

INFORM

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WELL UNDER WAY.

Since 1 March 2017, Jana Walker has been CEO of Swiss Prime Pack AG in Altstätten, Switzerland.

At **Swiss Prime Pack**, the name says it all. The **Swiss family enterprise** supplies its **high-grade packaging products** to well-known domestic brands and companies across the border. *inform* met **CEO Jana Walker** at the headquarters in Altstätten and discussed with her about **quality**, the **Swiss domicile** and the **future** of the industry.

Mrs Walker, what does Swiss Prime Pack look like today?

Swiss Prime Pack is a Swiss family-owned company. We specialise in the development and production of industrial packaging products for ice cream and dairy products as well as service packaging articles for the catering trade and fast-service restaurants. Another pillar is the production of cups and accessories for refreshment dispensers. We employ about 140 persons in three-shift operation, half of them here at our headquarters in Altstätten and the other half at our works in Niederuzwil. Among the techniques we apply are plastic injection moulding, extrusion, vacuum forming and various finishing methods.

In which countries can I find products packed in packaging articles made by Swiss Prime Pack?

The majority of our customers are located here in Switzerland. About 60 per cent of our packaging products are used within our country. You will find them at Migros or Coop, for example. The remaining 40 per cent are exported to the bordering regions of the neighbouring EU countries.

Can you name some salient projects?

There are several in every area we are engaged in. For example, the ice cream containers for Mövenpick or Midor. We produce them with a foamed material and in a protected process. Emmi's Caffè Latte cup is also an outstanding product. In the vending segment, the production volume of more than a billion cups alone is impressive. In addition, we use thin-wall technology and fully automatic production from granulate to carton-packed cups. The spoon for McDonald's McFlurry ice cream is certainly complex and therefore challenging.

In 2016, your Chairman of the Board, Eric Stupp, was quoted to have said: "In matters of quality and innovation, the enterprise intends to become the number one".

To which market did he refer?

This objective concerns on the one hand the geographic market of Switzerland, and on the other certain applications which we supply to neighbouring export markets. To achieve the mentioned quality means to invest considerably. We at Swiss Prime Pack strive for 100% product safety and impeccable hygiene. This can only be achieved by means of top technology on which we spend much capital. A further factor in this target are clearly defined standards. We train our workforce intensively along these guidelines so that the rules are always complied with.

To what extent is Mr Stupp's wish already fulfilled?

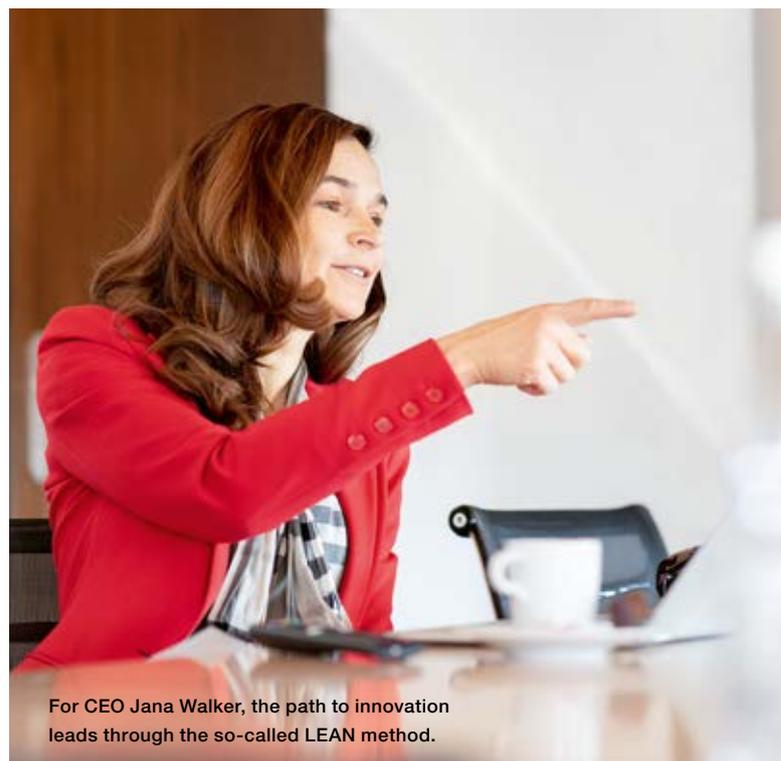
Let's put it this way: we are well under way. However, one never reaches the target, in principle. Striving for the highest quality is a constant process. In the interest of transparent results, we keep asking our customers about their satisfaction and we measure the quality. So far with very positive feedback from our clients and good marks for our quality. But, as pointed out: To rest on our laurels is out of the question.

