



# VBH Magazin

2/2012

The Expert Brand for Window and Door Hardware

- Customer proximity at VBH
- greenteQ - Brand and markets reinforce virtuous circle
- Global IT Strategy at VBH



Simply everything.

Everything simple.



Dear readers,

The VBH Group operations developed in the 1st half of 2012 as expected: slight increases in Germany and Eastern Europe are again contrasted with substantial declines in many Western and Southern European countries; also steering the process of withdrawal from Asian regions where there are longer any significant business operations. In sum, Group sales results in the first six months were slightly below the previous year.

Market developments in the individual segments also confirm the accuracy of the announced country portfolio adjustment. We need to focus on our strengths - in markets where we have obtained an outstanding market position, we continue to hold our ground at a time of crisis and are even able to strengthen our position; however, where we only "coasting", we are suffering: this is not our business object!

We have consistently communicated that where we cannot attain the desired market position, even tactical retreat can become an option. Consequently, we have begun this retreat from regions

that offer us no perspective or in the medium term or which do not fit our business model. This is painful, requiring a lot of grit and determination, but in light of the global economic outlook – we are currently finding in our industry in Europe is not a real growth market – it is absolutely necessary.

We are making rapid progress, are well ahead of schedule and are convinced that the VBH Group foreign portfolio established as a result of the consistent consolidation will be much more effective – and also more profitable.

But VBH is not only concerned with consolidation!

We continue to invest selectively in the development of our unique range of services and in expanding our greenteQ range. Both elements of the strategy are success stories and are continuously gaining importance; fortunately, this is also increasingly evident in the foreign markets.

In this issue of our magazine, you will once again find some examples and hopefully interesting innovations from the VBH greenteQ and tool chest.

Our primary goal is to establish win-win partnerships. For it is only when our services and greenteQ products yield real added value that customers will thank us with more jobs or better terms with suppliers. Our developers and product managers thus obtain rapid feedback, which helps us to control investments in the right direction. Two such successful win-win partnerships are presented in detail in this issue.

Our expert group is also at your disposal, it is definitely worth the effort to dig deeper to obtain more advantage!

With best regards, Your

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Hribar".

Rainer Hribar

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# General Meeting of VBH Holding AG

**The shareholders of VBH Holding AG confirmed at the AGM on 21st June 2012, by a large majority, the decisions of the board to adjust the country portfolio and to proceed with the sustainable consolidation of the Group.**

At the Annual General Meeting of VBH Holding AG investors followed with great interest the statements of the VBH Management Board and the Board of Directors, which set out the results for the last financial year. In addition to the financial figures for 2011 special charges in were the focus of the presentation of. Essentially, this concerned the withdrawal from the Italian aluminium mass market. At the same time, the Executive Board took the opportunity to look forward to 2012 and adopted the ad-hoc communication of 15/06/2012, which explained in

detail the strategic measures for the further consolidation of VBH Group, which is associated with an almost total withdrawal from the Asian markets. Around 150 people were at the meeting at the Haus der Wirtschaft in Stuttgart, representing 73 per cent of the voting share capital.

## Focus on profitable markets

With group sales of €780.1 million in the fiscal year 2011, VBH exceeded the previous year by 1.6 per cent. Special circumstances and adjustments in the country portfolio however encumbered the result with €33.6 million. The net operating profit (EBT) was €7.5 million and the resulting net loss amounted to -€24.5 million. This is mainly due to the determined exit from some unprofitable markets. Rainer Hribar, CEO of VBH Holding AG, confirms: "Exiting

the aluminium mass market in Italy as well as in the markets of Malaysia, Thailand and Cyprus was the right decision." However, in southern Europe, the ongoing financial and economic crisis will lead to further need for adaptation in the medium term. In addition, the VBH business model as a distinct level of trade in the business-to-business sector has proven not to work in Asian markets. Against this background, the Board of VBH has decided to perform additional consolidation in 2012, ahead of the upcoming Annual General Meeting. This was announced on 15/06/2012 by means of an ad-hoc report. "We will therefore continue with the restructuring measures taken to consolidate our partnership structure in Asia and southern Europe and reinforce the measures taken in Belgium, Greece and Turkey," stated CFO Frieder Bangerter. "This provides the basis

Top left and bottom: The Annual General Meeting of VBH Holding AG is held annually at the Haus der Wirtschaft, Stuttgart.





for a successful strategic positioning and sustainable development of the whole group for the future." With this step, the VBH will focus on the markets in which the relevant earnings in the group are achieved. The aim of the measures is to restore the profitability of VBH on a sustainable basis.

### Successful business model for over 40,000 customers

Given the comprehensive adaptation measures taken in the preceding year, there was no dividend distribution in 2012 and there will also probably be no dividend in 2013.

