

The Aluminium Times Profile: Michael Strathmann, General Manager Sales and Marketing, Kampf Schneid-und Wickeltechnik GmbH



Michael Strathmann is General Manager Sales and Marketing for Kampf Schneid-und Wickeltechnik GmbH & Co. KG

Can you mention your career to date since leaving education?

After I left the University of Cologne, where I worked as a chemical engineer, I joined the company Leybold AG in 1985. As an application engineer I developed special solutions for vacuum pumps and equipment for the extreme stress caused by aggressive gases in chemical applications, as well as for media used in the production of semiconductors. After four years I was offered to change to technical sales, being responsible for customers and OEMs in the Semiconductor Industry.

In 1997 I was looking for a change and a new challenge. I found this as sales manager for slitting and winding machines at KAMPF. Within a strong team I learnt the knowhow for such machines used for the slitting and winding of aluminium foil and strip. Over the years I met with customers from many countries in Europe, America and Asia for new projects. For the realisation of their investments I always tried to establish a trustful partnership. Two years ago I reduced my sales jobs and started managing the company's communication and marketing activities.

Kampf has a long history serving the aluminium industry, building the first slitters almost sixty years ago. Can you mention the industries that Kampf serves, the aluminium industry products of Kampf and the markets they serve?

Our company was founded in 1920 by Mr. Erwin Kampf. The first machines had been slitters for paper, but other materials followed and already in the late 1940 the first special slitters had been built for the slitting of aluminium foil. Over the decades the demands for machines that can be used within the production of plastic films grew constantly. That is why today the machines for flexible films and flexible packaging applications are the majority of our business, especially as the technology developments within these markets are fast. Our well-known machines for aluminium foil doubling and separating as well as slitters for foil and strip are still an important part of KAMPF's business. For new investments our customers are looking for additional features to control and improve the material quality. Integrated

pinhole detectors are more than optional and almost standard, and surface inspection units have now also a higher importance. Regarding new applications for aluminium foil in packaging, automotive and electronic industries, we are in close contact with foil producers as well as converters to find out the upcoming requirements for further developments of our machines.

Kampf is very active in Asia. Are the markets and therefore the (aluminium) products different to say Europe/North America? If they are can you suggest why? How did Kampf adapt this then to their product range?

Yes, we see some differences regarding the technical specifications for the machines. As the majority of the market for commodity products is served by foil made in China, we see that the foil producers in Europe concentrate on special products. For those customers we supply machines with the highest flexibility tailor-made for the wider requirement sphere.

Here are some of my favourite things...

Favourite food:

I like to cook at home and most of the time it is Mediterranean food mainly inspired by Italian and Spanish dishes

Favourite drink:

Red wine from Sicily and of course 'Koelsch' the traditional beer from Cologne

Holiday this year was to:

The island of Gran Canaria

The book I am reading is:

The restless dead (German Totenfang) from Simon Beckett, and *Born to run* the biography of Bruce Springsteen

My favourite TV programmes:

The news and I follow the games of the German Bundesliga and sometimes a crime story to relax

Best gadget I have is:

My digital Canon camera with several different lenses

The car I drive is:

A German convertible, to enjoy the wind and the sun whenever possible

My favourite sport is:

Football (just watching) and bicycle riding

The person I would like or would have liked, to have dinner with is:

Phil Collins (I am a fan for many years and have all the music of Genesis and Phil)

Kampf aluminium industry products process materials of 1 mm thickness and less. This does mean that Kampf equipment must be sensitive to working within exacting conditions to deliver an effective product. Does each customer have different requirements? How closely do you work with the customer to achieve their requirements?

The requirements of different customers are comparable as long as the material specifications are similar. The general requirements depend on alloys, hardness, widths, thickness, etc. The differences that appear are caused by the rolling mill equipment, the experience and production philosophy of our customers. Material with a good quality after the upstream process steps will lead to excellent finished products after slitting and winding on our machines. The challenge is to convert incoming coils with less quality into acceptable products. That is where our process specialists need to work with the operators to find good set-ups for tensions, pressures, speed knives and roll surfaces, for example, and also give advice how to improve their material quality.

