Switzerland in 1860: Environment for pioneers
Customer viewpoint: Strategic partner
Congratulations: 150 years young and dynamic
Dear Readers

The Buhler anniversary activities are governed by the motto “Innovations for a better world.” Throughout its 150-year history, Buhler has time and again found ideal solutions to customers’ needs. This remains our challenge for the future. This special issue of our customer magazine therefore shows how innovation is fostered in the Buhler Group. It also addresses the present situation and an outlook on the political and social environment during the era of Buhler’s founding. A customer from Hong Kong and a journalist, who both have known Buhler for years, present their views of our organization as representatives of all our longtime partners. This Birthday Diagramm is rounded off with information on various anniversary activities.

I wish you much pleasure reading it!

Corina Atzli, Head Corporate Communications
Anniversary Project Manager

150th Buhler anniversary

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An aerial view of the Buhler headquarters in Uzwil/Switzerland.
Dear Readers

As the leading provider of food production process technologies, we feel committed to meeting the challenges of the future and solving the issues of the world of tomorrow. Problems such as global climate warming or hungry children can only be resolved on a sustainable basis if we give exactly the same consideration to the development of the environment we are living in as we do to the economic challenges we are facing. We at Buhler make every conceivable effort to internalize sustainability so that it becomes a natural part of our actions as well as those of our customers. We therefore do everything in our power to ensure that the benefits we offer to our customers will also ultimately benefit the future of our planet.

It is our firm commitment that our customers be able to rely on our performance and our continuous innovations also in the future – in exactly the same way as they have been able to during the past 150 years. We will continue to contribute to finding solutions to the solution of our global problems. That is the reason why we have placed our anniversary under the motto “Innovations for a better world.”

Calvin Grieder
Chief Executive Officer

Dear Readers

150 years Buhler – an occasion to pause and remember as well as to celebrate. But not an event to lean back and bask in past successes. We can celebrate this anniversary thanks to our customers, the smooth cooperation with our business partners, and the great commitment of our employees. The event offers us the opportunity to think about the future. We are convinced that dealing with the past is only meaningful if we do so looking toward the future – and if our own experiences create visions and ideas for the future. The fact that the family-owned Buhler company was able to evolve into a global technology group is related to the attitude of systematically focusing on the future and not only responding to changes in market needs, but anticipating them at an early stage. Knowing not only what customers need, but also what they are dreaming of – this is the mindset that has always released and continues to release a high innovative energy at Buhler without neglecting solidity.

Urs Bühler
Chairman of the Board

Calvin Grieder
Chief Executive Officer
The foundations for the future

The history of the Buhler company started 150 years ago. Adolf Bühler, the company’s founder, set a course to success for his enterprise based on continuous technical innovation, a global focus from its outset, and a commitment to the well-being and advancement of its workforce.

On February 10, 1860, the trained foundryman Adolf Bühler set up a small iron foundry in Uzwil. Together with two employees, he produced tools and other castings using the so-called gray iron casting process. The quality of his work was outstanding, and local demand for his products steadily increased.

Entering the field of flour milling
He soon entered the field of flour milling, which at that time was undergoing a fundamental shift from artisanal low grinding to industrialized high grinding. Beginning in the mid-1870s, Bühler started manufacturing high-grade cast rolls for the then ultra-modern roller mills. As early as 1876, the company shipped its first complete three-roller mill. In 1887 the next milestone was reached: a four-roller mill with a roll length of one meter. The successes in high milling led to a steady expansion of business with additional grain milling machines and devices: With this product line, Bühler also soon started building complete grain milling plants. This was followed from 1890 onwards by the construction of ship unloading elevators (“marine legs”) and grain storage terminals (silos). Later the company entered the business of constructing machines for brickyards, pasta production, brewing and malting (grist mills and mash filters), as well as chocolate processing.

Out into the big wide world
A targeted business strategy accompanied the innovative powers in the field of engineering. From the very beginning, Adolf Bühler had a global vision for his business activities. As early as 1880, an agency agreement was signed for England, the global industrial leader at that time, and her colonies. A licensing agreement with the Frankfurter Allianz Company Simon, Bühler & Baumann in Frankfurt boosted roller mill sales in Germany and Eastern Europe. Subsidiaries or sales offices in the world’s major cities marketed Bühler products worldwide.

In addition to the successful entry into newly emerging industries with innovative technologies and a keen sense for new markets, a third cornerstone of Bühler’s success is its recognition of its ethical and social responsibilities as an employer. As early as 1862, Adolf Bühler in concert with the neighboring Benninger company in Uzwil established a joint employee health insurance plan, which in 1875 culminated in the founding of a company-owned health insurance company. Additional milestones are the early social housing scheme for employees or in 1915 the creation of a veterans’ association. 1918 saw the establishment of the first works canteen in Switzerland. Four years later, Bühler was the first Swiss company to open a counseling and welfare office. Not only did it help employees who had fallen on hard times, but it also provided recreational activities, organized Christmas parties, and offered vacation weeks for employees’ families.

Training and continuing education
An awareness that employees constitute a company’s most valuable asset runs like a unifying thread through the entire 150-year company history. At all times the company management gave a high priority to the training and continuing education of its staff. As one of the first Swiss companies to do so, Bühler established its own special apprentice workshop. Today, Bühler offers apprenticeships in 15 different vocations. Moreover, the company management was instrumental in the early 20th century in setting up a progressive curriculum for apprentices. In 1950, the company founded a general technical school in St. Gallen, and in 1957 it set up the Swiss Milling School with four departments.

In the truest sense of the term, the continuous improvement process has kept the stream of innovations flowing uninterrupted throughout the company’s 150-year history. As early as the late 1920s, Bühler started manufacturing metal die casting equipment. Later additions included plastics injection molding machines and chemical engineering systems. One of its mainstays up to the present date has been grain milling. It was further strengthened in 1972 with the acquisition of Miag Mühlenbau in Braunschweig. Additional acquisitions such as the purchase of Sortex, a company specializing in the design and construction of high-performance sorting equipment, and other companies allowed the product portfolio to be continuously expanded and completed. At the same time, new markets were regularly developed. For example, Bühler was one of the first western companies with its own plants in China. Since the second half of the 20th century, the Arabic countries, Africa, and Southeast Asia have been intensively developed as well. Globally, Bühler not has some 7500 employees and operates 40 sales and service companies and various agencies in over 140 countries.
Switzerland in the year 1860: The ideal environment for pioneers

The family-owned Buhler Group is celebrating its 150th anniversary and thus has almost the same age as the Swiss Confederation, which was founded in 1848. The economic historian Professor Dr. Joseph Jung explains why Switzerland 150 years ago was an ideal environment for business pioneers and the founders of family-run companies.

Professor Jung, in 1860 Adolf Bühler set up the Buhler Iron Foundry and thus laid the foundations for today’s Buhler Technology Group. During the same period, numerous other similar Swiss family-owned businesses were founded, which have been successful to this day. How come this concentration?

Jung: The breathtaking pace of development of numerous successful family-run businesses in Switzerland was kick-started in 1848. This was initiated by the introduction of the new Swiss federal constitution. But after this, certain basic decisions first had to be made. At that time, the unique opportunity arose to virtually build a “New Switzerland” on a green-meadow site.

What, then, was Switzerland before that?

Jung: Outside countries considered Switzerland exotic, a republic in the heart of Europe surrounded by monarchies and dynasties, an impossible national entity with cantons that conducted their own foreign policy and had their own units of measurement and currencies. Switzerland was thus a confederation of states that was cross-crossed by customs borders. But depicting Switzerland this way does not give us the whole picture. Switzerland was also dismissed as a “rogue nation” – because it was a country in which failed revolutionaries from all corners of the world found refuge, a melting pot where the dissatisfied gathered.