The Board emphasises, however, that it will continue to adhere to a long-term target pay-out ratio of at least 35 to 40 per cent of operating profit per share. "Our business model is good, more than 40,000 customers worldwide prove that," said Rainer Hribar, in his report for the fiscal year 2011. "Our three-pronged strategy with a successful product line and proprietary brands, with innovative services and a continued international focus, has proved

very successful. Especially our own greenteQ brand and our service tools are very successful on the market. With new products such as the greenteQ alarmed window handle with climate control or the particularly quiet and fully integrated greenteQ automatic front door open-close system sets the VBH benchmark. "

The goal was to consolidate VBH consistently, to reorder the existing country portfolio strategy and operations and to weather-proof the Group's profitable core business for the future. We will maintain this course following the motto "Simply everything. Everything simple." was the conclusion of the CEO.

Ulrich Lindner, who was added to the management team of VBH Holding AG in International Marketing and Sales since 1st February 2012, addressed the meeting for the first time. The sales expert, who has experienced in the area of construction, will continue to promote, among other things, the international market penetration of the greenteQ own brand and the company's innovative services.

### Critical issues and support for the strategic consolidation

Following the explanations of the Board, the shareholders and shareholder representatives had the opportunity to ask questions and express their views on the issues discussed. Particular representatives of the German association for securities (DSW) and the Protection of Investors (SdK) presented quite critical questions, which focused among other things on the economic situation of VBH in Greece, Asia and Turkey. The shareholders universally expressed their support for the measures adopted by the Management Board and Supervisory Board. Positive highlights were the relatively stable course of the VBH share price, the strong increase in the operating cash flow of the Group and – at 32.3 percent – the high equity ratio of the Group. The shareholders present therefore approved by a large majority the members of the Management Board and the Supervisory Board.

Above: Board member Frieder Bangerter at the lectern.

Left: Ingeborg Brimmer of VBH in an interview with Supervisory Board Member Stephan M. Heck. Right: Chairman of the Supervisory Board Rainer Kirchdörfer with the two workers' representatives on the Supervisory Board, and Martin Morlok Klaus Meichner and Rainer Hribar, Chief Executive Officer (from left to right).



# “We must never cease to improve ourselves”

## An Interview with VBH chairman Ulrich Lindner

**As the new Director of Marketing and International Sales, Ulrich Lindner has been responsible for the regions of Western, Southern and South-eastern Europe, Asia and South America since the 1st of February 2012. His ultimate goal: to continue to successfully and profitably advance together with his colleagues on the Board, the management and all VBH employees.**

*Mr. Lindner, what were your most important professional postings before your path led you to VBH?*

Recently I was at direct sales at Berner SE in Künzelsau responsible for marketing, sales and purchasing. Before that I worked for Hilti in Liechtenstein and the United States in various cross-sectional and sales functions and also was with the American consulting firm Booz & Co. for a few years. I began my career in the '80s with an apprenticeship as export sales assistant at a Bremen trading house, for which I then led the sales office in Uganda – it was a very interesting time.

*What prompted your move to VBH?*

VBH is the largest hardware distributor worldwide. Nevertheless, there remains a lot of potential in Europe and also overseas. This need to be developed profitably while limiting risk – a task that excites me greatly. Furthermore, I am convinced that to accelerate the VBH strategy, intelligent services and greenteQ brand, is the correct approach and also still offers many opportunities for profitable growth.

*By now you have been in the company for half a year and know the view from the inside. Has your view of the international markets and the position of VBH changed?*

It has not fundamentally changed but I now of course have a better understanding of our international business, particularly in Western and Southern Europe, as well as the other markets, and can assess the overall situation in each subsidiary territory. During the course of its internationalisation strategy, VBH has greatly expanded its activities abroad. Although basically correct, I see now a clear need for action since, from the Group's perspective, too many companies have not reached break-even point. The reasons are varied and quite different depending on the country. Particularly in southern Europe, the companies are operating in a situation where there is significant deterioration in market conditions; in other regions it does not fit our business model to meet the requirements of the local market; and to some extent we have self-made operational challenges. In any case, we must obtain a clear view of the situation on the ground with the local management and then define and implement appropriate measures to quickly and clearly reduce the cash requirement and the losses in the affected areas. This will keep us very busy in the coming months, but ultimately strengthen the financial clout and the VBH Group in earnings.



Ulrich Lindner. Below, at the Annual General Meeting of VBH Holding AG in July 2012. (Second from right, next to Supervisory Board Member Matthias Linnenkugel. In the background, the two board members Frieder Bangarter and Rainer Hribar).





*With the widespread retreat from Asia, the Board has issued a clear signal. What led to this decision?*

The growing Asian markets are attractive in principle, but have also become very challenging. The sales and trading structures are not comparable to those in Europe or North America. In particular Western companies trading in the B2B area in Asia do not find it easy to successfully establish themselves. Since this has been the case in many places, we have drawn the necessary conclusions.

