

FORUM

The Stieglmeyer-Group's company magazine



Mr & Mrs Stieglmeyer

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The duo at the top

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Mrs Kemmler, Mr Kampisiulis Kemmler, how would you describe each other?

Anja Kemmler: I would like to start with something we have in common. We are both down-to-earth people and we compliment each other very well. When I think of my husband, his keen perception springs to mind. He is also very warm-hearted and a loving family man. On the other hand, he is tenacious and very strong-willed. If he sets himself a goal, he pursues it steadfastly.

Georgios Kampisiulis Kemmler: For me, my wife is a very determined person. She is pragmatic and capable of reaching a consensus; she doesn't force her goals on people but negotiates them with the other parties. She is sensitive to other people and has a pronounced awareness of people and feelings. She is always optimistic, and always sees the good in people and their positive side.

What does Stieglmeyer mean to you?

AK: For me, Stieglmeyer is - so very familiar. I have heard about Stieglmeyer from as far back as I can remember. I connect the brand with tradition, a long history and with quality.

GK: Although our last name isn't Stieglmeyer, we feel a great affinity with it. We watch over the company as though it were one of our children, but not in the sense of conserving it. Like our children, the company should continue to develop and grow.

In the past, you worked only with external directors. What is special now about managing your own family business yourselves?

AK: After the business succession was clarified in 2010, the family was able to actively help shape the future again. This now allows us to implement our own ideas of management and organisation. We discussed this within the family, and my husband said: Ok, I'll take on the challenge.

GK: I feel that it is a very great privilege. First, the family entrusted me with the daughter and then a few years later with the whole company. But, luckily, I am not alone; we consult each other regularly, including my father-in-law Max and my brother-in-law Stefan Kemmler. I can set the clock on a Sunday morning by Max. When everyone is still asleep, we have our weekly status update by phone. The special thing about managing your own family business, of course, is that you focus on making decisions that will be right for the long term. While other companies are oriented towards quarterly figures, we think in much longer terms. However, at the same time, the extremely short decision-making channels make us flexible.



Anja Kemmler and Georgios Kampisiulis Kemmler in conversation with Christoph Prevezanos and Kirsten Kawaar.

After all, you vouch with your own name for the company's products ...

GK: Yes, that's something we are keenly aware of. We were at the trade fair in South Africa in May, and while we were there we visited hospitals. It fills us with pride whenever we see our products used in the hospitals there. But it is also a great responsibility since people are dependant on these beds. I have worked in several corporations before but have never felt this personal connection with the products so strongly or this degree of responsibility for them.

How do you get on with the East Westphalian mentality?

GK: I don't wish to oversimplify, but it's said that East Westphalians are stubborn. But Swiss granite is not exactly soft either. Once the ice is broken, the two then strike up a true and deep friendship with each other.

Mr Kampisiulis Kemmler, what were your greatest challenges in the early days at Stieglmeyer?

GK: Gaining the trust of staff and management colleagues. There were also important manpower decisions. This cost a great deal of strength, and sometimes brought unrest within the company, but finally we're now on the right track.

AK: The company had not been run by the owners since 1987. We were also very successful during this period, but we are now looking for an even more dynamic culture. We want to retain what is good from the past, but also continue to develop.

National and international competitors are targeting the market with what are sometimes aggressive prices. How is Stieglmeyer reacting to this?

GK: We are all in competitions with other companies, and that's a good thing. However, focusing on the

price alone is not constructive in my opinion. We sell our products through high performance and quality, not through low prices. Our customers rightly expect that, in over ten years' time, the beds will work just as well as today and also that we guarantee spare part availability long after the product has been discontinued. It is not without reason that we carry out maintenance work on beds that are older than 20 years and still work flawlessly.

AK: To achieve this, we are investing in our location in Germany and employ over 500 people here alone. This includes a large number of apprentices, since we would like to give young people from this area a perspective for the future. All this is geared towards the goal of establishing proximity to the customer. Stiegmeyer will never be cheap – you cannot compare us with a company that only produces in low-wage countries.



