



More power for europe's market leader

## **Manufacturer of handlebars for bicycles**

### **Humpert from Wickede uses his potentials anew**

"We are one of the world's leading manufacturers of bicycle handlebars. But we can only hold that position, if we keep our know-how head start and develop our advantages in the on-time delivery and delivery speed by automation. Organisation development, motivation promotion and safeguarding of jobs were therefore in the centre of the consulting", Dirk Linnewerth, project manager of the Humpert company, explains the most important objectives of the potential consulting, which the family business had conducted by the consulting firm G.O.P.B. from Sankt Augustin. Discovering and developing existing potentials is the objective of the consulting which was funded by the Land North Rhine-Westphalia and the European Union.

Wilhelm Humpert GmbH&Co.KG was founded in 1918 in Wickede on the Ruhr. At first the emphasis lay on the development and production of high-quality bike parts, especially bike handlebars. Today Humpert produces and distributes 3.5 m bike handlebars made of steel, high-quality steel and aluminium per year, and has so become one of the market leaders in Europe and a world-wide leading vendor. In 1980 the development of another line was started to secure the independence from the bike industry.

With the ultra-modern and environmentally sound electroplating plant the company opened up other sectors with a range of products. Parallel to that the tube processing sector is producing prefabricated articles with or without surface finishing. Many well-known lamp manufacturers are supplied with tube components of a variety of materials in differentiated specifications.

#### **No chance on the market without motivated employees**

In the course of the expansion of the product range and due to the good order situation in the area of bike parts, the family-wned company was able to increase its workforce from about 50 to approximately 110 employees. It was, however, almost impossible to adapt the structures and the work procedure in the company due to this enormous growth. So it was only logical to open the company for a potential consulting. After an analysis of the core processes in the company the management and consultants took first steps to improve quality and on-time delivery, to reorganise the order processing and to establish a new management system. Furthermore the development of the staff was promoted by targeted motivation increase.



“You have no chance on the market without motivated employees”, Linnewerth explained. This led to a reorganisation of the system of suggestions for improvements in the course of the consulting.

Now there is not only the one-time bonus for suggestions from the workforce, but everybody who has made a suggestion participates in a lottery. At the end of the year you can then win a special prize at the company Christmas party, for example a trip. These changes caused the number of suggestions for improvement to rise considerably.

The appraisal interviews were developed, too. These interviews are now held systematically and regularly in order to find out the career objectives of each employee, to match them with the demands of the company and record them in an agreement. “We also look, if the employees have been placed correctly and whether we can help them with their development, that is with their own personal qualifying”, the project leader explains. “We get some real successes with the consulting in this respect. We now include the employees more – and that is good for the climate. There have been less people on sick leave, for instance”, Linnewerth adds.

Another tangible result of the consulting is the reorganisation of the workflow. A classical work scheduling has been introduced. “That has created an additional job, because it has to be done professionally”, Linnewerth describes the workplace effect of that part of the consulting. The individual production groups of the company now prepare a process analysis when new work projects or work orders come in. Additionally a new network engineering was introduced to promote the internal communication. “That is our only

chance”, Linnewerth explains, “only that way we manage the head start in on-time delivery and can hold prices in line with the market. And you can only secure workplaces or create new ones when you hold your ground on the market.”

**Always carry on or you get overtaken**

As a sequel to the funded consulting the project of a companies group is now being carried out. Several companies exchange their experience and cooperation possibilities in order to improve their market position and the development of their companies. You have to hang in there and keep changing. That is not always easy. “The application for the grants is very complicated”, Dirk Linnewerth complains. “Many institutions are involved in the decision, many forms have to be filled in. The Regionalsekretariat<sup>1</sup> helped us a lot there.” Otherwise that would be too much for a medium-sized company.

But the Humpert company is keeping at it, because who does not develop is overtaken by the market instead of leading it.

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