*What, for you, is VBH's particular area of strength?*

VBH has many strengths. We are by far the largest worldwide distributors in our industry and have established a strong position as a strategic partner for both our customers and our suppliers. We have a very attractive portfolio of services, which is truly unique to the hardware trade and cannot be readily obtained from a competitor in terms of quality and breadth. I am thinking for example of the easyScan logos or our customer portal. The same applies to our strong greenteQ range. Above all, the VBH has maintained a medium-sized corporate culture in which every individual has the ability to make a lot of progress. I have spent the first weeks and months getting to know and appreciate many very dedicated colleagues that impress me with their work and achievements.

*And in what areas do we need to improve?*

We must never cease to improve ourselves. We need to continuously develop our structures and staff, so that we are able to effectively support the foreign companies and also help them to advance. This concerns nearly all functional areas. For example, we will standardise our global IT environment and intensify the international human resources so that we can better educate and develop our young executives internally. Similar challenges can be found in category management, marketing, controlling, and almost all other areas. The work and the opportunities are not going to disappear.



## Customer orientation at VBH

# Braun: High-tech plastic windows from the Bavarian Forest

**Win-win partnerships are the goal of the daily business of VBH. The window companies Timm from Berlin and Brown from the Bavarian Forest Weiding VBH share not only the same demanding thinking when it comes to quality but also in their professional and technical expertise. With VBH's customer-oriented service, solutions that are decisive for the future of the entire industry can be created collaboratively.**

The success story of the Braun company over the last 50 years is astonishing. Located in Weiding near the Czech border in the midst of the Bavarian Forest, the operation today has 95 employees.

Wolfgang Braun (photo below). Together with his three brothers, Christian, George and Thomas Brown, he now runs the company his father founded. 5,000 profile meters were the agreed acceptance specification at the beginning - today it is 100,000 to 150,000 annually.

In the beginning, however, it took a lot of persuasion in an industry dominated by traditional timber construction. The striking argument for the continuing success had thus to consist in the high quality from the outset of the new high-tech products. "We are not the biggest, but rather the best," said Wolfgang Braun.



More surprising is that for which Braun is known throughout East Bavaria for the last 50 years: high quality windows and shutters made of plastic. Also, doors, conservatories, sun awnings and aluminium are included in their range. "At the end of the 60s, we were one of the first to have applied the then-new plastic window technology to our products. Our father already knew the material from the roller shutters and recognised its potential early on", explains







Top: Braun's Erlebnisswelt in Weiding, including the event arena, one of the most beautiful window exhibitions in Germany. Top right: The brothers Wolfgang, George and Thomas (left to right) Christian Braun jointly run the company in the Bavarian Forest.



## Quality and good reputation as a commercial basis

Sustainable quality and credibility are the basis of Braun's success. The production was therefore not transferred to the Czech Republic upon the opening up of the Iron Curtain although Braun sells its windows as far away as to Pilsen and in addition to the offices in Regensburg, Schwandorf and Straubing, it also has three offices in the Czech Republic. The deeply embedded high standards of operation that are associated with the region, which have already become a watchword in the business media throughout Germany, were

on show to the rest of German at the opening in 2011 of Braun's Erlebnisswelt [world of experience] in Weiding, one the most delightful window exhibitions in Germany. Braun its staff trains at its own company academy with potential employees also welcome as students or trainees, for which there are special seminars, as Wolfgang Braun says: "Our reputation and the quality of our products is our greatest asset and we always try to be at the forefront of development in this area as well as to promote ourselves."

## Leading the way in innovation

In fact, the desire to develop new solutions is part of the Braun tradition: as early as 1982, at a time when the subject of saving energy was far from everyone's lips, the company founder Georg Braun developed the first closed insulated roller shutter box in the world. The experts at the time were baffled by his patented invention; today they should be included as prior art in the EnEv [Energy Saving Ordinance]. Together with the profile manufacturer Salamander, Braun developed the first rounded sill-less sash window, and, with Winkhaus, the continuous door-closing strip. The company is also focusing on continuous improvement on the production side: the first pilot plant in Europe led Braun in the direction of production on the pre-weld profiles following the concept of Siegenia Aubi and in terms of energy conservation takes Braun as a role model: "We sell energy-saving products, something we were doing very early on. We even started it", explains Wolfgang Braun. "Our assembly area is clearly divided into cold and hot areas, our photovoltaic system provides enough power for the production, and insulated gates and shutters prevent energy loss during the night."

## Reliable 25-year partnership

VBH has been supporting the development of the innovative window manufacturer from the Bavarian forest for about 25 years. In the warehouse, Braun relies on the wireless technology of the VBH-Scanner with direct access to the company's own marketing material. The purchasing staff use vbh24.de for job tracking and availability and price checks. Deliveries are received twice a week.

"95 per cent of our customers are residential customers and we do not sell to distributors or resellers. We have full quality control over the entire value chain, all the way to assembly," says Wolfgang Braun. "The advantage is the good payment practice of our customers, the drawback is the rather small-scale orders."