How did modern Switzerland come to be founded?

Jung: In 1847, Switzerland was being ravaged by civil war. Although the history books call this conflict a confessional struggle, this is not basically what it was. Ultimately, the issue was less about religion and denomination than about what kind of Switzerland the people wanted. A new, modern, forward-looking and liberal Switzerland with a single economy? Or the conservative Old Confederation? With the liberal radicals gaining the upper hand, the new federal constitution was written. The state thus drew the general lines. It enabled private initiative and entrepreneurial commitment to develop.

Was that enough as a basis for setting up successful industrial companies?

Jung: The first few years of the new federal state proved a boon for Switzerland. The foundations were laid for the country’s economic development – and nothing could stop the success story of Switzerland from running its course. This lasted up to the middle of the eighteen sixties. This was an economically liberal age – the only one in the history of modern Switzerland.

What were the components forming the basis of this success story?

Jung: Private railroad companies, the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich (ETHZ), the large banks as the first industry banks, and the insurance companies. Arguably, the decision with the most serious consequences and at the same time the wisest decision was the following: Because the government lacked money, the construction and operation of railroads was left to private companies and investors. This very rapidly gave rise to rail links linking the far ends of the country. The showpiece of Swiss railroad engineering prowess – the Gotthard Tunnel, which international critics of that time acclaimed as a “world wonder” – was also realised by a private company. To sum up, we can say that within just a few years, the formerly backward Switzerland which lacked modern infrastructures was transformed into a nation boasting a prosperous and dynamic economy.

And was all this the work of the young federal state?

Jung: The drivers of this development were the liberal politicians, including many entrepreneurs and pioneers, who in this crucial period enjoyed absolute majorities at the national level and in most cantons. Among them were a number of great personalities such as national counselor Alfred Escher (1819–1882). He was chairman of a major railroad company and promoter of the ETHZ, the founder of the Swiss Credit Bank (today Credit Suisse) and today’s Swiss Life insurance company, and among many other things also the president of the Gotthard Railroad Company. Escher was a singular figure in the history of modern Switzerland.

So, does this imply a close intertwining of politics and business?

Jung: Yes, that is so. One of the characteristics of the young federal state was that many entrepreneurs also bore political responsibility – at the cantonal as well as national levels and for the good of the nation.

Back to the family-owned companies. How did they benefit from the “New Switzerland”?

Mind and money

Professor Dr. phil. Joseph Jung is Managing Director at Credit Suisse Group AG in Zurich and lecturer of economic and business history at the University of Fribourg (Switzerland). Among other functions, he is also Managing Director of the Alfred Escher Foundation in Zurich. The declared goal of this institution is to make the gigantic documentary estate of the creator of modern-day Switzerland accessible to our time. Jung has authored several books on the history of Switzerland as a financial center. He has written about the former Swiss captain of industry Rainer E. Gut and scored two bestsellers with his biographies of Alfred Escher and Lydia Wettli-Escher. Jung was born in 1955 and grew up in Ramsen on the border between Switzerland and Germany. He is married with one son.
As early as at the start of the 19th century, in the Swiss mechanical engineering industry emerged standing quality of the Swiss economy. During the Napoleonic Continental Blockage against England, the motherland of textile machinery, the Swiss mechanical engineering industry emerged as early as at the start of the 19th century. In the liberal environment of the New Switzerland of 1848, it gradually gained global stature. Pioneers from other areas of the economy followed—for example the food and chemical industries.

Are you saying that a large number of new businesses were set up?

Jung: Yes. And initially, almost all of them were family-run companies which were financially independent—among other things because certain social classes frowned upon debt.

How would you describe the personalities of these pioneers?

Jung: Their most conspicuous characteristic was their preparedness to accept risk. This willingness to accept risk has always been common to all entrepreneurs. Moreover, the pioneers of the old school along with their families were distinguished by their exceptional commitment. One might exaggerate and say that the founding generations worked seven days a week and 365 days a year. They saw their opportunities to achieve business success and seized them. Their success as entrepreneurs filled them with a long-term. “Buhler” stands for the success story of the Swiss economy.

Let us fast-forward into the present. Among the mid-size and large corporations, hardly any family-owned businesses are left. Is the family-run company a thing of the past?

Jung: No, the opposite is true. Looking at the development history of today’s global corporations, we see that the family business model still promises success. Many market leaders today originated as family-owned businesses or are still family-owned even in the 21st century. People intending to become successful entrepreneurs are well advised to consider the family business model. The remarkable thing in this connection is that family-run companies are basically more successful than publicly owned ones. Family businesses offer many advantages, for example short lines of decision-making or a long-term and sustainable business philosophy. But family-owned companies are also exposed to specific risks.

What risks do you mean?

Jung: A growing and successful family business must take various hurdles. Research and development activities require high capital investments. It is not always very easy to obtain the necessary funding. And financing steps must be carefully considered. A family business today will typically start off in a niche. But there is no magic formula. Each family-owned company must find its own path. And early succession planning is essential.

Family businesses

The term “family business” refers to companies that are essentially controlled by a single family or a limited circle of owners. According to the strict definition, family businesses are characterized by the “unity of ownership and management”. Other definitions have less stringent criteria. For example, companies may also be considered as family-owned businesses in which—though ownership and management are separated—control is exercised by a small number of private persons or families.

The oldest family-run business in the world and at the same time the oldest company at all was the Japanese temple builder Konko Gumi, which was set up in 578 and shut down in 2006. The oldest family-run business in the world is also Japanese: the Ryokan Hoshi company. In developed economies, family-owned businesses include mainly small and mid-size companies with up to 250 employees. In the industrialized nations, up to 90 percent of all companies of this size are family-owned. The larger the number of employees, the lower the proportion of family-owned businesses. Since the year 2000, the percentage of family-owned companies worldwide among all new companies has been on the rise.

Building the southern entrance to the Gotthard Tunnels. Xylography 1874.

History shows that companies must find their own approaches to success and follow them in a targeted, courageous and prudent manner. This is what Buhler has systematically done. With its commitment to the fifth generation of the family business system, the next step into a successful future has already been made.

Interview: Herbert Bosshart

What are the reasons for the success of the Bühler family?

Jung: Apart from the company characteristics outlined, Buhler’s closeness to the marketplace has contributed to its success. Messrs. Bühler have time and again correctly interpreted the signals of their customers and offered the right products. Occasionally, Bühler even identified customers’ needs before customers were able to describe them themselves. This feeling for the marketplace has helped Buhler weather minor and major economic crises more or less unscathed. Last, not least, the Bühler family identified the significance of foreign markets as a strategic success factor at an early stage. Even before 1900, the company ventured into foreign markets both near and far. The Swiss market alone would never have allowed the dynamic and powerful growth of Buhler.

What would you advise Buhler to do in the next 150 years?

Jung: Buhler is a shining example of a family business that is successful in the long term. “Buhler” stands for the success story of the Swiss economy.
“Not only a supplier, but a strategic partner!”

The customer list of Buhler includes large and small companies in almost all countries around the world. Many of these customers have been relying for decades on Buhler plant, equipment, and processes. Representing all Buhler customers, Wai-Fung Leung, Group Managing Director of the Lam Soon Hong Kong Group, explains why Buhler is a highly appreciated and valued supplier and partner around the globe.

