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mbw

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**The new world
of advertising
and selling**

With sympathy and creativity

The products of the company mbw have long since made a name for themselves in the industry. The haptic heroes of the Schnabels and Herr Bert brands, the practical „Schmoozies“ and the plush cuddly toys of the MiniFeet brand create a cheerful mood in every way. Jan Breuer has been the man behind these popular figures for four years. The young entrepreneur virtually grew up in the company of the founding Both family and today he drives the further development of the company with fresh impulses.



We meet 34-year-old Jan Breuer on a beautiful spring summer day this year in Wanderup in Schleswig-Holstein in the north of Germany, very close to the Flensburg Fjord and the Danish border. Wanderup is where mbw is located, and although it is a small municipality, its name has been well known in promotional product circles for a long time. This has to do with Jan Breuer's predecessors, the married couple Monika and Walter Both, who founded the company in 1980 and developed it into a successful, well-known and respected supplier to the industry. Although Jan Breuer had not yet been born, he accompanied this entrepreneurial evolution almost from childhood, yes you can say, he grew up in the company. But more on that later.

Impressive collections

Everything started with pedestrian reflectors. After taking the first steps in the retail trade and cooperating with the German traffic associations, it quickly became clear that this path would lead to the promotional product industry. Gradually the assortment was extended to include bicycle helmets, bottle openers, wrapped T-shirts called „Snaky's“, reflective tapes, soft plush, silicone wristbands and microfibre cloths. Then SQUEEZIES, the first individual collection, was introduced. Others followed, including City-Ducks, part of the more than 200 models of the squeaking duckling family, and the truly 'voluminous' clan of Herr Bert.

Distinctive individualists

The cuddly animals and ducklings (also offered in larger versions) have long been available throughout Europe, and together with the MiniFeet and Schnabels brands, have now become strong pillars of the company under the ae-

gis of Jan Breuer. Thus, the company's portfolio today now features a balanced and coordinated mix of original and useful product lines that have found their place in the colourful industry assortments. The youngest cuddly players in the plush series are called BigHeads & ChillyFriends. „All in all, mbw currently has over 200 design-protected articles and logos,“ reveals Jan Breuer. One thing, however, combines all of these high-quality and of course completely certified brand series: they are popular figures or even „individualists of the heart“, and therefore sustainably effective as promotional products.

Benefit from one another, grow together

Before we return to the protagonist of this text, however, it should be noted that mbw has been a permanent PSI member since 1986 and regularly participates at the PSI Trade Show in Düsseldorf; for several years in conjunction with the so-called CHOICE Group, a group of six promotional product suppliers that belong to JCK Holding, a diverse and powerful group of companies that today operates worldwide. In 2007, mbw joined the family holding company which, under the motto „Benefit from one another, grow together“, guarantees its subsidiaries the independence of the companies and thus their entrepreneurs.

Growing up in the company

Which brings us back to Jan Breuer who currently steers the destiny of mbw. He has been in charge of the company since 1 January 2014. One year earlier, Monika and Walter Both transferred the power of attorney and, after leaving the company at the end of 2014, laid the fate of the company completely – and quite deliberately – into his young yet reliable hands. At that time, Breuer had just turned 30, but had been working for mbw for several years. However, his contact with the company goes back to his childhood and is no coincidence. As this native of Wanderup tells us, the Both family and his family have a long-standing friendship: „My mother has been working in mbw's accounting department for more than 30 years. In addition, we lived in the immediate vicinity of the Boths. We played together with their children and often turned the warehouse inside out, building caves with cardboard boxes. Even when I was six years old, I was even allowed to take part in courier trips. „That's how Jan Breuer grew up with the company. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that after finishing school he took the opportunity to do his apprenticeship at mbw. And: „After these two and a half years it was clear: I want to stay here!“

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JAN BREUER IN PERSON

What was your first thought this morning?

Oh great, the sun is shining. In the north of Germany, we are often used to other weather conditions.

When is your day a good one?

When projects run smoothly and together we manage to find good solutions to address challenges.

What gets you in a good mood?

A good WE feeling in the team, creative minds with good ideas, and when things that have been prepared for a long time have a successful outcome.

And what drives you crazy?

Unreliability.

What are you most likely to forgive yourself for?

Dessert.

When do you lose track of time?

When I'm by the sea. We are very spoiled here in Wanderup with the North Sea and Baltic Sea nearby.

If you were forced to take a four-week holiday, where would you go?

To Föhr with my wife, the children and our dog. The island is simply wonderful and within easy reach for us.

What do you like spending your money on?

On good food.

Do you allow yourself to be seduced by advertising?

Of course not ... ;-)

When is a promotional product a good promotional product?

When it is remembered for a long time.

What is the best promotional product you have ever received?

