

Interview with Uli Kern, owner of Kern AG

## Modularity and new perspectives

**Flexibility and modularity increasingly form the basis for a successful long-term business model. For this reason, Kern AG not only focuses on the usual high productivity in the development of its high-performance inserting systems, but also on a significant variety of combinations of individual modules. In the context of the Hunkeler Innovationdays, we spoke with Uli Kern, owner of Kern AG, about clever further developments in the inserting sector, new strategically important business areas and the realization that when designing new solutions, one can benefit from the potential and know-how of the entire team.**

Kern presented its flagship, the Kern 3200, at the Hunkeler Innovationdays. How was the new high-performance inserting system received?

Our Kern 3200, designed as a modular solution for demanding inserting, demonstrates in practice its intelligence, flexibility and job security, thus opening up completely new perspectives for users. In Lucerne, visitors were able to see the Kern 3200 flash model live in action, which is designed for flexible and complex inserting jobs in the medium to high output range with up to 22,000 insertions per hour. In particular, we have received consistently positive feedback due to its diverse modular configuration options for flexible applications. This makes it ideal for use in the transactional and direct mail market, but its performance is equally convincing in lettershops.



*Uli Kern, owner of Kern AG*

Which strategically important fields will Kern continue to expand in the future in addition to the inserting sector?

We can justifiably say that we have achieved a great deal in the inserting sector. Today, we offer our customers a wide range of options, enable additional functions such as stapling, binding, and the software required for this, at the customer's request. Our core business is and remains inserting, but we are increasingly broadening the scope of this market segment. The topic of intralogistics has become significantly more important in recent years, and we are striving to build more automated structures for this purpose together with the relevant partners. Specifically, I am thinking of packaging, transporting and sorting. Ultimately, these are precisely the processes that fit seamlessly into our inserting business and complement it in a meaningful way. After all, inserting is also a form of packaging, taking into account track-and-trace elements and the data preparation required for this. To a certain extent, these segments encompass the same horizon of knowledge and experience. Therefore, we want to explore this space even further in the future. A step that must be taken with caution and foresight.

It is important to occupy this sector intelligently because there are strong competitors. The strategic question is, do you look for a niche or do you enter the market on a broad basis? At the same time, the right partnerships are of enormous importance. That is why, for example, we recently launched a collaboration in the area of shipping logistics and sorting systems. In Prolistic, a company specializing in the capture and sorting of postal items, we have found a perfect partner to help us strengthen our position in the field of optimized and automated dispatch logistics through to capture and sorting systems in incoming and outgoing mail.

With more than 75 years, Kern can look back on a long history of success as a family business. What challenges do you see for your company in the near future?

I am glad that we are present worldwide and have our own branches in Germany and the USA, among others. In all these countries, we have first-rate teams that have been working successfully with us for many years. At the moment, I see the transition from my generation to the next as a great challenge in all areas of the company. We are superior to the competition thanks to motivation and quality. In this context, the knowledge of the employees is becoming increasingly significant and it is important to promote team spirit, to show the staff where challenges lie and to embrace their ideas. You don't always have to look for new solutions in selected R&D project teams, innovation, inspiration and creativity should permeate the entire company. As a result, one benefits from other perspectives, new creative approaches and the accumulated experience of the entire team. Through mutual exchange within the whole company, spectacular ideas can develop that one would not have thought possible before.

Mr Kern, thank you very much for the interesting interview.