The Lam Soon Group has been a Buhler customer for 55 years, since the establishment of the Hong Kong Flour Mills in Hong Kong in 1954. We were the first flour millers to import Buhler’s Newtronic MDDO eight-roller mill to China. That was when we set up our first plant, Shekou Lam Soon Flour Mills, in 1995.

Leading supplier of flour mills
As a flour milling specialist and supplier of premier specialty flours, Lam Soon always strives for more advanced milling technology. We want to fully utilize all the nutritionally valuable substances embedded in the wheat grain. After all, wheat is one of the most widespread staples in the world and at the same time the most scarce. Buhler as a leading flour milling machine designer and manufacturer is undoubtedly the ideal partner for Lam Soon. Buhler’s advanced flour milling technology and full range of solutions and services are exactly matched to Lam Soon’s needs. Lam Soon chose Buhler as a supplier and technology partner because Buhler shares our interest in the continuous development of high-quality process technologies. It is very important for us that Buhler has been able to fulfill our operational market needs.

A customer relationship that has evolved over the years
Shekou Lam Soon Flour Mills is the first flour mill in China that imported Buhler machinery in the twentieth century. Our customer-supplier relationship has developed ever since. Buhler is more of a strategic partner than just a reliable supplier for Lam Soon. When we recently set up our plant in Qingzhou, we equipped it one hundred percent with Buhler machines. During the design stage, we cooperated closely with Buhler’s engineers. Together, we defined the required machines, the plant layout, and the solutions for achieving the best possible output. We openly debated issues and options. We are very pleased to say that Lam Soon and Buhler worked together as a team and as solution-building partners.

In China, cost competitiveness is one of the key success factors. Lam Soon sets high quality standards for its machines and plants. We also insist that our suppliers install the plants on schedule so that we will achieve maximum cost effectiveness. We appreciate the continuous efforts made by Buhler to meet such standards.

Local presence
Robert Zhu of the Buhler affiliate in Wuxi is our “personal” supporter who looks after our day-to-day needs locally. We also have regular contacts with Buhler’s senior management team in the region, as well as with the divisional experts at Buhler headquarters in Switzerland. They provide us with updates on Buhler’s latest technologies and propose solutions for our plants. We experience the representatives of Buhler in our daily contacts as customer-oriented, market-focused, technologically highly competent, very familiar with the Buhler products, and driven by their striving for perfection. As persons, we appreciate their honesty, dependability, and patience. Buhler’s presence in China is very important to us. We need these personal contacts for obtaining immediate solutions and must be able to rely on prompt support services and fast spare parts supplies. In addition, Buhler and Lam Soon speak a common language when dealing with local operating issues. Thanks to its local presence, Buhler has a stronger understanding of the market conditions and the business environment and can therefore offer us as a partner adjusted solutions.

Mutual support
Also personally, I very much enjoy working with Buhler’s team. We both have mature and professional teams working together to pursue the op-
opportunities in China. Through regular visits and meetings, Buhler also provides Lam Soon with the most up-to-date information on flour milling technology or integrated quality control. This supports Lam Soon in continuously supplying its customers with consistently high-quality flour both on the Mainland and in Hong Kong.

In addition to the excellent track records of the two companies, the common positioning of Lam Soon and Buhler in China provides an excellent industry platform for increasing the growth of premium flour-based products. But the relationship for Lam Soon is not only that of a preferred supplier and solution provider. Lam Soon and Buhler are important strategic partners who may jointly leave their imprint on the progress of the flour milling industry in China.

Innovative and advanced
In my opinion, Buhler is the leading designer and manufacturer of machinery based on innovative and advanced technology. Also Lam Soon sets its focus on innovation. Like Buhler, we at Lam Soon believe that innovation is only possible on the basis of a strong vision, determination, and a continuous pursuit of top precision. Buhler’s contribution to the development of grain milling machinery and processing plants is indeed impressive.

After working together with Buhler for half a century, we wish to further deepen this relationship. We expect Buhler to manufacture more Swiss standard grain milling equipment in China. We would like Buhler to thereby position itself in the premium market of the grain milling and grain processing industries in the region. The two companies should work together to upgrade the quality of food supplies to Chinese customers.

Wishes for the future
The problem of global warming has become increasingly obvious and rigorous in recent years. As a producer in China, we are actively seeking different approaches to reduce electricity consumption, which will eventually also reduce carbon emissions. We wish that Buhler will focus more on reducing energy consumption in developing its next-generation machines while maintaining their same high functionality. This would allow all Buhler customers worldwide to make a more active contribution to preserving our earth. We also wish that Buhler will develop preventive maintenance software. It would warn users of all major and minor machinery malfunctions, improve the monitoring of machine operation, and enhance our operating efficiency.

As for China, we wish Buhler continued success and hope that it will take a leading position in supporting the food processing industry by innovative technology and solutions. We hope that Buhler will continue to do the right things in China, since the market opportunities in China will definitely stay for another 150 years so that Buhler can continue its remarkable history.

Wai-Fung Leung
Group Managing Director
Lam Soon Hong Kong Group
150 years of dynamic development

Charles Sosland is the Chairman of the Sosland Publishing Company and publisher of “World Grain”. He has intimate knowledge of the global food industry and has closely tracked the development of Bühler AG over many years. He has authored the following detailed outsider view of the company for its 150th anniversary.

As a long-time observer of the global grain and grain milling business, in my dual capacity as publisher and journalist, I find that few companies stand out for both their industry-wide presence and their excellent reputation as does Bühler AG. While I have visited milling plants that were not built or equipped by Bühler, the majority of the mills I have called upon around the world or have edited articles about in our magazines are either totally Bühler-engineered and Bühler-equipped plants or have a Bühler presence of a dimension that uniquely signifies this company’s world-circling presence. Estimates place Bühler’s dominance of new mill building in the past century at 70%, which alone is a singular achievement.

Exceptional standing
150 years after its founding, Bühler’s standing as the leading flour mill engineering and construction company is extraordinary. With annual sales of 1.7 billion Swiss francs, Bühler’s volume approaches or surpasses that of most of its individual customers. Its stated corporate goals are also impressive in comparison with the aspirations and results realized in most of the food industry – annual sales growth of at least 6% and average EBIT (earnings before interest and taxes) of 8% of sales. When it comes to having a leading position in its business, the breadth of Bühler’s reach into every market with a grain milling business of any size extends far beyond that of any single customer. A rough survey of other sectors of the food industry, indeed of industry at large, indicates the presence of few plant suppliers with operations that extend into more markets and more areas than any of the principal producers in that industry.

Geographical diversification
If one studies Bühler’s corporate strategy, primarily this nearly total globalization, it becomes apparent that Bühler chose to diversify geographically rather than into new product segments. Based on the excellent results, the success of this geographic diversification is obvious. Similarly, the company’s position is greatly strengthened with people who run grain milling companies by the way its global reach makes a miller trained in a Bühler plant suited to work almost anywhere in the world. Bühler’s remarkable breadth of business as well as its widely acknowledged success in almost everything it does – besides grain milling for flour and feed, there is pasta manufacturing, chocolate processing, coffee roasting, bread baking and grain handling and storage to name the most prominent – are usually attributed to a specific range of influences. Visiting with its customers will produce admiration for the company stemming first and foremost from its engineering skills as well as the ability to adapt to the needs of each company and plant assignment. One satisfied customer told me, “Bühler was the one company that really made me understand what a true business partnership meant and how it could greatly contribute to my company’s success. Bühler understood that technology is the key to the future and having the research and development strengths of Bühler as a partner gives me a competitive advantage in the market place.”

