

mybelt



OPTIBELT

* LAND OF OPPOSITES *

MEXICO



THE BICYCLE ENTHUSIAST

Optibelt has been helping Bernds Bikes to revolutionise belt drive systems for bicycles.

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HOLA, COMPADRES!

A love of life and precision: Visiting Optibelt's customers in Mexico.

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EDITORIAL

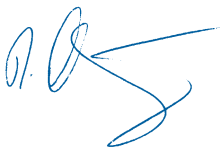
Mexico mio, dear Readers,

This edition of myBelt is all about the sun, Latin American vitality and plenty of entrepreneurial enthusiasm. We visit Mexico, the biggest exporter in Latin America and an important location in international automotive production. Industry there is diversifying increasingly dynamically with lots of energy and gusto – and Optibelt solutions are part of that.

But there are examples closer to home, demonstrating that enthusiasm can be a productive force for improvement. Read for example how ‘Bernds Bikes’ have been teaming up with Optibelt to bring belt-driven bicycles to a new level of performance, and how Optibelt is already working on tomorrow’s mobility solutions.

We’re getting there – here and all over the world.

Reinhold Mühlbeyer,
Chairman of the
Executive Board



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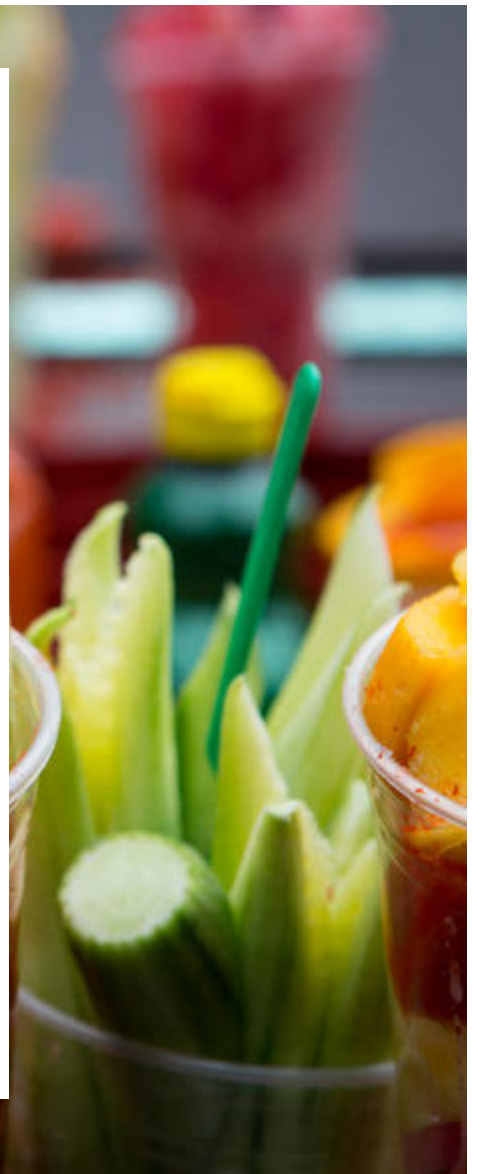


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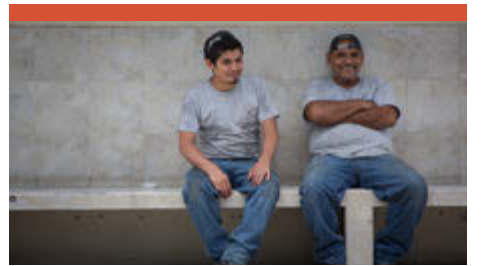


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TYPICAL OPTIBELT

THE BICYCLE ENTHUSIAST



BICYCLE-MAKER ON THE SHORES OF LAKE CONSTANCE

The story of Bernds Bikes began in Detmold in 1991, just a stone's throw from Optibelt's headquarters in Höxter. While still in the middle of an apprenticeship, Thomas Bernds founded his first company to design recumbent tricycles with full cladding.

Out and about one day, he met a friend riding on a collapsible bicycle which he had developed for wife and built himself. Berndts, who has loved cycling all his life and drew his first bicycle at the tender age of three, loved what he saw. He asked his friend whether he could develop the bicycle further. The friend agreed – and Berndts basically redeveloped the collapsible bicycle from scratch.