The company counts approximately 1,300 per year. Lead times are often short, but Braun is nevertheless able to deliver within a week in most cases – thanks to the good organisation of work and dedicated suppliers. "VBH is a very capable and reliable partner. This fits well with our philosophy", says Wolfgang Braun. "Service tools such as easyScan simplify our processes significantly and through personal contact with the field service staff, we are able to discuss tricky problems or find new solutions."



Alongside with its modern window construction technologies, VBH also applies its simplified order system – such as the use of scanners.

# Hans Timm Fensterbau - Design meets technology



Photo left: Bastian Timm (right) in conversation with Jörg Heimes, Regional Sales Manager VBH East.

Photo below left: Typical window for the listed Berlin State Library.  
Photo below right: Villa with various wood-aluminium structures in the element facade configuration.

It is possible to draw numerous parallels between Braun and Hans Timm Fensterbau from Berlin. Both companies are family businesses with more than 50-years of tradition behind them; both grappling with the developments of the time and at the same time pursuing the highest technical quality. Nevertheless the approach to daily tasks differs significantly. "We focus on the special construction of wood, wood-aluminium and aluminium windows of the highest quality and work mainly in the contracting business - from the quotation through consultation, design, fabrica-

tion, to assembly," said Bastian Timm, grandson of the company founder Hans Timm. Beside him, his father Bernd and his uncle Detlef form the three generations under one roof, the joint management of the 120-man operation, which is known far beyond the boundaries of Berlin. "While we focus on the Berlin market, based on our extensive experience in new construction as well as in dealing with historic buildings, we also consult with architectural firms from all over Germany on a daily basis and seek advice for particular building projects." Bastian Timm refers here to major

projects such as the Berlin State Library, The Federal Ministry for the Environment, the renovation of the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Schiller Park or the headquarters of Rena Lange. "For such large projects we are aware of and every day faced with new challenges in terms of design, architecture and technology." Another focus of Timm is in high quality new-build villas. Here villas are planned and carried out worldwide that conform to the highest standards of design and safety engineering.



## No readymade properties: the residence of the German embassy in Washington

In commercial construction, the physical requirements are high and continue to steadily rise. For the design department at the Timm this means having to be constantly up on the latest technology and developments. It is planned to connect the structural connection to the glass pane. By so doing, planners often encounter special challenges. Additionally in this connection we have sought to connect with the VBH in the open exchange of solutions: "It's a mutual give and take. Recently I had a two-hour technical discussion with Hans Neumeier of VBH concerning a particular threshold situation in a building project, but that only affected four doors. But of course VBH learnt a lot as well, because we often go at constructive boundaries and with us every little detail counts. "

The large and readily available range of fittings and special tools is necessary due to the high individuality of the building projects. Elements of up to eight by four metres in size are not uncommon for Timm. "We were looking for a strong partner and we have been in very good hands with VBH for more than 10

years", says Bastian Timm. VBH supplies Timm with nearly 100 per cent of all its fittings requirements. The orders are also simple here, handled quickly and reliably online via the LOGOS ordering system directly from the company's internal materials management system. Basically any new building requires individual windows. In addition, there are often special requirements for security and technology, such as the current project of the construction of the residence of the German ambassador in Washington, D.C. under the well-known architect Prof. OM Ungers. Timm provided 100 wood-integral wood windows with wood facing framework and specific security requirements for probably the second most important building of the Federal Republic. "But I'm not allowed to say more," Bastian Timm says with a smile. The production team has just eight weeks to make the supply. During the embassy holidays 15 engineers from Timm will then fit the new windows and renovate those windows and doors in the embassy building that are worth preserving – another speciality

of their expert craftsmen. The "retread" approach towards the restoration of listed window designs while enhancing energy efficiency was developed in a research project initiated by Hans Timm in cooperation with the European Union. Here old paint layers are removed from the frame using the hot air method without mortising the work and the window sash rebuilt from scratch and fitted with new seals and insulating glass. A method required frequently in the Berlin area due to the high density of monuments.

Wood-wood-integral window design for the residence of the German embassy.



Bastian Timm explains the retreading of an exhibition element.





Developed by David Chipperfield: the famous gallery house behind the Gießhaus (above). Energy facade for the Plus-Energy-House of the Federal Ministry of Planning (left).

## High standards of customer focus and flexibility

“Of course Timm also presents a challenge for us,” says Jörg Heimes, Regional Sales Manager of VBH Germany for the Eastern Region. Bastian and Timm adds: “Our family lives and breathes windows 24 hours a day to meet the highest standards. Therefore, our requirements regarding the competence, speed and flexibility of our partners are very high. At

the same time, we also know to appreciate what we have at our major suppliers, namely reliability, a sense of partnership and access to knowledge. We must always be up to date in meeting the requirements of our discerning customers. VBH has made enormous progress – including putting in a lot of effort into internal staff training - made and is practically a very

good sparring partner.” Hans Timm Fensterbau relies partially on the VBH system platform CE-fix for the CE marking. “With this platform, VBH has set standards in the supply industry, helping us to focus on the real work of constructing windows.”