Over 7,000 patents
Along with the praise for helping to design and equip an installation, regardless of size or complexity, is the attraction that Bühler brings on account of its internal focus on constant improvement and innovation. What this means is best illustrated by the more than 7,000 patents that have been won since the group’s founding. Impossible as it would be to choose inventions that are especially notable, the temptation is great to single out something like the Gold Medal the company won at the 1,900 Paris World’s Fair for a floor-mounted plansifter, ending the need to hang sifters from the ceiling. Or roller mills with increasing capacity that in effect made possible the equipping of ever larger flour milling plants. The company’s role in the introduction of pneumatic conveying to replace the bucket elevators of the previous several centuries can hardly be overstated. Similarly, having introduced electrical relays to provide the initial remote control of the functioning of flour milling machinery, it almost seems right that Bühler should have a lead in applying electronic computing to the modern milling plant. The result means modern mills are operated from a central control point with reduced staff.

Broad product range
Just as important as its large spending on research and development aimed at constant product improvements has been the parallel Bühler strategy of making and supplying all the equipment needed in a modern grain mill. This broad product range is a defining feature of the group’s business strategy. It is different from competitors with narrower offerings that often require plant projects involving a number of different equipment makers instead of Bühler’s singularity. This seeking to make every piece of equipment means that Bühler’s acquisitions often have been concent...
trated on facilitating this approach. Thus, its major purchases of other businesses toward the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st century have been of a leading manufacturer of color sorting machines, extrusion technology, a manufacturer of die casting machines, one of the world’s leading manufacturers of roasting technology for coffee and cocoa, and of the U.S. company that is the market leader in drying equipment and thermal processes for nutritional products and feed sectors.

Purchase of largest competitor
While internal growth has been the main driving force for Buhler over the decades, one acquisition stands out as hugely important to the company while revolutionizing the milling equipment business. That was the 1972 purchase of the Mag business of Braunschweig, Germany, which at the time was one of Buhler’s largest competitors. Mag itself was formed in 1925 through a merger of five large German mill equipment manufacturers. Its acquisition gave Buhler in one fell swoop access to markets in Central and Eastern Europe and nearby areas that had been beyond reach up to that time.

Permanent training and continuing education
As important as high quality engineering and precision manufacturing may be to Buhler, it has set another standard in the technical training and continuing education programs – in reality, schools – it offers to its own staff as well as to customers’ personnel around the world. Starting by early sponsoring of a technical institute in Switzerland, the group launched a vocational training school in flour and feed milling in 1957. It also has built a training center in Uzwil for the grain processing division that is second to none. Education in this Swiss environment of Buhler is seen as important not just to helping train people to be skilled in their chosen fields, but also in developing loyalty to the company itself. Building on what Buhler calls the “solution mindset,” school graduates usually carry with them an enduring loyalty that lasts through careers in the industry.

Supporting the IAOM
The Buhler commitment to training and education, like the company itself, reaches around the world. Thus, the company had the lead role in equipping the Hal Ross model flour mill used by the Department of Grain Science and Industry at Kansas State University in Manhattan. K-State offers the only university program devoted to instruction in flour and feed milling operations, as well as administration. Buhler has established milling schools in Morocco, Algeria, Egypt, India and China. In parallel with the group’s desire to build new mills in countries where the industry is either developing or being modernized, these technical training schools are established to foster early loyalty to Buhler systems and equipment.

Buhler has also played a significant role working with flour milling associations around the world. As one former leader of the IAOM (International Association of Operative Millers) said, “The support that Buhler has given the IAOM over many years was paramount in helping the organization become a truly global organization committed to the advancement of education and training in grain milling”.

Fourth generation
These hugely significant and unique developments could never have happened without the guidance and direction the employees of Buhler have had for generations from their owners and managers. Nothing is more special about Buhler than that its ownership and direction have been with four generations of a single family. It was Adolf Bühler who started a cast iron foundry in Uzwil in 1860 with two employees. He was followed by his son, Adolf Bühler, Jr. Next came René Bühler, the late family member still fondly recalled by present-day milling executives around the world. His son, Urs Bühler, is now chairman of the group. It is Urs Bühler who brought the first non-Buhler chief executive to the helm of the group in the person of Calvin Grieder. Mr. Grieder gets high marks for leading a great staff who are attuned to customer needs and continue the company’s dynamic growth.
At home around the globe
As the dominant presence in the small eastern Swiss town of Uzwil, Buhler has turned out to be the exemplar of a good corporate citizen. Of the current worldwide payroll near 7,500, an amazingly large percentage work in Uzwil. Much of the company’s equipment is made at the headquarters plant, into which the group has invested huge sums to keep these facilities competitive in a world where many similar businesses have chosen to shift manufacturing to low-wage areas of the world. Instead, Buhler has almost uniquely stayed with its founding roots achieving breakthroughs in die casting and similar processes that allow it to manufacture innovative equipment of high quality in what by any measure is considered a “high cost” part of the world.

A socially-minded employer
Considering how it has stayed with Uzwil as its headquarters and principal plant location, it is no surprise that Buhler prides itself on relations with employees. It offered an employer-funded health insurance program beginning in 1875, it introduced the 5-day workweek as early as 1960, and it was one of the first companies in the country to introduce flexible working hours in 1980. This has translated into a loyal workforce where many of the top managers and engineers have spent most if not all of their entire careers with Buhler which has given the company a competitive advantage by fostering a true corporate loyalty. My predecessor in this job as chairman of the Sosland Publishing Company, Morton Sosland, addressed in 1980 a celebration Buhler held in Minneapolis, U.S.A. He expressed considerable optimism about the outlook for flour milling. He forecast domestic U.S. flour demand rising to near 15 million metric tons annually by 1990, which proved conservative. The total reached 17 million tons in that year and was at 20 million by 2000. It is currently at 21 million tons.

Growth markets
While this American growth has not been matched in most other nations of the developed world, where consumption has held fairly steady in recent years, much market expansion has occurred in developing nations. This is particularly the case and important for Buhler where countries that formerly were significant importers of flour, like Egypt and parts of the Middle East, have decided to build their own domestic milling industry. New mill construction and modernization have also been priority projects in countries like Russia and Kazakhstan, as well as in China, where Buhler has built a sizeable manufacturing operation, and other parts of Southeast Asia. In the Asian market, mill building reflects both overall demand growth as consumption shifts from rice to bread and other flour products, but also catching up in rebuilding a milling industry that had been neglected under Communist rule. Latin America and Africa also hold out much promise.

Resistant to recession
That Buhler has experienced continuing good demand, except for the die casting part of its business involved primarily with auto manufacture, is a reflection of the company’s decision to focus throughout its long history on specific parts of the food business. The global recession of the past several years has not seriously affected Buhler’s business, thanks to the way that flour milling and similar parts of food manufacturing have avoided the worst negatives of the global downturn. That grain milling has done so well for the company reflects the demand growth experienced by flour-based foods in both developed and developing nations and largely beginning in the last third of the 20th century.

Flour market has changed
There’s no question that Buhler’s business has grown in response to technological advances accounted for by the company’s equipment. Flour milling extraction rates have increased measurably in recent years due to equipment advances, which in turn have helped millers deal with record high wheat prices as well as pressures on demand related to the away-from-home food business. The need for maximizing efficiency in flour milling, which has been present in the industry for its entire history, has been accentuated by unprecedented wheat market volatility. The consumer marketplace, where milling’s and Buhler’s bottom-line results have been, are and will be determined, has been undergoing many changes that require flexibility with the array of flours produced. Expanding demand for whole wheat flour is just one of the more recent changes that require millers to respond to a different set of needs. New consumer products of an ever-changing sort, experiments with innovative ingredients, flour without gluten or milled from organically-grown grains, accentuate the importance of advanced skills on the part of milling engineers and equipment makers like Buhler.

