

TAKING ON RESPONSIBILITY

Corporate Responsibility at edding AG in Ahrensburg

Article by: Benjamin Hellwig | Images: edding AG

PER LEDERMANN, CEO AT EDDING AG, IS CONTINUING THE COMPANY'S PHILOSOPHY BY IMPLEMENTING A SERIES OF CR MEASURES IN THE TUG OF WAR BETWEEN COMPETITIVENESS, PROFIT AND CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY. A LOOK BEHIND THE SCENES OF THIS FAMILY-OWNED BUSINESS IN AHRENSBURG.

"Plan for the future, because that's where you are going to spend the rest of your life." These words from American author Mark Twain (1835-1910) could be our wake-up call for action. If a company or an individual is to present itself as fit for the future it means being able to demonstrate an honest and ethical attitude and adopting a clear position on responsibility. Over the past ten years society and economy established structures explaining these principles. This is known as CR, or Corporate Responsibility. The term refers to a company's responsibility, as a part of society, for the social, ecological and economic consequences of its business activities – for example,

by implementing waste management strategies and energy efficiency measures; optimising logistic processes to be more environmentally friendly; using natural resources economically; preventing and banning exploitative child labour and introducing innovative models for working time models This commitment has many different aspects and is applied to all areas along the value added chain, from remote suppliers right through to the head office in



edding AG Head Office in Ahrensburg



Schleswig-Holstein. It is usual for CR policies to be based on a company's own initiative, and at times they go beyond statutory requirements. It's therefore worthwhile for consumers to take a critical look at questions such as: How sincere is the company in pursuing its stated goals? And what motivates it to do so?

If the only drive for bringing in CR measures is to use them for the company's own profit, there is a risk they will stop suddenly, because if they fail to succeed they will be scrapped. On the other hand, if CR is a matter close to the heart of the people responsible, this can result in sustained growth, including at a financial level. Searching across the value added chain



Per Ledermann, Chairman of the Management Board of edding AG

Patricia Siebel, Environmental Management and CR Coordinator

philosophy, passed down to us by our founders, Carl-Wilhelm Edding and Volker Ledermann." Right from the start this has included the issue of making writing implements refillable. After setting out in 1960 with a start-up capital of 500 Deutschmarks and a simple typewriter, today the business has evolved into a global group of companies with an extensive range of products. This family-owned enterprise designs, produces and sells markers and other writing implements under the edding brand, along with products in the Visual Communication segment under the Legamaster brand. Per Ledermann, who succeeded his father in 2005, wants to take the corporate philosophy forward.

An independent service provider was brought on board in the middle of 2014 to help the company tackle all areas of CR in a structured way. Working together with the Gesellschaft für Nachhaltigkeit (Company for Sustainability) based in Bremen and with the aid of ISO guideline 26000, the team of people responsible are addressing all the relevant topics and shaping them into a form that fits edding. Numerous workshops have been held, and there have been many discussions with experts, all of which has resulted in nearly 70 mandatory targets being drawn up. Patricia Siebel works at the Ahrensburg site and is responsible for the company's environmental management and coordination of the CR policy. Here, she highlights

for innovations that will benefit society as a whole, whilst also strengthening a company's own competitive position, can be viewed as a win-win situation.

"If a company has financial profit as its key motivation, then it won't be bubbling over with ideas from its core," observes Per Ledermann, Chairman of the Board of edding AG, headquartered in Ahrensburg, Schleswig-Holstein. He underlines that in no way is edding's careful use of natural resources a sign of a recent change in social awareness: "Much more than that, it has always been a part of our company

"We offer tailored part-time work packages to older employees."

Patricia Siebel

topics from the audit and the commitment to these in relation to the principles laid down. She reports that the company has picked out five areas of action from the core topics in the guide: strategy, products, environment, society and corporate culture.

In terms of corporate culture, Patricia explains: "We want our employees to feel at home at edding. That's why we do everything we can to meet their personal needs and find solutions for a wide variety of life circumstances. For example, we help mothers return to work with us by offering flexible working hours and the option of working from home, not to mention childcare cover for emergencies and

Symbolically linked: interaction between Hamburg and Bautzen in graphic form



Photovoltaic installation at the Bautzen

exceptional circumstances (currently only available at Ahrensburg). Right now, I am working on solutions for our other sites: Wunstorf (national sales) and Bautzen (production)," says Patricia, adding: "We offer tailored part-time work packages to older employees, such as a gradual reduction in working hours, to facilitate a smooth transition into their retirement."