Large and unusual window in the production of Hans Timm's Fensterbau.



Current greenteQ products

## greenteQ electronic roller shutter motor and greenteQ SK glazing tape

### greenteQ electronic roller shutter motor with integrated obstacle detection

In addition to the known standard motors for rolling shutters, the greenteQ range now offers electronic rolling shutter motors with integrated soft obstacle detection and position-controlled limit switches.

greenteQ electronic shutter motors serve the motorisation of roller shutters, sun protection systems and similar short-term operation applications. They work precisely and very quietly and are, with 5 years warranty just as durable, extremely long-lived, reliable and absolutely maintenance-free in their function as the well-known standard greenteQ actuators. In addition, they also offer an integrated soft obstacle detection in both directions and a comfortable position-controlled limit switch. The connection and the settings of the end points can be conveniently and easily performed in seconds. A built-in thermostat prevents damage to the motor with an automatic shut off in case of overload. The simple installation takes place directly in the winding shaft to save space.

### Programming of the endpoints in seconds

The setting of the end positions at the greenteQ electronic shutter motors is achieved easily and quickly by pressing the programming button on the motor head until the desired position is reached. Alternatively, the setting can also easily be achieved by means of the new greenteQ mounting cable. The greenteQ electronic shutter motors are available in two versions: the micro-electronic design already fits in systems from 40 mm up and is suitable for mini blinds and shades. The ultra-electronic model is designed for systems with a shaft diameter of 60 mm.



### greenteQ glacier mounting tape SA

**The new closed-and plasticiser-free greenteQ SA glazing tape is the best sealant for reducing energy consumption due to the ideal product characteristics of the glazing rebate seal.**

Available in black or white and in sizes of 9 mm, 12 mm, 15 mm, respectively in sizes 2, 3, 4 and 5 mm, the greenteQ SA pre-compressed polyethylene foam glazing tape can be used universally in the glazing of windows and doors. It is compatible with acrylic, elastic, is weather- and UV-resistant, and employs a one-sided adhesive tape with high adhesive force, so that only a slight processing is required. By means of these features, the product fills the rebate optimally thus reducing the panel's sealant consumption. At the same time it prevents a 3-sided adhesion and ensures an optimised thermal insulation process.

The new SA greenteQ glazing tape is available now and complements the own label range of VBH Holding AG. Further information and assembly instructions on these and all other greenteQ products including installation advice can be found on the Internet at [www.greenteQ.info](http://www.greenteQ.info).



## greenteQ: Brand and markets reinforce virtuous circle

**Natalie Schell is the Own Brand Manager for greenteQ, with the additional responsibility at VBH for developing the international marketing of the greenteQ product range. A very good knowledge of the different markets and regular interaction with the national companies and local customers for them is therefore very important. Only then can perfectly matching products and ranges be developed.**

*Natalie Schell, you were recently on a VBH business trip to Russia and Kazakhstan. What were the main stages on your journey?*

First the landing in Siberia, then the onward journey to Kazakhstan and then to Nizhny Novgorod to a meeting of the VBH Group in St. Petersburg. A packed program, but these meetings are an important platform for us to maintain personal contact with colleagues and to better get to know our markets and customers. Because the markets are very different: For example, in Kazakhstan – by population the smallest of these countries with 16 million inhabitants – we have 9 branches, 10 in Siberia and 20 in Russia. With 142 million inhabitants, this is of course the largest market in the region. Over the course of lectures and discussions, the essential characteristics of the new products and the strategy of our own greenteQ brand were discussed and repeatedly scrutinized. My impression of the addresses was thereby very positive, both concerning the processes within the regional structure and the understanding of the collective brand and quality designation. Here there was complete agreement on the importance of sustainability and product quality and our services in the market.



*Are greenteQ products relevant for all countries despite the different market conditions?*

Whether in Kazakhstan, Siberia and Russia, our own brand is already an integral part of the product ranges. Therefore, we have given some thought to the expansion of the product range. For me it was an experience to see how many similarities – but also some differences – in the various cultures. For me our colleagues' experiences of our products are very important. In addition, we are also always concerned with the optimization of our internal processes, logistics or distribution of storage capacity in order to offer our customers the best service and rapid responsiveness. All VBH regions will benefit from this exchange. For that reason I was not traveling alone, but together with our logistics and controlling experts Vasilij Toropov and Demiyan Nemykh.

*In Germany, the greenteQ customer training courses have been very successful. Is this also offered in other countries?*

Yes, our training model is also active internationally and in Kazakhstan we conduct customer training, among other things, at our sales branches. Our greenteQ product managers from the different countries also receive training in Germany, which we offer in several languages. We want to expand this offer still further.

