

We enter 2023 with a positive outlook

Sales restructured

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Record prices for aluminium, Ukraine war, explosion of energy costs, shortage of skilled workers - 2022 was extremely challenging for Gutmann Bausysteme GmbH. "Nevertheless, we got through it well, and we see some obstacles in the new year as well, but we are confident that we will overcome them," says Managing Director Arnd Brinkmann. However, the company also has good reason to look positively into the future. The company from Weissenburg in Bavaria considers the topics of digitalization, automation, and sustainability to be the key factors for future success. Gutmann will therefore concentrate on these three fields of action in 2023 - also in terms of the products it sells. In addition, the sales was restructured at the end of the year.

After extreme global raw material shortages in 2021, the aluminium price developed unprecedented momentum in the first half of 2022. Record prices on the stock market combined with an ever weaker euro (against the dollar) catapulted the raw material into unprecedented price regions: Daily prices almost 200 percent above the average prices of previous years were called. "We were faced with extremely complicated questions during this phase, such as the best possible times to buy and the general security of supply for us and our customers," explains Brinkmann.

In the first half of 2022 in particular, demand developed so positively that Gutmann was producing around the clock, seven days a week. "It was already sometimes tight with the material reserves. Security of supply and ability to deliver to our customers therefore remains the first priority in our purchasing strategies. We tended to stock up on a long-term basis, which of course also posed a financial challenge. We have never had so much aluminium physically in stock as we do at present," sums up Brinkmann.

New press at the right time

Gutmann's management demonstrated perfect timing by investing in the new extrusion press, which went into operation at the beginning of 2022 and is mainly used for system profiles. Since then, the latest technology, higher process reliability and around 30 percent more capacity have helped to avoid delivery problems. "However, security of supply was and is not only the number one issue for us in the case of aluminium, but also increasingly in the case of energy supplies for our production due to the war in Ukraine. Prices have run away from us here," says Brinkmann.

In the end, the company's stable financial foundation, long-standing and proven customer relationships, highly committed employees and prudent management decisions meant that it had come through the difficult year in good shape.

Expectations for the current year

There were already signs of an economic downturn across the industry in the third and fourth quarters of 2022. "Due to the general political as well as economic uncertainty and the out-of-balance relationship between financing costs, real estate and construction costs, we expect a temporary dip in the economy," says Brinkmann, assessing the situation for 2023.

In the medium and long term, however, the high energy costs could have a positive effect for the industry and for Gutmann. The pressure to save energy and reduce CO2 emissions will continue to grow. "Much more attention should therefore be drawn to the poor condition of windows and facades from the 1970s and 1980s," demands Brinkmann.

In this difficult market situation, Gutmann's high vertical range of manufacture, machining, coating and recycling at a central location in Germany are the main advantages. After the experiences of the last few years regarding outsourcing to so-called "low-cost countries", Gutmann is convinced that a rethink will take place in society and in the economy in this respect as well, for both economic and ecological reasons. At Gutmann, the focus is on "Made in Germany" and the necessity of using energy sources from politically uncritical countries and regions. Brinkmann comments: "With our product range, we can make a significant contribution to achieving the climate targets we have set ourselves and reducing energy costs. However, many market participants still need to become more aware of this."

The challenge of a shortage of skilled workers

Due to the steady growth, the company's management sees the need to increase personnel. For this reason, Gutmann is focusing not only on traditional recruitment but also on training its own specialists. A trainee program tailored to the company's needs is already showing initial success. "In order to continue to be attractive as an employer in the region as a traditional company, we have to adapt to a different understanding of values among the younger generations. Above all, this means more flexibility and more responsiveness to the different life situations and goals of our employees. We train young people, take them on in responsible jobs and support our established specialist staff

in gaining further qualifications. This is the only way we can overcome the difficult personnel situation in the medium term," emphasizes Brinkmann.

Pleasing result in the product areas

With regard to the individual product segments, the result for the past year is positive: "We were able to increase our profits in all areas. In the aluminium division, we realized some challenging projects. Building fitting and metal composite systems again developed very well, as they did last year, and made a significant contribution to the company's success," says a pleased Thomas Reinert, head of sales. Wood-aluminium frames and aluminium window sills were very successful as individual products. "Customers are increasingly rewarding our investment in our own coating plants, so that the percentage of coloured profiles could be further expanded. We are pleased that the newly introduced clip holder was immediately accepted by our customers and we receive a lot of positive feedback on this," says Reinert.

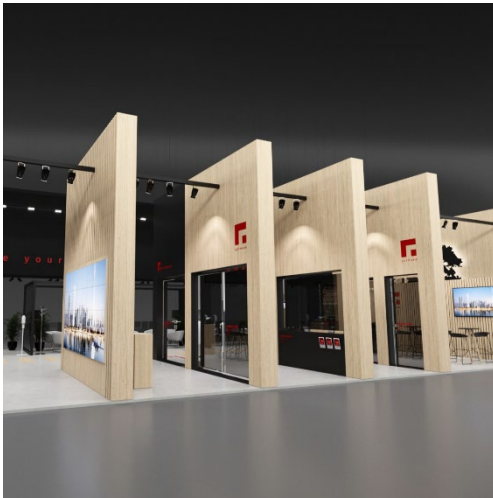


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New sales structure

In 2023, the sales organization of Gutmann Bausysteme GmbH in German-speaking countries - i.e. the D-A-CH region - will be restructured: aluminium, building hardware and metal composite systems will be merged in terms of sales, and employees will then act as contact persons for all three segments. The aim is to make greater use of synergies and convert them into customer benefits. The property management team in the South region will be strengthened in April 2023, while the search is still underway for the North region.

Changes have also been made to the fall protection systems. Reinert says, "In the future, we will focus on prefabricated system packages in this area. The customer receives coordinated kits that are precisely adapted to the respective requirements. These complete packages can be made available to the market quickly and conveniently by our partners in the production connection trade." This project is supported by a new configurator on the Gutmann processor platform tuulo, which can be used to put together an individual kit at any desired time and place it as an order.



Trade fair participation fixed

Gutmann will participate again at the BAU trade fair in Munich in 2023. Among other innovations, Gutmann will present the new FPA fall prevention system with grids made of aluminium profiles. Optimizations, which also have an impact on the production process, were achieved for the "MIRA" wood-aluminium window system, and a revised version of the façade system "LARA" will be presented at the trade fair. The new development for the GWD aluminium window systems is a new sealing frame concept, which promises significant cost and time savings in production for our customers. The tuulo portal will also ensure increased attention with new 3D-animations for product selection and configuration.

For Gutmann, digitization and automation are necessary tools to counter the shortage of skilled workers. "We primarily train junior staff ourselves, but in production we want to focus more on modular designs and serial systems in order to better manage personnel capacity bottlenecks in the future. In the area of sustainability, our standard remains to protect the renewable frame material wood from the growing environmental influences with appropriate facing shells made of high-quality aluminium. Wood/aluminium windows are known to last a lifetime - certainly an effective contribution to resource conservation and climate protection," Reinert knows.

In all segments, the focus is on accelerating and streamlining production processes, explains the sales manager: "Here, we listen to our customers and develop practical solutions with bundled know-how. By expanding our system audits, we will continue to meet the growing demands of the bidding side."