Anja Kemmler and Georgios Kampisiulis Kemmler in conversation with Christoph Prevezanos and Kirsten Kawaar.

The new Stiegmeyer products include the suite eMotion high-quality comfort bed. What lead to the decision to address end customers directly?

GK: Actually, it is not the first time we have addressed end customers. This used to be part of our core business for decades. Right into the 1970s, we sold our furniture to German homes through furniture retailers.

Was it a desire to explicitly pick up where the company had left off?

AK: We saw the market potential of using our competence as a manufacturer of high-quality and functional medical products and furniture to now bring out an exquisite and exclusive designer piece. This is designed to offer increased comfort and safety to the generation that is growing older. It has already been very well received, and it won the Interior Innovation Award at the “imm cologne” trade fair. This shows that we are on the right track.

GK: We exhibited the bed in Dubai and South Africa – and it was positively pried out of our hands. The potential uses are wide-ranging, from private use to residences and sheltered housing, right up to VIP rooms in hospitals in the Middle East or suites in exclusive hotels.

How do you see the current situation regarding Germany as a business Location?

AK: Germany, as a location is our home country. We are market leaders here as we take great care of our relationships with our customers. The expertise that we have built up is anchored in our workforce here. I can't just transfer something like that to anywhere else. “Made in Germany”, or German engineering, is highly regarded not only abroad.



A target of attaining a 50% export share has been formulated. How realistic is that, and what time-scale are we looking at?

GK: This is an ambitious goal, but it's attainable. Although we have planned and budgeted it for the next 7 years, it is realistic to think more in terms of 10 years. Realising this goal involves massive growth in turnover. We will only succeed with this if we approach it in a very targeted way and have the right products for the market. Our product pipeline is currently filled to bursting.

Where do you see Stieglmeyer in 10 years' time?

GK: I see Stieglmeyer clearly as the number 1 for customer satisfaction and service. In 10 years' time, we will have grown considerably, but our customers will still be our principle focus. We are already on course for this.

AK: I see, of course, that we will cement our position in Germany and continue to build on this. We want to grow organically through sustainable development and establish a firm basis abroad. I see Stieglmeyer as a very healthy business.

How strongly does Stieglmeyer influence your private life? Are you even allowed to mention the name over dinner?

AK: We talk about it regularly at mealtimes! Stieglmeyer is an essential part of our everyday lives. Our children, too, are growing up with Stieglmeyer. They get a feel for the responsibility behind it, and also pick up on any controversial discussions we may have. They then ask about it; this happened, for instance, at the time that the Puro hospital bed was to be developed and launched. That was an important issue.

GK: There is one drawback, through, to the whole thing. The family feels my Absence.

AK: It's a hard Job at home. That's where my husband is missing.

Is there time left just for you?

AK: We're working on this. My wish would be for Stieglmeyer to take a back seat at certain times. I would like a weekend where my husband gives his full attention to the family.

GK: Yes, that's true. The time with my family gives me the strength to then concentrate my full attention on the company again.

We would like to thank you for this interview.

Anja Kemmler is the granddaughter of Hans von Hollen, the last owner, who managed the company himself until shortly before his death in 1987. The lineage of her family goes back to a business partner of the company founder Johann Stieglmeyer. Anja Kemmler, a graduate in Business Administration, and her husband were born and raised in Switzerland. Together with her father Max and her brother Stefan Kemmler, she is a proprietor of the Stieglmeyer-Group.

Georgios Kampisiulis Kemmler became chairman of Stieglmeyer- Group management at the end of 2012, following positions at Credit Suisse, Arthur Andersen and Ernst & Young. The 43-year old business economist and certified public accountant is married to Anja Kemmler. The couple has three sons aged 6, 9 and 11. The family lives in the rural setting of Mettmenstetten in the canton of Zurich.