For me personally, it was on this trip that it was once again made clear that it is the people that make our company a global Group. Globalisation does not mean standardisation – our success depends on our employees. For this you need the right mentality and openness to other cultures and regular exchanges. And naturally the willingness for constant training and development.

# Individual customer advisory service via iPad Everything simple, everything App!

**A well-founded customer service without heavy catalogues and samples corners? Yes we can! The new free VBH app for the first time permits a vivid presentation of window and door designs on the iPad. Thus, windows, post and beam and threshold systems are given a high quality presentation and even individual customer requirements can be immediately visualised. In addition, VBH customers can also use all the familiar functions of the VBH customer portal on the tablet PC.**

With the new VBH system app, a customer service application program for the iPad, window and door manufacturers can benefit for the first time from the opportunity to present themselves to their customers with their own app. After logging in, only the name of their own company is displayed. The presentation of the window and door systems

is logical and follows from the general overview, giving a step by step introduction to the personal choices of the customers. 19 window, post-and-beam and threshold systems are included.

## High-quality presentation of window and door systems

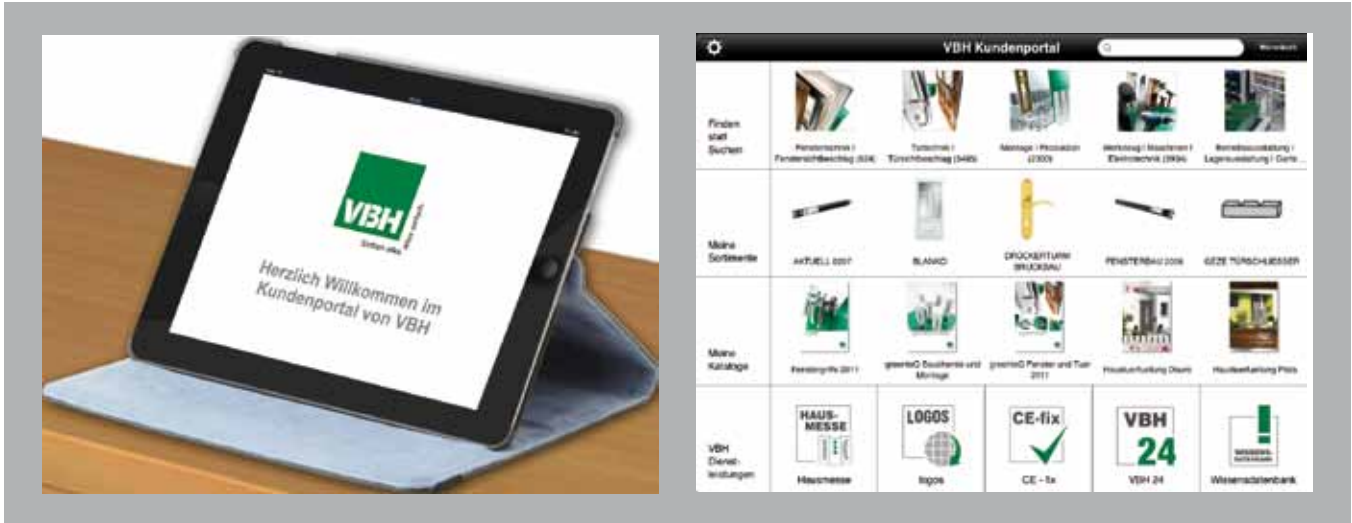
Depending on your own customer offer and request the consultant can choose a selection of items to display systems, colours and surfaces in advance of a call and thus generate their individual offer. Quality zoomable images from six different angles (front outside and inside, side and bottom cross-section, diagonally outward and inward) and all necessary interface drawings, data sheets, and heat transfer coefficients are available. Heavy catalogues and samples corners are no longer necessary. Another advantage: the updating of the section draw-

ings and data sheets happens automatically and without the necessity to update the app. The VBH customer thus always has the current state in his hands.

Left: The new free VBH system app for the iPad allows VBH customers during consultation to make convincing presentations without heavy catalogues. Right: The VBH system app offers high-quality images from six angles, cross-sections along with data sheets.







**Modern tool for well-founded advice**

“With the new system app we offer our customers a presentation facility with which they can appropriately and individually present high-quality systems according to their needs,” says VBH marketing director Thomas Erhardt. “The sound expert advice talking to customers will be assisted by the best-quality visualisations of the systems.” Thus, for example, fundamental colours can be visualised (brown, green, blue, red, etc.) or be selected and displayed by directly entering the RAL codes. A favourite feature allows the composition of a pre-selection, so that customers can decide at a later time between the selected colours. This selection is retained for the window and door consultants for the follow-on conversation. VBH also offers additional even more useful tools and ordering solutions for smartphones and iPads. Thus, for example, the new VBH customer portal app, presented for the first time at the fenterbau/frontale 2012, which delivers compact know-how in one place: with it you can quickly and easily find an article or an item in the VBH Knowledgebase on the iPad while on the road. The vbh24.de central customer portal combines the wide range of VBH online

services that make it much more than just an online store. Among the components include a quick product search, an oversight of the complete product range and the possibility of online ordering and order tracking. In addition, the portal provides access to a customised virtual house exhibition, the CE-fix system platform and the VBH knowledge database with hundreds of useful tips in the experts forum. The new iPad app brings this offer now to tablet PCs.