You have been with Kampf for two decades and if you were to consider two/three important changes to the aluminium industry sector that Kampf serves, what might they be?

In my first years at KAMPF people had been aiming for the biggest and fastest machines. In the meantime most customers are asking for the right sized solution. A smaller machine sometimes gives more productivity, depending on the market's requirements. The many investments in greenfield plants in China changed the world's foil industry and thus the kind of investment behaviours.

Kampf is exhibiting at Aluminium 16 at Düsseldorf. What will Kampf be displaying?

In addition to information about our whole product portfolio we will show our latest development, the KAMPF Production Cockpit - KPC. Industry 4.0 is actually in all minds and a 'must have' for a modern production site, as well as for suppliers to such plants. KAMPF started with its own project called 'Converting 4.0' almost two years ago.

The centre point of the KPC presentation provides a fully functional explanatory re-reeling model including the complete interface to create typical production circumstances and to produce real time data. The beta version of the KPC will have first functionalities of the new service and product modules Smart Production, Smart Operation and Smart Maintenance.

Are you a good traveller? Do you enjoy the opportunity to visit different countries and cultures? How do you manage? Are you a good delegator? Can you comment on your management philosophy?

Even the long distance flights are sometimes boring. I have always enjoyed seeing new countries, meeting people and learning about their culture. Whenever possible I try to save a little time for sightseeing, but unfortunately during most of my trips I saw only airports, hotels and aluminium plants. We established a good back-up assistant for our sales force so that telephone calls and mails are answered when we are travelling. Furthermore the modern communication technology makes it easy to get in contact even from remote areas in the world. To manage my different tasks within sales and marketing it is important for me that I can rely on the team. Regular jour fixe dates ensure that all members are up-to-date.

I was interested to read recently that Kampf does 'look beyond' slitting and winding. Could you mention what this means? Would you like to mention a couple of your company products that our readers would find interesting?

With our developments we do not only focus on the improvements of the machines but

include aspects that are beyond the border line of our machines. To achieve high productivity figures it is not only the machine speed that counts. Integrated solutions for roll handling, fast and easy set-up, and smart connection with the process steps before and after a slitter/rewinder lead to optimum conditions for highly efficient production. This is our aim by 'looking beyond' slitting and winding. The above mentioned Converting 4.0 is an important part of the developments as well as a wide portfolio of our Lifecycle Services.

The rolling aluminium sector has seen many changes over the past few years. Would you like to comment on your view as to how the rolling sector that Kampf serves might develop over the next five years and how this might fit with your strategy within the company?

The demand for aluminium foil is still increasing but not that strongly any more. That's why we expect more investments for retrofitting and modernisation or replacing of single machines and fewer investments in complete new plants. To secure the foil business it is important that we promote the benefits of aluminium for packaging and in other industry sectors, especially as in some countries aluminium has not the best reputation any more. Aluminium in packaging helps to save energy and resources and the recycling of aluminium is an advantage and needs to be used as a strong feature. We do constant developments to improve the sustainability of our machines and the corresponding processes - less waste, lower power consumption and increased productivity to name some of the major items. KAMPF is a member of the GLAFRI (Global Aluminium Foil Roller Initiative) as a major supplier for the foil rollers. In September we participated in the latest Global Foil Roller Conference, where we discussed the actual situation and the future requirements for our industry. To create benefit for us all it is important that our industry speaks with one voice.

Thank you for answering the questions. May I just ask one more question? I was interested to learn of the Kampf Laboratory. Can you mention its function and benefit to the company and customers?

We have always several different machines in our lab. We can test new components and software before we put them into standard. Furthermore we invite customers to come with their materials for trial runs. This is to prove that the KAMPF machines are able to run these materials. On the other side we are able to customise machines to fulfil special requirements. Unfortunately the laboratory is not big enough for a Sepamat or a Centurial strip slitter, so tests with aluminium foil are not often carried out. However, for our customers from the flexible packaging market it is a very useful installation.

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