In 1992 he presented the result for the first time – ‘Berndts collapsible bicycle’ – at the IFMA bicycle fair, where it was met with a storm of enthusiasm.

“ I don’t think I ever sold as many bicycles as I did at that trade fair. Straight out of the booth.

Thomas Berndts

His business took off and the company grew. Thomas Berndts got to know his life-partner Michaela Buchholz, who joined the enterprise and quickly emerged as the perfect counterpart to the creative Berndts.

An organisational genius, she whipped production processes into shape, switched the company to innovative direct sales and took care of administration.

Later on, in 2014, after the family and business had moved from Detmold to Überlingen on the shores of Lake Constance, her brother joined the business, allowing Thomas Berndts to turn all of his attention to what he loved most: continuously improving every detail of his collapsible bicycle.



He drew his first bike at three and constructed his first at seven. Everything in Thomas Berndts’ life revolves around (collapsible) bicycles.



EUREKA!

Day and night he worked on details, drew, filed, tinkered and thought. When faced with a particularly tricky problem, he would even continue his work in the bathtub, as his partner revealed to us with a wink. It is not known whether he was in the bath when he had the idea to offer a belt drive system as an alternative to conventional chain drive. Whatever the case, Bernds has been supplying his bikes with belt drives for over 20 years.



100 percent made in Germany. From development to shipment, the entire production process takes place in the Lake Constance region.

” This drive system has big advantages over the chain: it’s lighter, stronger and longer-lasting and needs no upkeep. Because belts require no grease, they don’t make cyclists dirty.

Thomas Bernds

But belt drives have their shortcomings too. The length of a chain is easy to adjust, whereas a belt is a closed system. The frame therefore has to be constructed in the right way to allow the belt to be put on. Bernds developed chainstays that are open at the drive side, like on a motorbike.

This allows a toothed belt drive to be used without difficulty – and, unlike solutions offered by other manufacturers, cyclists can even change it themselves without special tools, should they need to do so.



Bernds and Optibelt didn't reinvent the wheel – but they are working together to make it quite a lot better.

ON THE SAME BELTLENGTH

The 'Real Snapper' – developed by Berndts, naturally – guides the belt and prevents it from slipping off the cog. “We only use high-grade components in our bicycles. We do buy in some things like gears and brakes, but the rest we develop ourselves so that we can offer our customers the best possible riding experience combined with maximum flexibility.”

All of their bikes fitted with toothed belt drives will feature the **optibelt DELTA CHAIN Carbon** from November 2017 onwards. This, however, does not mean all of their collapsible bicycles are fitted with toothed belts. Berndts also sells bicycles with conventional chain drive systems, under guarantee.

“We experimented with belts and drive systems made by various suppliers and soon realised that a lot of them were making the same mistakes we were making more than 20 years ago. Finally we found Optibelt, a partner who was prepared to accommodate our needs and work with us to develop a solution tailored to our product. Maybe that's because Optibelt is a family business like we are. You could say we're on the same beltlength.”

Optibelt is currently developing a prototype of the **optibelt DELTA CHAIN Carbon** to drive Berndts' collapsible tandem. It has to be very narrow and very long and have the 8-mm tooth spacing preferred for bicycles.

These two traditional companies are in fact getting a number of new products up and running. “At Eurobike 2018 we will be jointly presenting a new product which will revolutionise belt drives for bicycles,” promises Berndts.



SMALL, BUT OH MY!

Next, of course, we wanted to know what it's like to ride a bike with a belt drive. Thomas Bernds provided us with some collapsible bicycles and showed us how to get them ready. Three moves and less than ten seconds later, we were sitting in the saddle. And we were surprised: it was by no means less comfortable than a big bicycle — on the contrary.