150 years and still going strong
In this, its sesquicentennial anniversary year, Buhler still appears uniquely qualified to meet the changing and varied demands of its grain milling customers. Yes, Buhler is fortunate that its founder seized upon casting new roller mills as a business opportunity only a dozen years after he started the company. He thus put his company on the course to tie its fortunes to an industry that has done so well in the past century and a half. And, yes, the flour milling industry is hugely fortunate to have had a partner like Buhler to invent and make the systems and equipment that help modern flour milling be what it is today. It is a partnership that has made “the daily grind,” a term derived from the tiresome grinding of wheat with stones, a modern-day example of great industrial success.

Charles Sosland, Chairman
Sosland Publishing Company
Publishers of “World Grain”
Buhler celebrates with customers

Among other things, the success story of Buhler is based on the decades of loyalty of thousands of customers in all corners of our planet. Buhler is thanking its customers for this confidence in various celebrations and events at sites around the world.

- 05.08.2010
  Minneapolis/USA
  Open house
  Casual meeting with customers

- 12.02.2010
  Uzwil/Switzerland
  150th Buhler anniversary
  Official ceremony

- 08.04.2010
  Braunschweig/Germany
  150th anniversary celebration with dedication of facilities
  Official opening of the rebuilt and renewed company premises

- 26.11.2010
  Joinville/Brazil
  Customers and culture
  Bolshoi Ballet and gala dinner

- 22.11.2010
  Capetown/South Africa
  Customer event at the IAOM 2010
  Reception for customers

- 10.06.2010
  Shanghai/China
  Special receptions for customers

- 25.–29.10.2010
  Delhi/India
  Gala night
  Reception for customers

- 25.–29.10.2010
  Bangalore/India
  Gala night
  Reception for customers

- October 2010
  Xian/China
  Official factory opening
  Official opening of the new plansifter factory

- 22.11.2010
  Capetown/South Africa
  Customer events
  Special receptions for customers
Looking forward to the future

13 business units – 13 situation reports.
The head of the Buhler business units assess their markets and take stock.

Of course, Buhler people are proud of the company’s history and its continuous development into a global leader in the field of process engineering, especially production technologies for making foods and engineering materials. Its 150th anniversary will therefore be duly celebrated. But entirely in line with the mentality of the company’s founder, the main purpose of commemorating the anniversary of Buhler is to take stock of what has been accomplished so far and to use it as a basis for meeting the challenges of the future. The anniversary motto is therefore not so much “Where does Buhler come from?”, but rather “Where is Buhler heading?” On the following pages, the heads of the 13 operating business units of Buhler look at “their” respective markets and venture a glimpse into the future. Despite the turmoil in the global markets, they are filled with optimism.

Grain Processing

Feed & Biomass

The Feed business unit has developed very successfully with its locally produced equipment and solutions. An important step toward the future is the development of our high-performance machines for integrated feed manufacture. In cooperation with key customers in the pig and poultry industries, we have realized short development cycles and innovations meeting the requirements of practice. In the Aqua Feed segment, we now offer cost-efficient “single-screw extruder” solutions in the medium capacity range. Also the Oil business is developing as planned, and our new flaking roller mill has achieved a success that we had never expected to this extent. In the Biomass segment, on the other hand, we feel a certain restraint. Plants offering optimized operating costs, for example on the basis of unattended operation or low-energy grinding processes, have become a reality in Europe. Another emphasis of our development activities is on process innovations for creating solutions allowing a measurable reduction of production costs. We have achieved promising results in the fields of poultry fattening and piglet and cattle rearing. In Biomass processing, we are focusing on the needs of European and North American customers wishing to increasingly procure their drying and pelleting systems from a single source. In Oilseed Preparation, we plan to further refine the process operations and thus improve the economy of the overall process. With our new processes and construction standards in terms of sanitation, inspection, and raw materials traceability, we are contributing to safe feed and healthy meat products.

Grain Processing

Malting

Grain Processing

Sortex & Rice

Grain Processing

Malting

Beside hops and water, breweries in particular require malt for making beer. Malt is germinated barley which is subsequently dried. The malt market on the one hand depends greatly on beer consumption and on the other on the cost of barley as the raw material for making malt. Over the past few years, prices for brewers’ barley and malt were exposed to wild price swings, which peaked in the years 2007 and 2008. On the other hand, demand for beer has remained at a relatively stable level, but showing a certain potential for growth in the Asian markets, in South America, and in Africa. As a result, customers’ capital investment behavior is very cyclic.

Three factors are decisive for our customers: effectiveness of resources, malt quality, and efficiency. We offer maltsters solutions for new and existing plants which can slash water consumption, improve malt homogeneity, and optimize energy costs. We plan to increasingly offer services in the fields of consulting and engineering and also move into related markets where we can apply our know-how of the germination process.

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Careful storage and gentle handling of grain are becoming increasingly important for the food processing industry. The activities of the Grain Handling business unit range from inland grain terminals for gathering the grain to the entire logistics chain. This includes transportation by road and rail vehicles, river barges and/or ocean-going vessels to storage facilities (bulk storage installations and flat stores) prior to further grain processing in various food production plants.

Beside short material transfer times and very high availability of ship loaders and unloaders in ports, grain management is also becoming more and more significant. This is an area where we encounter the first processes offering substantial added value: precleaning, cleaning, drying, grading, and traceability of the grain along the entire value chain. Just as important is assurance of the grain quality on the basis of the storage time. New and innovative automation solutions such as the “Grain Vending Machine” for withdrawing grain outside the opening hours of grain terminals are just as much being focused on as extensive consulting and other services. Grain is one of our most important foundations of life. We make sure that this valuable commodity is carefully treated and shipped along the entire logistics chain. That is our declared commitment.
Food Processing

Nutrition Solutions

Whereas individual consumers in the highly industrialized countries are literally bursting at the seams – as the statistics on obesity unfortunately yet unmistakably tell us –, innumerable people in the new emerging markets are starving and dying because of malnutrition. The more we know and believe to understand about nutrition and well-being, the more our dietary behavior patterns appear to be getting out of whack. The Buhler Nutrition Solutions unit is responsible for rolling out new and innovative food solutions – for creating a better world.

By launching NutriRice™ – a process for making vitaminized rice grains – and LEURON™ – a process for producing a nutritionally valuable ingredient from wheat –, our aim is to develop new markets and to offer our customers clear added value. This offers consumers the possibility of enjoying foods which are at once healthier and tastier.

In addition, Nutrition Solutions is building yet another service for flour millers with its “Flour Services.” By offering them specialty ingredients, we enable grain milling customers to further develop their range of flour products. This, in turn, allows them to produce specific flour blends and to offer their own customers such as bakeries added value. In the medium term, the expansion of this ingredient business is to be multiplied also into other market segments such as snack foods, pet food, etc.

Beat Müller

Peter Böhni

Food Processing

Aeroglide

As the newest unit to join Buhler, we can say that this is the most exciting time for the Aeroglide business unit to be part of this world-class organization. Our thermal processing equipment serves numerous markets – ranging from basic foods such as breakfast cereals to advanced industrial processes and the energy business. Our customers want to actively shape their future and are looking to us to offer them vigorous help in this effort by providing them with know-how and cutting-edge process technology. This is growing our business into new areas, particularly food and energy production.