When it comes to the environment, edding is guided by environmental management standards ISO 14001 and 50001. The certification, gained in 2008 and 2014, forms the basis of the company's acknowledged credibility in terms of its long-term and growing CR commitment. One aspect of this is the array of solar panels installed on the roof of the high-bay warehouse at the head office in Ahrensburg and the production facility in Bautzen. Every year, this gives edding 179,000 kilowatt hours of energy and avoids around 158 tonnes of CO2 emissions each year. "By using low-energy fluorescent tubes, motion detectors and light sensors we have been able to make electricity savings of around 30% at both our Bautzen and Ahrensburg plants," Patricia continues. In 2011, an electric car was added to the fleet. This runs on green electricity obtained from the company's own charging point and is used for driving short distances.

And yet another aspect: in October 2010, a combined heat and power plant was commissioned in Ahrensburg. Powered by natural gas, the combustion engine produces 50 kilowatt hours of electrical energy – covering one third of the daily demand and the entire night-time demand between the hours of 6 p.m. and 6 a.m. "We also operate a waste heat recovery system. The fridges in the company canteen generate enough heat to provide all the hot water needed in the kitchen," Patricia explains.

It is quite normal for any company to encounter challenges when implementing CR measures, and there are still many areas where edding can improve – for example, by exerting more influence on the entire supply chain: "We are in the process of developing our supplier network from a stronger CR viewpoint. To get a clear idea of how things currently stand, we have written to all our suppliers and asked them what CR measures they have already implemented, and which already exist within their company," adds Patricia, before going on to explain that it is often a question of a balancing act

between what is possible from a price or quality perspective and what is available in the country concerned. What is important, however, is that ecological, economic and social elements are taken into account to the same degree.

Sometimes, it is necessary to engage suppliers in countries where CR is not yet an issue. It can be particularly difficult in those cases to get hold of the necessary information in order to be able to evaluate whether they are reaching their self-defined goals with regard to CR. But the fact that we have been dealing with a lot of these suppliers for many years already rates as a plus point for CR.



EcoLine production unit in Bautzen

For many companies, logistics is another challenging area when it comes to CR activities. The availability of emissions data for the vehicles used is often limited and route optimisation can also be a sore point, especially when it comes to online business. Customers prefer to receive their goods immediately, and small orders require a lot of flexibility which makes route optimisation difficult. What's more, with freight forwarders, you can never be sure that they won't subcontract the jobs to others whose working conditions are incompatible with one's own CR conscience.

edding reached an important milestone in its company history when it launched the EcoLine product line, which includes a range of highlighters. Underlining the ecological success factors for this product segment. Mr Ledermann explains that "the cap and barrel of the highlighter is made from at least 90% renewable resources, the mouthpiece is made from at least 97% recycled material and the ink is water-based. Other items in this series include permanent, whiteboard and flipchart markers produced from 90% recycled material (of which 83% is post-consumer).

"Our hope is that, one day, we will be able to present a pen that is entirely compostable."

Per Ledermann

This allows for a significant reduction in the amount of new material used and avoids up to 83 tonnes of CO2 emissions per year." And, finally, he adds: "Our hope is that, one day, we will be able to present a pen that is entirely compostable." These are visionary thoughts for a corporate approach that could be a wake-up call for others with responsibility in this area. Thoughts that support a strong commitment to a better future. ■

CR milestones for edding

- 1991:** Membership of B.A.U.M. (the German Environmental Management Association).
- 1995:** Volker D. Ledermann is presented with the B.A.U.M. Environmental Award for exemplary long-term commitment to environmental management
- 2003:** The edding Academy is founded, giving employees the opportunity to take further training during working hours on a voluntary, individual basis.
- 2005:** The "Ehrenkodex" is drawn up, a code of practice for the paper, office supplies and stationery industry, which lays down the principles of fair business practices.
- 2007:** A specialist department is set up to deal with environmental and social issues
- 2008:** The EcoLine product series is introduced, including permanent and board markers where at least 90% of the plastic parts used are now made from recycled material. The edding highlighter, made from renewable raw materials, is introduced.
- 2011:** edding receives the Energy Masters Award in the "Energy Efficiency in SMEs" category (best of three companies nominated).
- 2013:** A collection scheme for empty, used markers is set up allowing any non-recyclable parts to be disposed of correctly whilst reintroducing recyclables such as plastic back into the production cycle.
- 2015:** The EcoLine series is one of 34 German brands to receive an award from brand marketing organisation GREEN BRANDS.
- 2016:** Post-consumer plastics are incorporated into the production of EcoLine products. The recycling of plastic waste significantly reduces the use of new material, thereby avoiding up to 83 tonnes of CO2 emissions every year.
- 2016:** edding is named "Sustainable Brand of the Year" by the German Brand Award, in the category "Excellence in Branding".
- 2017:** edding AG is currently audited and certified to ISO 90001, ISO 14001, OHSAS 18001, ISO 50001 and has undergone the German "agv" audit for corporate social responsibility.