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## Interview

Werner Köpp  
“Everyone  
needs  
seals.”

## Advanced training

A worthwhile  
investment

## News

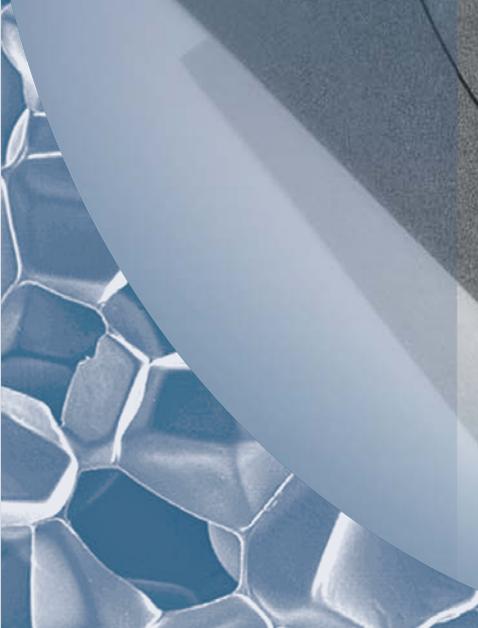
Even more  
in stock



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# Cellular polyethylene

Individual diversity –  
perfect in any form!





**Interesting interview: insight. met with Werner Köpp, the former managing director**

## Werner Köpp on the successes and challenges of the family business

For 51 years Werner Köpp had a hand in developing the fortunes of WILHELM KÖPP ZELKAUTSCHUK – the company which his father founded in 1938. For 25 of those years he was the sole managing director until retiring from the operational business in 2008. Even after this he still finds himself drawn time and again back to his old office. And it's not just because Werner Köpp still feels bound to the company in his role as partner... he likes to stay in the loop and he's always available for some good advice.

# “Everyone needs seals. But that in itself is not enough.”

*Herr Köpp, how do you find the company since your retirement as managing director?*

**Werner Köpp:** Good. KÖPP continues to develop itself further. Another building plot was acquired recently to increase warehousing capacity. The employee head count has continued to rise. We have survived the financial crisis of 2009 well. The “crisis”, incidentally, didn't particularly alarm me at any event.

*Why not?*

**Werner Köpp:** Because, time and again throughout the company's history there have been periods of economic difficulty and painful interventions. I like to describe these lows and highs as undulations. Because I knew for sure that troughs can arrive any time, I've never had to meet them quaking at the knees. Perhaps that's why we've managed often enough to counter these successfully.

*How, then, have you been able to keep the company on the road to success?*

**Werner Köpp:** One must, on the one hand, always have the costs under control. In this respect, it is asked of each employee that they recognise potential savings and exploit these. On the other hand – and even more important – one must always ask oneself what can still be improved on. Even if – or more particularly when – one is in good economic health. One thing was always quite clear to us: Without seals, it won't work – virtually everyone needs them. That is a business sector with great potential. Which is why one must always be proactive in recognising gaps in the market and offering new products. This mobility is the unique strength of a medium-sized company such as ourselves.

*Which market gaps did you fill during your active period?*

**Werner Köpp:** Nowadays, I like to describe my job description as I joined the company at the age of 21 as “Son” (laughing). Through voluntary service at various companies in the rubber industry, I got to know the business but I also didn't want to do any of the company's “old hands” out of a job. That's why I

mainly concerned myself with new products and secondary business fields right from the start.

I pushed for the filter technology area, as an example. One which is still very successful today.

With the sales of insulation sleeves for the plumbing and heating field I filled what was at that time a real gap in the market. At that time, our warehouse capacity was turning over monthly.



The incorporation of Plastazote® cellular polyethylene foam into our portfolio is certainly another milestone. We've been registering a greater volume here than with cellular rubber for some years now.

*What is for you retrospectively the most important thing you've accomplished?*

*What are you particularly proud of?*

**Werner Köpp:** When you ask me what I'm especially proud of then it's quite clearly the incorporation of the FIP(F)G sealing systems in 2001. A great deal of convincing was necessary here because this technology required high levels of investment. An automatic dosing machine already cost between 200,000 and 300,000 DM at that time. I must make a special mention of Herr Johann Finkl at this juncture, whose flair is to thank for the priming for this technology and who, along with others, saw through the further development so intensively. We now have nine machines. The turnovers in this sector are increasing dynamically. For this reason, FIP(F)G technology has become an important pillar of the business. We also have this, among other things, to thank for coming through the crisis of 2009 relatively unharmed.