For example, our customers are seeking higher-efficiency processes to reduce the burden on the environment. Our continuous advances in drying technology are already addressing this need. Our new developments are being enthusiastically received by the market. Thus, new exciting research in the field of alternative energies requires our thermal processes for advancement to the next generation of processes – from biomass conversion and hydrogen fuel to coal alternatives.

Clearly, with Buhler Aeroglide we are striving to be viewed as the market leader in meeting these global challenges. With our thermal processing expertise, our challenge is to contribute in the best possible way to the worldwide efforts being made in this area. As part of Buhler, we offer our customers total solutions, thus enhancing customer value and differentiating ourselves from competitors.

Tom Mix

Food Processing

Pasta & Extruded Products

As a business unit with two focal activities, we can balance our resources between the areas of Pasta and Extrusion. Despite the difficult business situation, the current pasta production equipment market offers opportunities for maintaining constant growth. The global significance of pasta as a staple continues to increase. Especially in harder times, eating habits appear to be shifting toward lower-cost basic foods. Moreover, continuing low commodity prices have allowed pasta producers to generate satisfactory profits again since 2008, which has led to a rise in capital investments.

Things are different in the area of Extrusion, where the economic situation has left a negative imprint. One of the reasons for this is that extruded products are not staple foods. Thus, for instance, bread is again increasingly substituting breakfast cereals today. But Extrusion also implies innovation and thus inevitably a certain risk, which businesses tend to attempt to control when economic times get rough.

Nevertheless, we see ourselves in a growth market offering great opportunities for the future. One such opportunity is the Asian market. For this reason, we will in the future increasingly offer targeted solutions from Asia for Asia in various market segments. Furthermore, we plan to make it easier than ever before for our customers to access our process knowledge along the entire value chain from grain to finished product such as pasta. This effort is governed by the philosophy of “From crop to fork.”

Beat Müller
Business units

Food Processing

Chocolate & Cocoa

The international chocolate and coffee industry looks back on a number of turbulent years, which we mean in the positive sense. Since the start of the 21st century, it experienced a real boom, which was manifested in high capital investments in trend-setting process technologies. This also benefited the Chocolate & Cocoa business unit with its re-entry into the Coffee business. True, a certain restraint could be felt at the start of the economic crisis in late 2008. Our customers reduced their capital investments as well as their raw materials and end products inventories. But this restraint has already vanished again: Global demand for confectionery appears to be resistant to crises: The industry’s plants are humming at full capacity, and the raw materials and semi-finished products markets are lively. This has triggered new capital investments, with priority being given to product safety and energy efficiency together with environmental issues.

Thanks to its highly developed product portfolio; its acknowledged process, plant and equipment quality; and its global service platforms, the Chocolate & Cocoa business unit faces the future with confidence. We have always strived and will continue to strive to be a step ahead of our competitors through continuous innovations focusing on customer value. What is more, we will also continue to make every effort to maintain the differentiation of our product portfolio and retain our flexibility. We will identify and seize new opportunities in the markets. In the long run, our aim is to be the preferred partner in the fields of cocoa, nut, chocolate, and coffee process technologies in all the geographical regions and both in the top and the medium markets.

Advanced Materials

Die Casting

For the die casting industry, the year 2009 was full of turmoil and marked by the economic crisis. The Buhler Die Casting business unit is meeting the challenge, taking advantage of the opportunity to get off to a good start into the year 2010. After all, die casting is and will always be a promising business field, for the drivers of our industry are intact. Lightweight automobile designs and thus aluminum solutions help reduce carbon emissions and achieve global climate targets. And the significance of so-called structural components is on a steady rise. These are ductile (ability to be plastically deformed), typically large-area, weldable die castings. Today, a large number of reputed automobile manufacturers are developing such structural parts. Should the projected volumes become a reality, then global production capacities for making these demanding components will not be sufficient to cover demand. This is an enormous opportunity for us. Moreover, Buhler has responded to the changes in the market requirements by launching the Ecoline die casting machine series, which aims at the medium market. The Ecoline series is distinguished by its ruggedness and reliability in conjunction with an attractive price-to-performance ratio. Ecoline is also characterized by its high casting capacity and optimized energy consumption. The shot unit is precisely matched to the needs of the medium market and blends seamlessly with the existing product portfolio of Buhler.
Advanced Materials

Grinding & Dispersion

Despite the current setbacks in the markets due to the economic downturn, I would boldly argue that the Grinding & Dispersion business unit has a high growth potential. It is driven by new applications such as alternative energy storage and conversion, as well as more traditional areas along the entire value chain of our customers’ industries. In order to achieve our business targets, we must continuously match our products and processes to the changing market requirements and take advantage of the platform that Buhler provides for the benefit of our customers.

In creating his masterpieces, the great Renaissance artist Michelangelo Buonarroti needed no more than a hammer and a chisel, his painting utensils, or his charcoal pencils. It was the combination of these tools and his personal knowledge of how to use them that ultimately produced the value of that equipment created: masterpieces of Renaissance art as compared to merely battered stone or splashes of paint on canvas. So our task is clear: We want to enable our customers with our plant and equipment and our cutting-edge processes to become masters in their respective fields – or in other words: Michelangelos! That is really our call, and that is what we are striving for.

SAMUEL SCHÄR

Advanced Materials

Thermal Processes

The Thermal Processes business unit is currently enjoying a very dynamic market and business development. Despite the economic downturn, the PET industry in 2009 has resumed investments in modern large-scale production plants for making bottle-grade PET. As the leading provider of SSP technology, Buhler has been able to benefit from this positive market development. Ninety percent of all new investments made annually in a PET capacity of 2.8 million metric tons (15% of total annual PET production) are based on Buhler technology. For the year 2010, a significant number of potential projects are in the pipeline. At the same time, PET recycling is being encouraged throughout the world. The recycling technology of Buhler has set the industry standard for safe food-contact RPET in all markets.

The challenges that the plastics industry faces include the crude oil price and the limited oil resources. Energy-efficient large-scale plants are required in order to maintain the profitability of plastics producers. Bio-based alternatives to fossil-based intermediates are under development in order to decrease the dependency on oil. In response to this challenge, the Thermal Processes business unit has developed new PET technologies and is now in a position to offer SSP plants with a single-line capacity of 1500 metric tons a day. The energy consumption of such plants is more than 20% lower than that of conventional plants. In addition, the new S-HIP-PET production technology is available today. It allows cost-effective and energy-efficient production of PET resin with a low acetaldehyde content for bottling still water.

MARTIN MÜLLER

Advanced Materials

Nanotechnology

Let’s lean back and have a look at the list of achievements of the young Nanotechnology business unit: On four product lines, we supplied 50 tons of high-tech nanomaterials to more than one dozen recurring customers. This enabled us to generate respectable sales revenues. But before this was possible and all these products could be launched in the marketplace, they first had to pass the acid test of externally certified management of nano-specific risks – an area in which Buhler is the world leader.

But that’s where leaning back ends! After these initial successes with technology enthusiasts, the “real world” is calling us back. The Nanotechnology business unit’s task is now to grow up: We must capture the early majority in the technology adoption cycle. For a start-up such as we are, this is generally known as “crossing the chasm.” Successfully and patiently performed, the next milestone is now within reach – breakeven.