A high-tech screwdriver from Protrade. Functional, high quality and practical. I still use the screwdriver and it has already made quite a few turns.

What annoys you about promotional products?

Some are cheap and of poor quality but still look good. A promotional product must deliver what it promises – even in use. After all, companies that use such a product as a brand ambassador rely on this. As my friend Günter used to say, a logo on the handle of an umbrella that ends up headfirst in a rubbish bin in the pedestrian zone is not the best advertisement ... That's why it's important to ensure that quality is not compromised.



>> Life's work continued

Jan Breuer has been working at mbw for 18 years now. And the Boths know their life's work is in good hands with him. When the business was handed over, the outgoing owners found appropriate words: „He is like part of the family. We are very close – and we have complete trust in his experience, his ability and his passion. He has proven again and again over the past few years that he has this passion. Quality, safety, fair working conditions – Jan Breuer continues to follow these guiding principles of our work. An instinct for the new, an urge to further develop classic products, technical know-how and the joy of dealing with customers – these are his qualities.“ Breuer gladly returns the praise: „I had great teachers with Monika and Walter



Finishing and personalisation on-site in Wanderup – even for very small quantities.

Both who have always supported me with their advice and actions over the years and gradually transferred more responsibility to me. Their trust has always been an incentive for me to pursue my own inclinations and develop my entrepreneurial instinct.“

Continue the tried and tested, initiate something new

The (still) young entrepreneur seems to have succeeded in achieving this. Jan Breuer knows mbw like the back of his hand and lives the spirit of the company with every ounce of his strength. He knows: Success always means incentive in Wanderup. And to continue the tried and tested also means to initiate something new and get it off the ground. Naturally, at mbw we also rely on constant innovative drive. And that, like the successes that come with it, is a team effort. „I grew up in the team and continue to foster team spirit. Here at mbw we always try to get everyone on board,“ emphasizes Breuer. „Everyone has a role to play and you can tell that from the sense of togetherness within the workforce.“

Identification with the mbw family

The identification of the approximately 80 employees with their company is remarkable. „This is also because from the outset we aim to strengthen the competence of individual departments, to promote independence and to encourage them to contribute to the further development of the company,“ says Breuer. For example, there is a „suggestions box“ in which employees can input their suggestions, whether it be in relation to products or improvement of internal processes. „A lot of know-how is pooled here, and we exploit this with measures like these. We are grateful for every suggestion and about two-thirds of them are actually implemented and rewarded accordingly at our Christmas party (which is also something like a company family celebration),“ adds Breuer. The celebration also serves as the backdrop for awarding the „Golden Bert“, a token of gratitude for many years of service: further evidence of the good mbw climate in which the colleagues feel very content.





Professional warehouse management is ensured by the large external warehouse in nearby Eggebek.

Professional warehouse management

We were able to form our own impression of the professional warehouse management: mbw has been operating a modern pickup and picking warehouse in nearby Eggebek for five years. Products are finished or personalised – even in very small quantities – at local printing works and, to some extent, on six printing machines in-house. Packing is also carried out at the company headquarters where clever cardboard boxes are created to send out samples, among other things. As Jan Breuer told us, plans are in place (also in view of the constant „positive development“ of the company balance sheet) to expand and concentrate the warehouse and company headquarters at the Wanderup site which, incidentally, boasts an ideal transport infrastructure. The Port of Hamburg is not far away, and large orders go directly from there to the customer.

Products that bring a smile

A lot of groundwork has been laid

In addition to streamlining the product range, Jan Breuer has also initiated process optimisation. At mbw, they not only move with the times in terms of product trends. A keyword is e-commerce: After two years of development, a new, optimally flexible webshop was recently launched, offering the customer numerous advantages (and giving employees more time for intensive customer care and the development of custom-made products). The great value attached to e-commerce in the company is also demonstrated by the creation of a new apprenticeship position related to this topic. Marketing technology has also matured, as evidenced by the professional presentations of catalogues, flyers and the aforementioned trade show appearance within the CHOICE Group. Other advantages of the company include its own quality management at the production sites in the Far East as well as its in-house quality inspection which more than meets all legal requirements. Sophisticated graphics provide creative impulses. And responsibility in the field of social compliance has always been a matter of course for mbw.

In any case, the latter is still at the centre of all entrepreneurial aspirations at mbw: „Customer advice is the be-all and end-all. Satisfying success will only be found by those who are fully committed to supporting the customer,“ emphasises Breuer. And this credo has worked well within the mbw family so far. Here we enjoy working together to enthuse the promotional product trade for „things that nobody else can make“. Admittedly, the original, thoroughly popular product range makes it easier to create a good feeling with the customer and to put a smile on the face of the recipient. „Who can claim that with his products,“ says Breuer. We can only agree with him .. <