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**“** I expect a point of contact who combines a high level of administrative competence with specialist technical expertise. That gives me the feeling of being in good hands with a supplier.”

W. Zierke, technical buyer with MIELE

# Advanced training: Investment that pays off.

## For ourselves and for our customers.

Competent employees are the be-all and end-all to the success of a company and its customers. “Our aspiration within the collaborative customer relationship is always to find the ideal solution for them. We can achieve this, of course, only if our employees are expert in their field and enthusiastic. Which is why for some years now, we have invested consistently in the training of our workforce”, explains managing director Achim Raab. “In this regard, we took the decision to work with a professional training institute”, adds managing director Oliver Köpp. “We felt it important not simply to send our work force to any old token event under the banner of ‘Sales made easy’, but to offer genuine advanced systematic training. Advanced training with a sustainable impact”. Hence the training sessions take place regularly and build upon each other. In addition to conventional marketing content with telephone and camera

training, the schedule also includes technology and materials as well as team building. What’s special about the overall coaching concept is the individuality. That’s because the training sessions are aligned to the respective status quo of each employee. After each two-day basic training session there follows advancement courses after approximately six months. These so-called follow-ups demonstrate which training content was successfully transferred to the work routine. As the course continues, each participant benefits from optional modules configured specifically for them which are orientated to their individual requirements. “In this way I can concertedly develop my potential as a salesman and adviser. My manner is more self-assured and competent and my customers profit likewise”, states field service employee Uwe Herdin. “That advanced training is important for every company is nothing new. When it works, it

increases both turnover and motivation including workforce loyalty”, affirms Karin Kolmsee, proprietor and training manager responsible for the SKT training institute (Schwenk, Kortus & Team). “With KÖPP, I’m always noticing quite markedly the high value placed on advanced training here. As with the products, quality in respect of advanced training is also held in high regard. That makes our work that much easier and, in the end, more effective.”



*“Get away from the job routine” is the slogan. That’s why the training always takes place outside the company in a seminar hotel. Training manager Karin Kolmsee knows that “In another environment, it’s far easier to adjust to the training mind-set.”*



Dieter Jansen leaves KÖPP for a well-earned retirement after more than 30 years ser-

### All the best!

*“In despatch management, I always had my sights on customer satisfaction in all my remits. My first objective was that the delivery deadlines were adhered to. As the interface between customer and company, I was, of course, dependent on good collaboration with my colleagues. Humane and fair cooperation was therefore always especially important for me.*

### The Terminator goes.

vice. After his positions in Operating, in Programming and in Accounts, he was most recently active as despatch manager. In this function, persistent adherence to deadlines (Ger: Termine) was for him always top priority – earning him the nickname “Terminator” among his colleagues. We sincerely wish him all the very best for the upcoming stage of his life.

*I’m now looking forward to the time “afterwards” – away from the pressure of any deadlines: more time for my wife, for travelling and walking and for trips in my classic car or motorbike.”*



## Cellular polyethylene

### Individual diversity –



**Oliver Köpp**  
Managing Director

*"The development potential has by no means been exhausted. New stimuli are always coming from the experiences of our customers which we are seizing on and developing further with our partners for cellular polythene. In this way, innovative products emerge such as the unique ZOTEK® N polyamide or the novel Pebax foam product."*

**For over 60 years now, KÖPP has been** marketing its versatile cellular polythene material. Its countless application and processing possibilities have made this semi-finished product our strongest turnover mainstay. Over 250,000 cellular polythene blocks are processed annually.

"The success story in the cellular polythene segment has certainly been crucially linked to the takeover of the distribution of PE foams from BXL Ltd. (today: Zotefoams)", states managing director Oliver Köpp. His father, Werner, initiated this business partnership with the English as far back as the 60's. The properties of the PLASTAZOTE®, EVAZOTE®, SUPAZOTE®, PROPOZOTE® and ZOTEK® N foams offer KÖPP's customers critical advantages due to their unique

manufacturing process.