The main driver on our road to success is expected to be our Oxylink™ product line. These nanotechnology-based high-performance additives help environmentally friendly water-borne coatings to compete with solvent-borne coatings. This is fully in line with the trend to reduce the volatile organic compounds (VOC) which are partly responsible for climate change. That, therefore, is our focus. But being a creative start-up, we are of course full of other ideas about what can be done with nanodispersions.

SAMUEL SCHÄR
Ideas for a better world – and for a successful future of Buhler

Develop innovations and business ideas for new products or services which have the potential for improving the world and are commercially profitable – that was the challenging target of the Buhler in-house business plan competition. Of 200 ideas entered from all corners of the world, the twelve best were picked. Of these, four ultimately made it to the great final.

Buhler is a global leader in the design and construction of plant and equipment for grain processing, for food production, and processing of specialty materials. As the market leader in various fields, Buhler is committed to forging ahead with innovations while at the same time assuming responsibility for sustainable development in the areas of foods, raw materials, energy, and the environment. Buhler’s striving for continuous improvement of products and services has two fundamental aims: On the one hand, it is designed to secure the commercial future of the Group. On the other hand, Buhler wants to make a substantial contribution to a more sustainable world.

Feasibility as a must

“Innovations which have the potential to create a global product or service!” This is the idea underlying the in-house competition which Buhler announced as part of its 150th anniversary celebrations. The invitation to take part was published about half a year ago and was addressed to all the 7600-plus employees worldwide. They were challenged to submit business ideas in self-formed teams to a central jury. The terms of the competition demanded that the teams focus on projects offering a high level of innovation and a large market potential. Purely idealistic projects that were not feasible were thus excluded.

Twelve projects make it in the first round

From the large number of project ideas that the jury received from all corners of the globe, twelve were selected in a first round. The 56 members of these twelve teams met in Switzerland in mid-October 2009 for a two-day training session with innovation experts and professors from globally renowned business schools. The aim of this seminar was to give the required skills and tools to the teams that would enable them to develop a successful business concept on the basis of their ideas. The teams established their business concepts by the end of November. In their efforts, each team was supported by a seasoned coach. The goal was to analyze markets, to evaluate customers’ needs, and to identify possible competitors. These analyses and concepts had to be distilled in a brief summary. At the start of December, the twelve teams could then explain their projects to a five-member jury in a ten-minute presentation each. The panel picked the four finalists from the twelve projects. These four teams were asked to create an extensive business plan by mid-

“Smart Energy”

Idea: A solution for autarchic in-house energy production which optimally and efficiently utilizes the energy supply chain. With the aid of microturbines and heat exchangers, power and process heat such as steam, hot water, and hot air are produced. Cooling applications are also possible. “Smart Energy” allows energy costs to be reduced by 50 percent and carbon emissions by 66 percent. It is ready for the market and can be used worldwide in Buhler plants.

Team: (from left to right) Jürgen Joachim, Thomas Fiebig, Maja Jösler, Christoph Meier, Willi Aurich.

Coach: Stephan Walther.

“Gold Digger – generating high-value mango fat from mango waste”

Idea: Mango is a widely consumed tropical fruit. To date, the core of the mango fruit has been disposed of as waste. The project idea is to process the fat of the mango core into value-added products for the healthcare, nutraceutical, cosmetics, and wellness industries. This is to reduce environmental pollution and poverty and to create job opportunities for millions of underprivileged people living in developing countries. Buhler essentially possesses the required technology.

Team: (from left to right) Vinod Kumar S, B.C. Sunil, Prashant Gokhale, Alok Sabharwal, GVL Chari.

Coach: KC Reddy.
January 2010, which they presented to the final jury on January 29, 2010.

**Training in Harvard**

As a competition prize, the two first-ranking teams were offered the opportunity to spend an intensive week of training at the Harvard Business School in Boston, U.S. The winning team will additionally be awarded the “Innovations for a better world 2009” trophy.

The end of the competition marks the actual start of four finalists’ entrepreneurial venture. They will present their projects to a Buhler investment committee. This panel will then decide on the basis of the business criteria in which business plans to invest. A prerequisite for any capital investment is that the business concept presented be commercially viable. The goal is to launch and build two or three new businesses in the current year. In order to provide the best possible support in building the new businesses, Buhler will establish and make available a “New Business Creation” platform. This is quite in line with the philosophy of the competition – to shape a successful future for Buhler by rolling out innovations.

**“ParGem” wins competition**

Following the presentation of the four final projects and in-depth discussions, the jury arrived at the following ranking:

1st place: “ParGem”
2nd place: “Isigayo compact maize mill”
Shared 3rd place: “Smart Energy” and “Gold Digger – high-value mango fat from mango waste”

**“ParGem”**

Idea: In India, pulses such as chickpeas, pigeon peas and mung beans are important staples. Germination of pulses is a natural and organic method of enhancing their nutritional value. Today, germination is accomplished in a three-day, tedious effort in households. The “ParGem” solution allows germination of pulses on an industrial scale for producing safe and healthy foods.

Team: (from left to right) Michael Jacobs, Eliana Zamprogna, Stefania Bellaio, Beatrice Conde-Petit, Urs Keller.

Coach: Marcel Natterer.

**“Isigayo compact maize mill”**

Idea: The goal of the Isigayo team is to improve the supply and quality of food to the population living in parts of sub-Saharan Africa and suffering from malnutrition. This is to be done by supplying them with fortified, high-quality maize meal (cornmeal). To accomplish this, the team will develop containerized, compact, portable, and inexpensive maize (corn) mills. These will be sold to non-governmental organizations, village communities, commercial farmers, or small traders. The basic technology is available within Buhler. Design and manufacturing will be done in Africa.

Team: (from left to right) Paul Young, Olivier Marion, Yves Stuber, Andreas Risch.

Coach: Anton Holenstein.
New website

Focus on customer value

Buhler had a surprise in store for its customers on the occasion of its 150th anniversary: a new website. For all its simplicity, the concept underlying the new appearance is precisely defined—“customer orientation” and “ease of use” were the prime considerations in developing it.

The web appearance of a company is like the receptionist’s desk in a good hotel: You are expected to feel at home at first glance. In an increasingly digitized world, Internet appearances are therefore a company’s most important business card—they present the digital home of an organization and are a core source of information for customers and prospects around the globe.

Taking new approaches

Buhler was aware of this challenge and relaunched its website right in time for its 150th anniversary. The philosophy of the new corporate appearance systematically sets the focus on potential users with their expectations and requirements. “In designing the new Internet appearance, we always tried to put ourselves in our customers’ shoes,” explains Frank Nehlig, the project manager in charge of the new website. Before actual work started on the new website, different analyses and numerous responses from customers were evaluated. They showed, for example, that up to now it was not possible to find the product portfolio fast enough. With the new “Products” section, the Buhler Group has responded to this essential customer need: In addition to an optimized search function, a clear product index and an interactive “Solution Finder” now allow the required information to be found with ease. A lot was also simplified in the “Services” section: For example, now a clear Service area is offered, and in the future a central hotline will be available on the website to make it easier for customers to contact us when they have inquiries or problems. Another innovation is the so-called “Service Finder,” which enables customers to easily find specific services for old plants (e.g. retrofit or maintenance packs).

Promoting a dialog with customers

Interested users can enter into contact with Buhler directly from the context of almost every page—the need for tedious searches for the correct unit or the right contact has thus been eliminated. But what the new website offers is not limited solely to this form of contacting. “Needless to say that we also want to enter into contact with our customers through the new communication forms of the Web 2.0,” explains Frank Nehlig. “We are now busy checking out the numerous new possibilities offered by customer forums, blogs, or other such tools for conducting an interactive dialog with customers. We are highly interested in creating a platform for our customers which enables them to exchange ideas and views and to proactively take part in the design process. A corporate website must never be considered to be a completed project—it is extremely important to maintain and nurture it by filling it with topics and incorporating customer feedback. After all, our customers’ online experiences are also characterized by news portals, social networks, and YouTube.”

