
Klaus Fischer, the Entrepreneur



Ambitious foresight

His “magic words” are future and sustainability. For over 40 years, the visionary entrepreneur Klaus Fischer has consistently looked ahead, claiming, “it’s only the future which we can shape”.

fischerwerke GmbH & Co. KG
Corporate Communications

Klaus-Fischer-Straße 1
72178 Waldachtal

Anyone who believed that the fischer plug could not be improved on was proved wrong by the entrepreneur with the introduction of the two-component DuoPower plug. Making visions come true – that’s how Klaus Fischer defines entrepreneurship!

Klaus Fischer is demanding, impatient at times, and always ahead of his time – and has been so for more than 40 years: Freshly graduated as Dipl.-Eng. (FH), he joined the company at the age of 25 as head of the test facility. Turnover in those days totalled 102 million Deutschmark (approx. 51 million euro), generated by 1,000 members of staff. By the end of 2020, 5,200 people worldwide worked for the family-owned business and generated an annual turnover of 872 million euro.

Klaus Fischer soon joined the management team. 1980 saw him taking on the overall responsibility and rapidly developing his own visions. He never lost sight of the new social conditions, the increasing competition in the wake of globalisation, and the growing complexity in his own business. These factors prompted him to initiate changes which made it clear that a

wealth of ideas and a spirit of invention are not limited to solving problems with products. Customer proximity and ongoing service are matters of importance to him. The international orientation of the product range follows the needs and requirements of the customers. The successful R&D centre is still centred in Germany, but new products are also being developed to market maturity at the sites of the 50 subsidiaries worldwide.

Building up competence in the business divisions

Klaus Fischer continually expanded the fixings division, consolidating his leading position in 1993 by taking over Upat GmbH & Co. KG in Emmendingen, Germany's number two fixings manufacturer at the time. In addition to plastic plugs, metal heavy-duty fixings gained importance. He significantly expanded the chemical fixing systems area, during which the acquisition of the foam and silicone manufacturer Rocca Chemie from Baden made a significant contribution. Today, the ProduktCenter Chemie in Denzlingen is one of the company's most prominent success stories: From product development and the production of individual components as well as the in-house manufacture of the automatic assembly machines through to the production of the injection resin and the cartridges including the labels, everything is "made in Germany" – a unique selling point not offered by anyone else.

Klaus Fischer also successfully drove the company's diversification. The fischer CBOX, a storage system for music cassettes, marked the first move into the automotive supply business in 1982. Today, fischer automotive, specialising in vehicle components such as ventilation outlets in car interiors or fully automatic charging covers for electric vehicles, is the second most important division of the Group of Companies. Its

customers include every renowned manufacturer in the international automotive industry.

Learning by playing – and not just in the family home. The fischertechnik construction kits, originally intended as Christmas presents for customers, are today found in schools and children's rooms throughout the world. The construction kits help children to grasp technical and scientific basics and to apply these in practice. One of Prof. Fischer's earliest concerns was to promote the education of children in a playful way. The construction kits address themes such as renewable energy, electronics, mechanics and structural analysis, but also programming, controlling and measuring computer-controlled models.

fischer InnovationCampus

The fischer InnovationCampus was launched in May 2020, providing a place where creative ideas and new business models are born. Several startups are housed in the new fischer InnovationCampus, located next to the company headquarters in Tümlingen. Startups and additional staff groups can generate new ideas and innovations in a creative environment in Klaus Fischer's former parental home, outside of the everyday work environment, to quickly lead these to market maturity.

Philosophy and ProcessSystem

Klaus Fischer's understanding of progress and prosperity goes even further. In the early eighties, long before it became a trend, he initiated a corporate philosophy developed over the course of an in-depth process together with the workforce and executives and which echoed this way of thinking with three central values – innovation, accountability, reliability. The aim is clear: To generate turnover. For him, economy, ecology and social responsibility are the three pillars which the company's

sustained development is based on. Internationalisation, the fischer ProcessSystem with items such as “continuous improvement” and “avoiding waste”, “lifelong learning” and many health initiatives are just a few examples of this.

Klaus Fischer’s colleagues in the business world have long associated his name with the concept of Kaizen, the continuous improvement process. In the nineties, Swabia-born Fischer travelled to far-away Japan to find out about lean production and continuous improvement. He passed his enthusiasm for the Kaizen culture on to others, also initiating a close cooperation with a highly successful Japanese company: “We launched the fischer ProcessSystem 15 years ago. Based on the Japanese Kaizen philosophy, the fischer ProcessSystem aims to avoid waste in all business divisions, to continuously improve processes, and to consistently adapt to customers’ needs. Members of staff play a central role in this approach with their wealth of experience and knowledge. They know precisely where the weak spots are in the processes, and they know what must be changed to improve these processes”.

Employees have thereby evolved into entrepreneurs within the company, accepting more and more responsibility and shaping the company with their daily changes. Mistakes and errors invariably happen. But it’s important for Klaus Fischer that mistakes are not made twice and that lessons are learned from the mistake to ensure continuous improvement. “Our aim is to be ‘best in class’ not only in terms of products but also in our processes in order to create extra benefit for our customers”, Klaus Fischer states. The expertise which fischer has meanwhile gathered in process optimisation resulted in the formation of a separate corporate division in 2004. fischer Consulting relays its bundled knowledge from production,

administration and services in all industrial sectors to external and internal customers and business partners.