**The manufacturing makes the difference.**

The cellular plastic, produced by means of a unique high-pressure nitrogen process, is absolutely pure, odourless and chemically inert. Moreover, this process is the only one to produce even cell walls which lend this foamed material its uniform, isotropic mechanical properties. The advantages are clear: regular distribution of density, perfect processing options, consistent high quality.



perfect in any form!



While most other manufacturing processes for cross-linked foam materials use chemical foaming agents, our AZOTE foam is radiation cross-linked and foamed purely physically. This takes place in enormous high-pressure autoclaves in which the cross-linked polymer plates are heated to a temperature above the softening point of the polymer. At process temperatures of up to 250°C and pressures of 670 bar, the nitrogen penetrates the molecular structure of the softened plastic and remains there. During a further production step, the plates permeated with nitrogen are reheated in low-pressure autoclaves. By means of the subsequent relieving of pressure the nitrogen expands abruptly and uniformly foams the plastic up. The difference between this and chemically cross-linked

PE foam is considerable as with the latter, these remaining foaming agent residues which trigger reactions smell unpleasant and can even continue to foam the plastic when warmed up.

**Deployed everywhere... thanks to its outstanding material properties**

Due to its exceptional properties, we sell PE foams into the most diverse branches. Thus the medical branch appreciates the purity of the foam in hygiene applications. For the aerospace engineering, the low volume weight as well as the option of sourcing flame retardant grades is particularly advantageous. The automobile industry uses it for its freedom from fogging and paint-compatible qualities while the building industry profits from the outstanding sealing and

**The decisive advantages at a glance:**

- uniform cell structure
- absolutely even density distribution throughout the entire block
- fogging-free
- chemically inert
- low weight
- FDA approval
- Oeko-Tex® Standard 100 approval

insulation characteristics. In the packaging industry, the ease of workability, static dissipation, low weight and the large choice of colours comes into play. Apart from that, the material offers a high level of mechanical protection for fragile goods. Find out more about the countless processing and application possibilities of our

PE foams at: [www.koepp.de](http://www.koepp.de).

**Always in stock**

KÖPP stocks the entire product range in large quantities to enable delivery times to its customers to be kept as short as possible. A new storage area is now being installed to cope with the increase in demand. Read more about this on page 6 of this issue.



# We now have even more for you in stock



## Bigger storage area for shorter delivery times

Companies wanting to save money are getting rid of cost-intensive storage areas – that's the trend. KÖPP, on the other hand are now increasing theirs by 3.500 m<sup>2</sup>. "That makes complete sense in our situation," reports managing director Achim Raab "because we want to keep our delivery times as short as possible. That's always been a USP with KÖPP."

"Due to global increase in demand, the capacity limits of our upstream suppliers are often more quickly reached than a few years previously. The enormous growth of the so-called emerging countries also causes "sold out" markets in other branches. That has ever more frequently lead in recent times to our own warehouse inventory also being extremely reduced. Thus, unfortunately, at some time or another our customers have already had to wait longer than they were accustomed to with KÖPP. But indeed with the new storage area the supply situation will be relieved significantly", Oliver Köpp is confident.

Wilhelm KÖPP Zellkautschuk GmbH & Co. KG as a semi-finished product supplier maintains a multitude of their products in stock. "Security of supply" is the catchword. Even with peaks in demand KÖPP wants to score points with their speed of reaction. "And we achieve that through even greater warehouse capacities. Our customers benefit from this. Because short delivery times present an obvious competitive edge", states Achim Raab. Incidentally, the resources for a further extension to the storage area are available. Grow with the demand? Yes, we can.



The new warehouse (shown here under construction) measures 4.000 m<sup>3</sup> for cellular rubber and cellular polyethylene semi-finished products which have to be stored indoors. The outdoor storage area extends the warehousing capacity by 3.500 m<sup>2</sup>.



## “Recreation room” - a thing of the past

### New spatial concept creates atmosphere

The “Break-lounge” is now the number 1 meeting place

“Homely, tasteful, inviting” – is how the KÖPPers describe their newly designed “Break-lounge”. Comfortable armchairs, sofas and stools tempt cosy chilling-out with table soccer and the dart board providing some sporting variety.

The workforce is putting it to good use. So the break is even being used for a mini tournament between colleagues from the different departments. The “recharging” value of the now clearly more lovingly designed spaces is also greatly appreciated. This is a place where people like to meet up.