“In the markets for the markets”

The new website’s global manifestation is based on the regions concept of Buhler: “In the markets for the markets.” In the short and medium terms, we will create various regional websites in addition to the international version. These regional variants are designed to allow Buhler to offer its customers worldwide special services and information that are tailored to local needs. The regional market launch of the website will take place in several phases. In an initial phase lasting up to mid-2010, the regions of North America, South America, China, and Western Europe will go live.

Looking to the future

The “old” Internet appearance of Bühler AG went live in early 2005. But five years are an almost biblical age for a website considering what has happened in this area since then. The relaunch was thus overdue. A Group-wide project team headed by Frank Nehlig has developed a new website from scratch within one year. To start with, it now includes about 500 pages—but that is not the end. Frank Nehlig: “We are continuously adding to the contents and plan to also increasingly offer background information on subjects such as food industry issues. We have a few other things up our sleeve as far as animated contents or the visualization of process technologies are concerned. So, customers can be sure this will not be the last surprise.”

The interactive “Solution Finder” allows information to be found with high efficiency.
The people behind the story

On the occasion of its anniversary, Buhler is publishing a book in which employees and retirees from all corners of the globe tell us about their jobs. This has produced a collection of personal narratives by people whose passion and knowledge have made Buhler’s success possible and on whose lives Buhler has left a lasting imprint.

The Anniversary Book entitled “Buhler. 150 years of innovations for a better world” invites its readers to get to know the Buhler company through the eyes of the people exemplifying the organization in Minneapolis, Uzwil, Braunschweig, Johannesburg, Wuxi, or wherever else in the world. Machine tool operators tell their tale as well as numerous other people: grain milling technologists, installation supervisors, scientists, factory managers, technologists, engineers, the CEO, and also the owner of the family-owned company, Urs Bühler.

They all paint a picture of a company which has become firmly established in the global marketplace over the past 150 years. This was possible through personal dedication, business acumen, and adherence to the proverbial quality and solidity in the Group’s core business activities, borne by marked innovative power.

The quintessence of Buhler

In all, 68 employees and retirees tell us passionately and enthusiastically about their jobs, new developments, trailblazing innovations, milestones in the history of the company, and future challenges. Each of the 68 texts is accompanied by a photograph showing these persons in their working environments. Many of them look back to times when computers were not yet part of our everyday jobs, when air travel was an adventure and the Iron Curtain was still firmly in place. One narrator explains to us why a sorter is a Stradivari for him, another why a new development can be compared with open-heart surgery. Affectionate words have been chosen when they talk about the “reluctance of the wheat grain to travel” or when they say that it would be hard to imagine any other life than that of an installation supervisor constantly on the move around the planet. And thus, every narrative and every passionately described detail of a process stage takes us closer to that legendary Buhler culture so often encountered when talking to people who have been loyal to their employer for twenty, thirty, or forty years. Pride shines through when people talk about Buhler as a global market leader; gratitude when the family-owned company is described as being one in which solidity is nurtured, moderation is a virtue, and decisions are made rationally.

Global expansion and technological leadership

Many of the stories testify to an ability to change which has always been a hallmark of the Buhler company: The road from the classical mechanical engineering company to the global technology group which develops and improves processes and sets an ever-sharper focus on its customers’ needs and problems in rolling out its innovations. Employees remember the changes that were required to this end, the striking-out towards new frontiers, the resistances and uncertainties associated with such paradigm shifts, for example when the question arose as to whether modern engineering sciences should be adopted. But far from looking back, the protagonists of this book much more frequently look forward, thus expressing the literally forward-looking attitude that has always been the prime quality of the company.

Milestones

The portraits are framed by milestones from the 150-year history of the company. Here, historical facts, figures, acquisitions, and mergers are presented; important staff-related decisions are mentioned; and premieres such as the casting of the first iron roll or the design and construction of the first pasta production line are recorded.

The Anniversary Book is supplemented with an extensive section of photographs of selected showcase machines and processing systems.

The Anniversary Book – not a chronicle, but a collection of personal reports and portraits.
“17,912 grain milling machines”

The section in the Diagram which is usually devoted to reviewing a magazine issue of earlier times is reserved this time in the anniversary issue for drawing our readers’ attention to a special historical work: the Anniversary Book published on the occasion of Buhler’s 40th birthday in the year 1900.

“On the occasion of its 40th anniversary, the Adolf Bühler company has the pleasure of offering its numerous friends and benefactors a small gift in the form of the present album.” These are the words of Adolf Bühler, the eldest son of the company’s founder, in the foreword to the Anniversary Book published on the occasion of the Bühler company’s 40th birthday in the year 1900. The “small gift”, of which 1000 copies were printed and distributed among selected customers the world over as well as friends of the company is abundantly illustrated and has 357 pages. According to the preface, the purpose of this “small gift” is twofold: “On the one hand, we are hereby inviting you to indulge in a brief hour of tranquility in the midst of our daily business bustle … in order to obtain an entertaining insight into the nature, organization, and activity of a branch of manufacturing and business so closely associated with flour milling. The technical part, on the other hand, shall offer the specialist the opportunity to walk through the grain milling industries of different countries…”

History and tour of the premises
The first section of the Anniversary Book is devoted to the then already 40-year history of the Adolf Bühler company. It reveals the patterns of thought and the purposeful procedure of the company’s founder. As a contract foundry operator, he detects defects on the rolls manufactured and develops his own rolls. As a supplier to millwrights, he does not hesitate to improve flour mill designs, developing revolutionary innovations. His new roller mills are soon followed by other plant components for flour mills. And thus, his son can proudly proclaim in the Anniversary Book: “At the end of 1899, 17,912 Bühler grain milling machines are in service around the world.”

Along with the development of new products, also the company’s payroll increases. Whereas Adolf Bühler employed two workers when he set up his business in 1860, the workforce had surged to 789 persons by the year 1900. Of these, 717 workers operated the neatly enumerated 524 machine tools while a staff of 72 were employed in office jobs.

The section on the “tour of the establishment in Uzwil” provides an abundantly illustrated overview of the 52,900 square-meter premises in Uzwil with foundries, machine shops, and offices.

Markets and customers
But the main emphasis of the Anniversary Book is on the description of markets and customers for whom Adolf Bühler’s business acted successfully at that time. With unusual openness, the markets of Switzerland, France, Spain and Portugal, Italy, Russia, and Germany are individually detailed. A general geographic map is followed by a reference list and some “certificates” from customers. Then individual customer flour mills are presented in detail – in the form of photographs, sketches, and descriptions – in much the same way as this is done in today’s issues of Diagram.

The final 30 pages of the Anniversary Book are dedicated to three special subjects. A large chart displays the results of “tests on power consumption in an automatic flour mill designed and constructed on the basis of our system.” The purpose of this was to show the advantages of the then new “automatic milling system” developed by Bühler.

The next-to-last chapter describes various projects for marine legs (chain elevators of ship unloaders) and storage terminals and thus points to the emergence of a new business unit. The final report on the Bühler-built “cableway installation at Herrenmühle” near Heidelberg (Germany) is representative of Bühler’s continuous quest for new business fields.

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The factory premises in Uzwil in 1900.

The Buhler workforce of 1900 – 717 workers and 72 employees.