In 2016, Klaus Fischer expanded the fischer Group of Companies' activities in the field of electronic devices by acquiring LNT Automation GmbH. The new business division encompasses the development, production and sale of capacitive touch systems such as multi-touch solutions made of glass and the corresponding controller units. LNT Automation manufactures custom electronic solutions at its headquarters in Nellmersbach near Stuttgart and its production site in the Czech Republic. In future, the solutions will play an increasingly important role at fischer.

Exemplary educational initiatives

"A company's biggest assets are not its facilities and equipment, but its people. The success of a business always depends on the people working in it. Their motivation and training is a crucial factor, which is why we invest heavily in our people", states Klaus Fischer. The Klaus Fischer BildungsZentrum was established for lifelong learning during employees' spare time and has integrated various advanced training and education measures since 2010. And that's not all: In 2015 a new fitness centre was opened at the Waldachtal headquarters (Freudenstadt district), which the company's employees and retirees can use free of charge seven days a week.

Prof. Klaus Fischer's exceptional commitment to education is by no means limited to his own company. In early 2015, he set up the Klaus Fischer Foundation for Promoting the Education of Children and Young People. Only the people directly involved are often aware of his generous financial commitment. There hasn't been much publicity about the 1-million-euro donation for the "Himmelreich" children's house, which was completed in late

2014 in Tümlingen. But schools and daycare facilities in the district also benefit from Klaus Fischer's generosity, as do clubs and organisations dedicated to supporting children and young people. On his 65th birthday, he donated 100,000 euro to the education of young people, and in Italy, the country with the company's biggest subsidiary, he gave 65,000 euro to schools, nurseries and children suffering from cancer.

Over the years, Prof. Klaus Fischer has received multiple awards for his commitment to education: in 1996, the Business Medal of the German federal state of Baden-Württemberg, in 1999, the Education Oscar of the German Business Juniors, in 2007, the Federal Cross of Merit 1st Class, and in 2013, the Grashof Memorial Medal, the highest honour conferred by the VDI. Shanghai's Tongji University honoured his entrepreneurial achievements with an honorary professorship, and the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences in Vienna and the University of Stuttgart awarded him an honorary senatorship. In Padua, where the Fischer Italy headquarters are located, he received the state seal, the highest honour the university city confers. In June 2016 he was honoured with the Global DIY-Lifetime Award for his life's work. In 2021, he was awarded an "honorary doctorate of Engineering for Safety in Construction and Industry" by the University of Padua.

The future is here and now

Customers, business partners and employees alike appreciate the fact that Klaus Fischer is foresighted in the best sense of the word ("We think in terms of generations, not quarterly figures"), someone who first asks about the future and develops visions for it. It goes without saying that he also prepared his company for the future at an early stage, relying on his directors and management team who to an ever-increasing degree take the weight off his shoulders. Prof. Fischer wants to dedicate more

of his time to issues of the future, such as Industry 4.0 and e-commerce, visiting subsidiaries and further developing the fischer ProcessSystem.

Ultimately, there will be more time for all things visionary, because Klaus Fischer enjoys being an entrepreneur and, as Prof. Konrad Bergmeister, Chair in Constructive Engineering at Vienna's University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences and CEO of the Brenner Base Tunnel (BBT) company put it: he is someone "who has accomplished extraordinary things with commitment and love of his work" and who still has big plans.

The fischer Group of Companies

The fischer Group of Companies, headquartered in Waldachtal in Germany's northern Black Forest, generated sales of 872 million euro in 2020 with a worldwide staff of 5,200 employees. The family-owned company operates 50 subsidiaries in 38 countries and exports to more than 120 countries. It includes the five divisions: fischer fixing systems, fischer Automotive, fischertechnik, fischer Consulting and LNT Automation

fischer fixing systems is the technological market leader in key areas of fixing technology. fischer offers products that deliver technical perfection to a wide range of customers, from do-it-yourselfers to tradespeople to key account partners.

fischer Automotive manufactures high-quality parts for vehicle interiors. The company is highly competent in the plastics processing segment and is an important partner for the automotive industry. Its range of products includes air vents, cup holders, trays and multi-function components.

With its construction kits, fischertechnik is active in both the toymaking and the educational sector. fischertechnik is one of the last remaining toy makers to exclusively develop and produce in Germany.

fischer Consulting evolved from the competence developed in the company itself, which includes the fischer ProcessSystem with its central aim of permanent improvement for the ultimate benefit of the customer. fischer Consulting advises small and medium-sized businesses, government agencies and major companies on their path towards lean and efficient processes.

fischer Electronic Solutions develops and manufactures electronic solutions including product and system developments based on the latest technology as well as custom production orders processed in the company's own production facilities. As an experienced provider of development and production services for custom systems such as multi-touch solutions made of glass and the corresponding controller units, fischer Electronic Solutions forms the perfect link between the customer and the final product.

www.fischer.group

www.fischer-international.com/en

Contact

Wolfgang Pott

Head of Corporate Communications

Telephone: +49 7443 12 – 6622

Email: Wolfgang.Pott@fischer.de