**Fast start and easy operation**

The Customer Portal app is functional immediately after installation and provides access to numerous functions without login being necessary. This includes the development of VBH’s own online “Finding instead of searching” search function. Using its advanced features, structured searches can be carried out according to specific product properties. For example, all door handles in stainless steel or aluminium window handles can be displayed in an overview. Additional features such as colour, size, plate width or perforation can then be located in the detail view. The new VBH app combines the convenient search function with the intuitive interface of the iPad: the versatility

of the tablet PC allows the simplification of the selection and arrangement of items. The experience of displaying and browsing VBH catalogues on the iPad is comparable to that of the printed form. After entering vbh24 customers will also obtain access to their individual product ranges and already assembled baskets. In addition the system immediately determines the price of desired articles and their deliverability.

“With the new iPad app, we have been able to offer our customers a new, additional VBH channel that combines the capabilities of tablet PCs perfectly with our online services,” said Simon Seibert, VBH Director of Central Supply Chain Management. “In this way the iPad apps optimally complement our other services, such as the Mobile logos for Smartphones.”

Both the System-app and the new VBH Customer Portal App are available for free via the Apple App Store.

SAP and Microsoft as future pillars of the ERP landscape

# Global IT Strategy at VBH Group

**If logistics or sales processes are intended to function internationally, the IT systems used and the IT infrastructure must also be globally aligned. Only then can employees be optimally supported across companies. With the release of the new IT strategy by the board of a number of activities for the standardisation and globalisation of IT within the Group have been set in play.**

The focus will initially be on ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning), since these are systemic mappings of business processes that form the backbone of a company. They support the optimal planning and allocation of resources such as capital, personnel and equipment, thereby increasing internal efficiency. "We want to become even better through increasing standardisation," says Burkhard Strüder, Chief Information Officer (CIO) at VBH. As a result of developing structures in a large number of the systems the Group currently operates, the future will see an increased focus on SAP and Microsoft Dynamics NAV to take place (Navision). In the CIS companies consolidation will be achieved using Microsoft Dynamics AX (AXAPTA). "It is not only the integration of the software



Burkhard Strüder

solutions that is coming to the fore," says Burkhard Strüder. "Rather, it is the standardised mapping of comparable business processes across system boundaries.

This is achieved in the definition of global templates that VBH use for pre-defined business processes together with the associated system settings, program enhancements, interfaces, reports, templates sales concepts and their associated implementation and training. With the help of these components it is possible to quickly and inexpensively implement standardised proc-

esses and comparable data structures across all VBH companies worldwide. "Of course country-specific characteristics and legal requirements must be taken into account and further integrated into the framework of the template," says Burkhard Strüder. "This will create significant added value with respect to a locally implemented ERP solution."

Photos below from left to right: TDS tower on Firmesitz in Neckarsulm, IT cabinets, fire extinguishing system and server cell in the TDS data center Quelle: TDS AG



## Better process support and globally available applications

The introduction of the new template has several advantages: firstly, the conditions for a quick connection of globally available applications such as VBH on-line store, the business warehouse or data archiving are created, forming the basis for sustainable cost savings and service and process improvements. The template systems combine the “best practices” of various VBH national com-

panies with the functionality of the current ERP versions, enabling the mutually beneficial joint development of the mapped processes. In the future, optimisations of the template will be made available to all companies so that no improvements have to be reinvented and paid for several times over. “Of course,

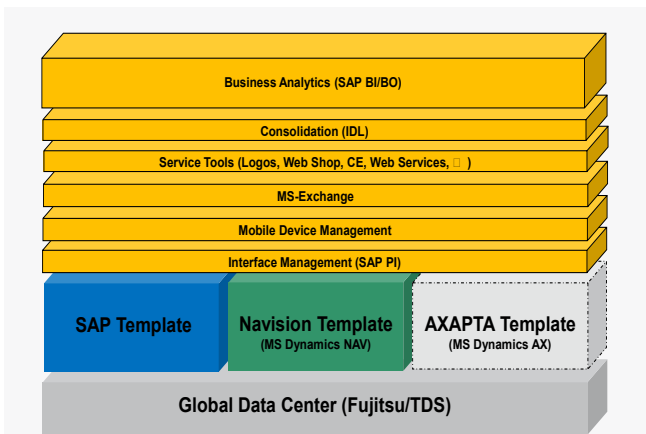
such a fundamental restructuring of our ERP systems is not easily achieved in the short-term, but will be a work in progress over the next few years,” says Burkhard Strüder. The new strategy does not only take place at the application level. There will also be changes in the operation of the IT systems. Here VBH continues to consistently outsource mission-critical systems (especially ERP and E-mail) to the outsourcing partner for data centre services. At Fujitsu / TDS in Heilbronn and

centre” and benefit from the advantages of this solution. This also applies to VBH Germany, which will take advantage of the changeover to the new SAP infrastructure.

