preferences. Appearance, taste and well-being are key factors here – all things that users in mechanical engineering are usually less interested in. The sale of our products is substantially different: We are suppliers of machines that are used to wind di-

verse materials with extremely different properties. This means we have customers in different sectors, each with their own processes and requirements. The exciting thing about sales is getting involved and finding solutions that can be perfectly integrated into existing environments so that users can achieve their goals – be it through increased capacity, more flexibility or shorter delivery times. In sales, we also attach great importance to other topics such as efficiency and work safety. And another difference: when someone buys jelly babies or a pair of sports shoes, it's that individual person's decision whereas in industry, several people are involved in the process. We're talking about much bigger sums of money here for long-term investments and these aren't normally easy decisions for customers. It's part of our job to accompany them through the process and provide them with support

KABELMAT joined the HELUKABEL Group in 2009. How has KABELMAT profited from being part of the group and what are the benefits for your customers?

Being part of the HELUKABEL Group has various benefits for our customers. The first one is the HELUKABEL sales network which covers most of the world and which we have access to. HELUKABEL sales representatives regularly attend product training workshops at our company. This means our customers always have a qualified contact nearby, be it in Germany, the USA or Brazil. We have also installed our machines in HELUKABEL distribution centres around the world which gives customers the opportunity to see our products in action.

As a result of this long-standing collaboration and HELUKABEL's high level of automation, we have been able to continually extend our portfolio which also benefits our customers. Our relationship with other subsidiaries in the group allows customers to purchase complete tailor-made solutions from a single supplier.

How has working in sales changed over the years?

One of the biggest and most obvious changes is the technological change. In the past, a sales rep used to drive from one place to the next visiting customers – not only to get to know them but also to discuss technical solutions or quotes. Today a large part of this work is done digitally. This brings a lot of opportunities but also risks. For a start, we can generate quotes much more quickly as lots of things can be discussed via

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Teams, and pictures or videos can be viewed online. Remote access to machinery and equipment by the service department, for example, also saves a lot of time. But this might be at the risk of forfeiting personal contact with customers and failing



to get a feel for where the machinery is installed. In my opinion, a combination of both is best, i.e. using the benefits of modern technology while at the same time visiting customers on site.

I've already mentioned the decision making process. In the past, it was the managing director and nobody else who decided about investments. These days, various people are involved, including the machine operator, and I think that's very good and the right way to go about things. Input from different stakeholders puts us in a better position to properly understand the relevant challenges and to focus on providing appropriate solutions.

Looking into the future, where do you see big opportunities for KABELMAT?

From a technological perspective, I see big opportunities in cable drum man-

agement – for example, through the mapping and digital management of traditional floor storage on the basis of shelves. Another major goal is to increase the level of automation by connecting our cutting systems to warehouse and materials handling equipment. HELUKABEL in Hemmingen has been a real innovator here. More and more customers are approaching us these days with similar inquiries. From a geographic perspective, the USA and Canada are particularly exciting areas as lots of work is still done by hand in these countries but this is likely to change in the future. We are in the process of extending our sales network in North American in order to focus on discussions with potential customers. Another megatrend which is creating very promising demand is electric mobility – after all, electric cars need charging cables which are made and cut by machines. But we are also extremely optimistic about sectors such as renewable ener-

gy and artificial intelligence. By working together with different partners, our solutions are becoming even smarter and more interconnected which further enhances the added value given to customers. ◀



PASCAL SCHWINDHAMMER HAS TO DECIDE!

Tea or coffee?

→ I don't function without coffee!

A suit or jeans?

→ Preferably comfortable jeans.

What do you like best: a savoury or sweet snack?

→ Unfortunately I love everything that's bad for you. But if I had to decide, then savoury

Active or passive sport?

→ It depends on the type of sport. My favourite sport – football – saw me relegated very quickly to the spectator's bench due to lack of talent.

Camping or all-inclusive?

→ Depends: with just one person, an all-inclusive, with the family, camping's fun.

Mountains or the sea?

→ Oh, definitely the sea.

Cat or dog?

→ I've always been a big cat fan.

Music or podcast?

→ Music – and across the board, from 80s rock to modern. The mix is important.

City or village?

→ I get very impatient looking for somewhere to park – but this isn't the only reason I prefer village life.

TV or book?

→ I'd go for TV.