

Press release

Wilkhahn is growing

In spite of the difficult economic situation in the office furniture industry in 2004, Wilkhahn, the office furniture manufacturer specialized in high-quality, design-focused office chairs and conference interiors, strengthened its performance in contrast to the general trend. Sales were up almost 6%, incoming orders even rose by 10% compared with the previous year. The company is also relatively optimistic about the current year. Wilkhahn management expects turnover to increase by at least 5%.

Bad Mnder. Following a two-year long hard haul in which the office furniture industry had to deal with enormous setbacks in sales, Wilkhahn, the internationally acclaimed company, succeeded in decoupling itself from the general trend in the industry in 2004. With some 6% growth in sales and a 10% increase in incoming orders in 2003, the company clearly gained new market shares. An increase in sales was even achieved in the German market which remained difficult.



Provided new impetus: the Solis office chair, winner of many international design awards (design: wiege)

In spite of the crisis-ridden economy and constraints on spending, Wilkhahn boosted investment in new product development, in its market presence and its sales and marketing effort. In addition to successfully established product lines, the Solis office chair, winner of numerous awards, and the DinA table and conference furniture range provided new impetus and met with widespread positive response.

“New products, consistent implementation of our corporate design and convincing performance at Orgatec 2004 served to distinguish Wilkhahn even more sharply in an industry which is to an ever greater extent characterized by products which lack individual profile and where one could easily be replaced by the other” director Holger Jahnke underlines Wilkhahn’s special position in the industry. “Creating a brand image plays an increasingly important role in international markets in particular, and this is where Wilkhahn unmistakably stands for ‘design made in Germany’, for the combination of the fascinating art of engineering, perfect quality and enduring design appeal. Our success in Asia, but also in Great Britain and Spain, goes to prove that there is substantial growth potential in international markets.”



Out to win new market shares in the segment of large-scale administration interiors: the Neos office chair will be on the market this March (design: wiege)

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Parallel to this, costs could be cut by means of a collective agreement dating back to 2003 to safeguard a target level of employment and also as a result of measures to optimize business processes.

Dr. Jochen Hahne is delighted with the fruits of these efforts: "Our policy of investing more in the market and, at the same time, of having done our homework to increase competitiveness is now paying dividends. We were already operating in the black in 2004. Instead of pursuing a policy of eradication we sifted through the entire business on the lookout for effective savings potential and found consensus on measures to cut costs which was based on solidarity with employees and all parties involved in collective bargaining. This enabled the company to uphold important sources of competence and capacities."

In view of the positive development of business in 2004, working time has since been increased by 10 % from 30 to 33 hours per week and Hahne sees every chance of returning to full employment in 2005. "On the basis of the development of business in the first two months of 2005, we are confident that we can achieve our planning target of minimum 5% growth this current year too – especially as we are launching a new product in the form of the Neos office chair range, which should help us to gain market shares in the segments of large-scale administration offices and back offices."

Director Holger Jahnke emphasizes that everything is pointing towards growth on the international front too: "We opened sales offices in Warsaw and Dubai in January aimed at developing the central and east European markets and the Middle East more effectively, and a representative office will follow in Shanghai in mid-2005, which will be looked after from Australia, by Wilkhahn Asia Pacific. Based in Hong Kong, Singapore and Kuala Lumpur and with a licence partner in Tokyo, Wilkhahn is today already participating in the high-growth economies in Asia."

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