## The conversion has already begun

But it is not only the relocation of IT systems that has already begun. An international project team is shaping already known information from the Navision template. Here the first conversion project for the first half of 2013 is taking place. Work on the SAP template will immediately after the conversion of VBH Germany to SAP and will have a focus on the scalability of the SAP processes for smaller companies with more streamlined processes. The first SAP rollout is planned for the 2nd half of 2013.

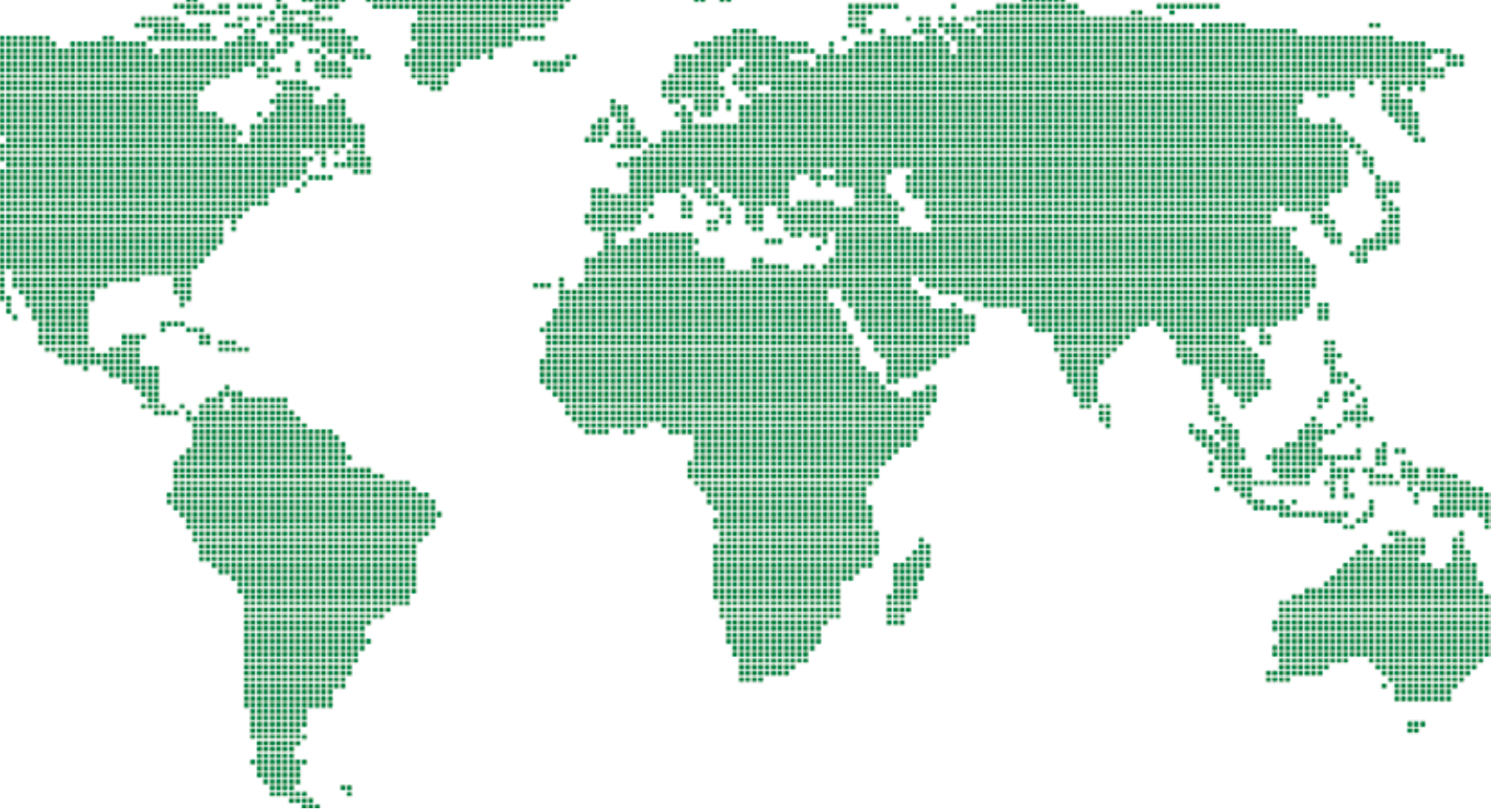
These and a number of accompanying measures, such as the expansion of centrally deployed and globally available applications, will help to facilitate collaboration within the Group.



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