"WE AT SWISS PRIME PACK STRIVE FOR 100% PRODUCT SAFETY AND IMPECCABLE HYGIENE."

Jana Walker, CEO, Swiss Prime Pack

What measures do you take to live up to the claim of your Chairman of the Board?

For us, the path to innovation also leads via the so-called LEAN method. We record our activities not only in production, but also in procurement, marketing and distribution as well as development. At weekly meetings, interdisciplinary teams coordinate their activities. This active exchange has proven very successful and is paying off in the entire innovation process.



For CEO Jana Walker, the path to innovation leads through the so-called LEAN method.

Swiss Prime Pack emerged a little over 10 years ago from the merger of two enterprises. The locations remained. To what extent is this division still perceptible?

To have two locations is of advantage to us in numerous ways. Our catchment area is bigger to find new and qualified personnel, for example. Furthermore, if demand in one area rises sharply in the short term, it will enable us to rapidly release additional capacity in the second plant. In addition, certain customers insist on more than one production site in order to ensure security of supply at all times.

At the same time, redundancy means higher costs, which is a disadvantage.

What are the decisive factors for competitiveness in today's packaging market?

At Swiss Prime Pack, the formula consists of innovation, quality, flexibility and customer service. Price also plays an important role, of course. Even in the case of a new product development, the price is recorded in the specifications as the decisive factor.



One of the lighthouse products of Swiss Prime Pack is the cup for Emmi's Caffè Latte.

Swiss Prime Pack appears to be very sensitive of the issue of energy consumption. What has been done in this respect?

We collaborate with a consulting agency and energy consumption is reduced annually through targeted measures and investments. The ecological footprint of our products is given high priority. When we develop new solutions, sustainability is a key consideration. Hereby we rely on reduced wall sections, recycling and bio-based plastic materials. We have only just launched a new vending cup based on GreenPlast®. The material to be processed is a blend of conventional plastic and natural raw materials. Packaging solutions based on this novel compound leave an ecological footprint less than half of that caused by products made from current polymer materials.

When it comes to vending cups, Swiss Prime Pack submits a quote to the customer that includes recycling. Will producers be held responsible in future?

We have assumed this responsibility of our own free will and regard it as sensible. This is why Swiss Prime Pack closed the material circuit already many years ago. The cups were returned and recycled in cooperation with a partner. However, the project had to be stopped for commercial reasons. By now, the pressure on the plastics processing industry is so enormous that a fair price might be achieved for this service, which would be useful in any case.

Your company cooperates in this area with the University of Technology of Rapperswil in Switzerland. What is your objective here?

Of key interest are new materials that permit us to further reduce the CO₂ footprint of our packaging solutions. On the one hand, we hope to achieve this by using biowaste in the form of wood, for example, or waste from the foodstuffs industry. The second direction to which we devote ourselves in our mutual research concerns a bio-based matrix. We are eagerly awaiting the results.

When you started as CEO, Eric Stupp announced that Swiss Prime Pack would invest in new production equipment and automation. To what extent is the company now automated?

Some interesting projects have already started well. For example, we have switched from off-line systems to fully automated in-line production. The production of yoghurt cups from the granulate to the film extrusion to the forming, punching, stacking and packaging of the cups

is fully automated. We see additional potential in the area of inspection, either using visual systems or sensors. The packaging of products in cartons can also be further automated. Optimisation is still possible, but skilled and conscientious employees will still be needed.