The management were also quick to pick up on this and decided without further ado to set up an “after-work” party. Since the start of the year, on the first Friday of every month,

the call is “Nit werke, mulle!” which, in the Aachen (or “Öcher”) dialect, means more or less “Don’t work, blether!”.

Then there’s a light snack and cold drinks for all employees. Stories are told, people relax, eat, play table footie and have a giggle – not unusually right into the evening.

Even if, despite regular recurrence, not every employee could yet be reached with this event, the popularity grows every time. Much to the delight of the initiators.

“It makes no difference how many employees we are now or how many it we will become. We are a family business and therefore want a certain familial atmosphere. That’s why we’re all the more delighted that the idea of our after-work party has met with great approval,” points out managing director Oliver Köpp enthusiastically. “Team spirit and open association are important building blocks for a cooperative leadership style. An approach that is important to us.” adds managing director Achim Raab.



*Continued from page 3*

*How, in your opinion, will the FIP(F)G technology develop further with KÖPP.*

**Werner Köpp:** The prognosis for the area of freely applied seals is for me quite clear: continued increase. Besides our established production facility in Bovenden near Göttingen we will in fact soon have a further one in Aachen. Thus we will further increase our radius and with this service will become more attractive to customers from the Benelux countries, France and England.

*When you walk through the offices and the production facility in Aachen today, how is the mood? Does one sense that KÖPP is a family business? Is there something of a “familial atmosphere”?*

**Werner Köpp:** In general I can say that despite an increase in the workforce numbers, we are still a family business. One can see this from the fact that we have already been able to honour many employees for their 25 year service. Since the beginning of the year, a meet-up of all employees has been taking place once a month in the canteen, called an after-work party in “new German”. That pleases me all the more as I’ve observed in recent times that society has in general become much cooler or more distanced – somehow less committed. So such an event is absolutely somewhat “connective”. I like that.

*Did you know that in December a team from KÖPP want to take part in the region’s tradition-rich, over 18 km long ATG winter run?*

**Werner Köpp:** Yes, I think that’s very good (winks and laughs): And did you know that, with over 70 years membership, I am the longest-standing member of the Aachen Turn-Gemeinde 1862 e.V. sports club? My mother enrolled me there at the tender age of one.

*Herr Köpp, with hindsight, would you do anything differently?*

**Werner Köpp:** No, fundamentally not. Certainly, perhaps one could have reached a few decisions earlier or otherwise in their detail. But by and large I can say the line was right. And that’s also how I see it for the future. I wish my successor much success and likewise much pleasure in the challenges of this business – as I always had.



# KÖPP inspired

**Industry and art – do they go together? Of course.**

The artist Torsten Bartz shows how. The former Aachen man now lives and works on La Gomera. He draws his inspiration and creative power from the dramatic island world. In 2002 we were able to gain the services of Torsten Bartz to portray our indeed, if anything, businesslike logo in a decorative and expressive way. In this dynamic interpretation we rediscover ourselves and the polymorphism of our field of work so well that it has meanwhile established itself as a fixed graphic element in our outward image.



**Torsten Bartz**  
Graphic designer and  
freelance artist,  
born 1974 in Aachen

*"My remit as an artist was to render the classical, stylised and highly technical-looking logo in an exciting aesthetic. To this end, I applied a mixing technique of acrylic and tempera colours to the one metre square canvas using a spatula and brush. I find KÖPP to be a remarkable and innovative company. I communicate the appreciably productive area of conflict between the traditional and the modern in my representation through the interplay between large, two-dimensional and fresh, loosened-up structures."*



Today, Torsten Bartz lives in the Canary Island of La Gomera, where he operates an advertising agency. He still works as an artist and produces contract work for companies and private clients ([www.centro-multimedia.es](http://www.centro-multimedia.es)).

## **insight.** Publishing information

**Editor:** Christof Carduck  
**Text:** Susanne Neumann  
**Translation:** Dr. Anja Rütten, Gareth McMillan  
Sprachmanagement.net  
**Pictures:** HOSAN Photography, STUDIO 9, Jürgen Wilke, Dieter Jansen, Torsten Bartz, Ralf Kalberg  
**Design:** WILKEDESIGN, Aachen  
**Printer:** Druckerei Scholz



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