



Visitors could see this example of “in-mold assembly” at the new test center. The base body of the cooking oil bottle with its tear tab and spout sits on one side, and the closure cap on the opposite side of the stack mold; by the two center plates that are rotatable around the horizontal axes, the two parts are oriented towards each other, and assembled by the clamping stroke movement

## (Dis-)Closure

**Integrated Solutions for PET Bottles.** Considering bottle cap production plants, there is a growing trend towards integrated one-stop solutions. Understandably, the takeover of a renowned moldmaker by a globally established producer of injection molding machines at the end of May caused quite a stir.

Even though there had been rumors for quite some time, the issue was not disclosed until March, when the notice of intent was given to the press (see report in *Kunststoffe international*): Husky Injection Molding Systems Ltd. will assume Kunststofftechnik Waidhofen an der Thaya GmbH (KTW). On May 26, the producer of injection molding machines and hot runners based in Bolton, Canada, eventually informed the public that takeover of one of the leading producers of injection molds for closure caps was completed. Both parties agreed to maintain silence about the purchase price.

As was to be expected, the news of the transaction produced some turmoil in the sector, and it was the talk of the day on April 28, when – with a symposium attended by invitees from Procter & Gamble, Henkel, Unilever, Beiersdorf and others – KTW officially opened its test and technology center erected in 2010. At a press conference, previous owners of KTW Anja and Claus Ziegler and Vice President Jeffrey MacDonald, as representative of the purchasing party, explained the reasons of the transaction.

### Competence Center for Closures

Following company information, KTW is the largest moldmaker in Europe with its approx. 370 toolmakers and technicians today. Accordingly, it brings a development center into the business, as well as three production plants situated at the headquarters in Waidhofen (Austria),



Husky Vice President Jeffrey MacDonald, Anja and Claus Ziegler (from left) opening the new test center of KTW in Waidhofen (photos: KTW)

Chemnitz (Germany) and Jindrichuv Hradec (Czech Republic). All over the closure cap production sector, Husky is now the only supplier to offer complete injection molding systems, i.e. including machine, mold, hot runner system and temperature controller, as well as consulting and services, thus extending the single-source solution strategy from its PET preform business to closure caps. Within the Husky group, KTW is to act as global competence center for closures, said MacDonald.

All three sites, in Lower Austria, Saxony and in the southern part of Bohemia, were close to the Iron Curtain, which had been tightly closed before the fall of the Berlin Wall. With this outstanding situation, the focus of business shifted from Europe and the USA to the economies of the former Soviet Republic and Asia after the revolutionary changes of 1989, explained Claus Ziegler. With its enterprise structures as they were, the company was hardly able, however, to provide for the necessary counseling and service in these markets, as well as the growth markets of Latin America. Building up a network of representations or on-site production plants, as many major and globally acting customers demanded, would have exceeded the company's scope. Claus Ziegler explained that, after more than 14 →

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years of close cooperation in the project business, and after intensive talks with Husky management, KTW finally decided to join a partnership with the globally established market leader.

This year, KTW turnover will certainly exceed the latest record value of EUR 40 million, Ziegler continued. Although the company's assets do not allow for global presence – the moldmaker has long had everything that is necessary in order to be in a strong position as major supplier to packaging manufacturers: plant equipment is almost identical in all three works. This is how KTW is able to adapt production capacities flexibly to the respective

products of globally acting beverage, food and cosmetics holdings, when e.g. a product is introduced to all parts of the global market at the same time. Moreover, the concept of operating several works with the same equipment provides for the resilience required by large customers. According to Ziegler, KTW acquired the necessary solution competence over several years too, when developing from "toolmaker to advanced solution provider".

### Tests on Pilot Molds

KTW mold technology covers the entire range of closures, starting from standard caps for beverage bottles, up to customized multi-component design of containers with lift-up and flip-top function for body care products, detergents and foods. For the test runs at the new technology center, eight injection molding plants are available now, with clamping forces ranging from 500 to 5,500 kN; half of them feature two or three injection molding units, respectively. One of the main tasks is to test pilot molds under realistic conditions and cycle times – reduc-

tions in material and energy consumption in order to reduce production costs frequently remain one of the main targets, according to Ziegler. With serial molds, the focus is on "fine-tuning", mainly of the drop channel during demolding, because a short opening stroke will save cycle time and energy.

A decision has been made to intensify efforts aimed at the development of integrated systems for closures, to eliminate interfacial barriers between machine, mold and automation, in order to step up efficiencies. Also, the KTW brand will remain. One issue still has to be settled on the way to integration, though. The renowned producer of closures, Injectoplast, top-seller of the KTW group, does not fit into the overall strategy within the new enterprise structure. As was heard at the symposium, Husky and KTW are currently engaged in promising negotiations for sale. To calm staff, Jeffrey MacDonald had the last word here: By no means will the factory, with its 40 high-performance injection molding plants and highly qualified employees, close down. ■

**Clemens Doriati, editor**