"WITH TWO PRODUCTION SITES, WE CAN RAPIDLY RELEASE ADDITIONAL CAPACITY."

Jana Walker, CEO, Swiss Prime Pack

Swiss Prime Pack relies on standards, as we heard. How can this be reconciled with the customers' increasing demand for individual solutions?

The standards refer to our processes. They guarantee the quality of our products and services. When it comes to individual solutions, every customer will find open ears here and highly experienced professionals who will try hard to meet every wish they have. Thanks to small lot sizes, we are able to offer an incredible multitude of finishes. We develop the solutions individually and usually in cooperation with the customer. In the implementation, on the other hand, everything follows our standardised processes.

According to CEO Jana Walker, skilled and conscientious employees will continue to be very important in the future.



What are the current design trends in the packaging world?

Trend number one is sustainability. In the last few months, the demand for changed functionality has also increased. Things are used differently today than in the past and must therefore be rethought in their form. Plastic is increasingly being substituted with other materials.

Are there reasons for using materials which are not lasting?

With the materials and knowledge already available today, more sustainable packaging can be produced. If the entire ecological balance of a product is considered, the possibility of replacing plastic in food packaging is challenging. Optimising, reducing and recycling is definitely a good idea. Replacing plastic completely leads to higher environmental pollution (CO₂ emissions, water pollution, etc.).

When you took up your job as CEO, in a sense you took over Otto Hofstetter AG as your mould supplier. What do you think of the specialists in Uznach?

When quotations for demanding products are concerned, customers often wish to know who makes the mould. When

they hear the name Otto Hofstetter, the topic is usually dealt with and finished. Our customers attach extremely high importance to the partner we cooperate with. To this extent, one might say that Otto Hofstetter is like an insurance policy for us.

**"SUSTAINABILITY IS ALWAYS
A KEY CONSIDERATION WHEN WE
DEVELOP NEW SOLUTIONS."**

Jana Walker, CEO, Swiss Prime Pack

In what areas could Otto Hofstetter AG still improve?

If we detect a possibility for optimisation within an ongoing project and refer the issue to Uznach, our requests for modification are met quickly and translated in perfect quality. As a rule, however, the impetus for optimisations comes from us. We would be glad if the experts of Otto Hofstetter AG supported us a little more actively and contributed their improvement ideas proactively.



Well-known companies from Switzerland and neighbouring countries rely on the high quality of Swiss Prime Pack.



The future lies in cooperation, they say. Where do you see opportunities for positioning yourself ideally to meet the challenges of the future in cooperation with the Uznach mould-makers?

Support in calls for tenders would be a great way of intensifying our cooperation. The option of procuring complete systems via the sister company Otto Systems looks interesting. I see considerable potential with a view to Industry 4.0. In this context, I am thinking of automatic data acquisition and evaluation, followed by on-site instruction of the employees regarding preventive maintenance and optimisation.

informatics and plastics technology. I was also fortunate enough to find a good solution in my family. Meanwhile, my two daughters have grown up and organisation is therefore easier. I think that most women who get a chance do well in the men's world, but as far as equal opportunities are concerned, we still have some work to do in Switzerland until this question no longer makes sense.

Many thanks for the open and informative discussion, Ms Walker. Our best wishes to you with Swiss Prime Pack and privately.

**"OTTO HOFSTETTER
IS LIKE AN INSURANCE
POLICY FOR US."**

Jana Walker, CEO, Swiss Prime Pack

A final, somewhat personal question: In the history of the customer magazine you are only the third woman we meet. How do you get along in this men's world?

From my perspective, it shouldn't be unusual for a woman to manage a technical operation if she meets the requirements. I have studied business administration and then business



Swiss Prime Pack AG

Oberrierterstrasse 53/55, 9450 Altstätten, Switzerland

Founded in 1956

Employees: approx. 150

Sales in 2017: approx. CHF 50 million

Production plants located in Altstätten and Niederuzwil

Development and production of top-quality foodstuffs packaging products for premium brands by injection moulding, extrusion, vacuum forming and finishing

www.swissprimepack.com



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