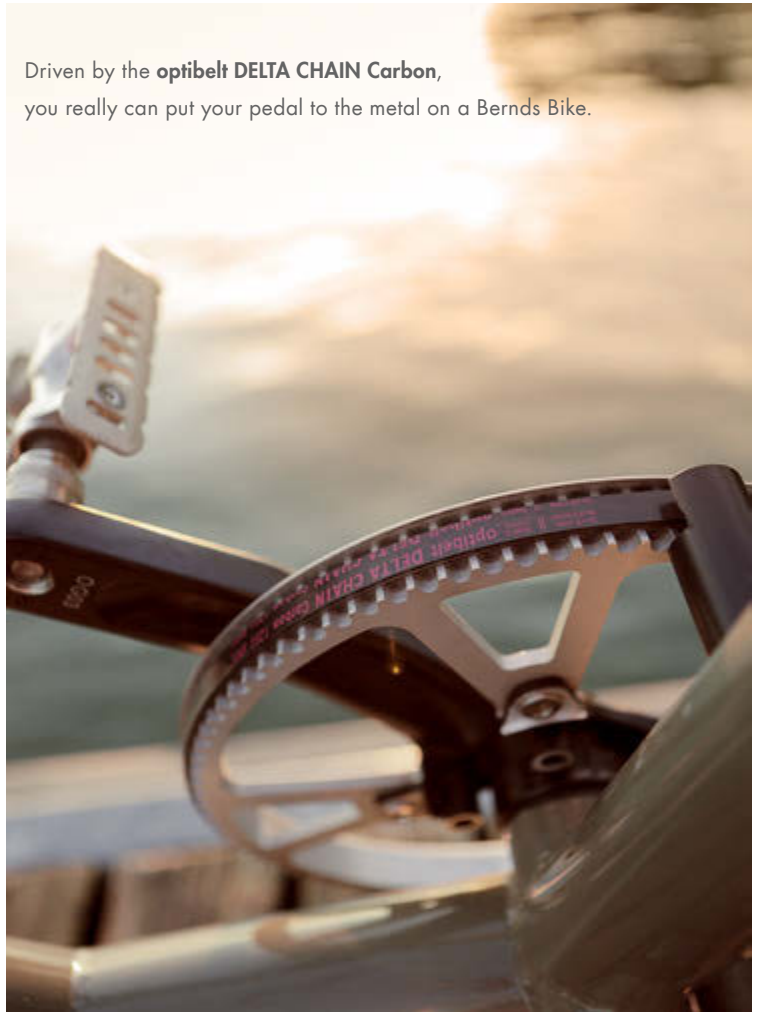
The carbon-reinforced belt transfers pedal-power brilliantly to the 20-inch wheels; changing gears is quick, silent and dependable.

Tight corners are easy to handle on the collapsible bike, as are longer rides — even if you're tall, old or handicapped. Every one of Bernds' bikes is tailored to the rider, tuned to their bodily requirements and able to be configured entirely individually by them.

” We don't simply want to build bicycles, we want to give people a new degree of mobility. When it comes down to it, that's Bernds' real driving force.

Thomas Bernds

Driven by the **optibelt DELTA CHAIN Carbon**, you really can put your pedal to the metal on a Bernds Bike.





Eloy Aguilera,
Sales Director Mexico

A WARM WELCOME TO MEXICO, * PASSION AND A LOVE OF LIFE * COMPADRES.

OPTIBELT IN THE WORLD



Speaking broad German and wearing an even broader grin, Eloy Aguilera embraces us and leads us to the car that waits. The 44-year-old general manager of Optibelt's sales company in Mexico will be accompanying us for the next ten days and 10,000 kilometres, giving us an insight into his work and into everyday Mexican life, culture and attitudes. Vamos!



FOLK MUSIC
**ELOY'S
 PASSION**

They sing of heroes, love and death, and after Carlos Santana they are probably Mexico's best-known musical export: mariachis.

They usually perform in ensembles consisting of singers, violinists, trumpet players and guitarists – originally at weddings, hence their name, which is derived from the French word 'mariage'. But mariachis have now become a ubiquitous feature of Mexico's street culture.



**OUR MAN
 IN MEXICO**

Eloy Aguilera glances at his watch. Traffic in Mexico City is heavy and we are late. Eloy is displeased. He may look like an archetypal Mexican, but in his professional life he swears most of all by typically German virtues.

Eloy has always placed much stock on punctuality, even before 23.12.2011, which was the day on which the Optibelt sales organisation was officially opened. Eloy helped build up that organisation. Before that, the trained mechanical engineer had worked in various companies and industries, including even a rival.

” Optibelt has become my second home.
 Eloy Aguilera





Clearly, Optibelt is all about quality, service, technical support and outstanding value for money – which is why he never for a moment doubted that the Optibelt sales organisation would succeed in Mexico, no matter what anybody else said. As it turns out, he was right. With a market share of eight percent, Optibelt is number two in the Mexican market and sales have risen by a factor of 14 over the past six years. The company now employs 14 people who sell Optibelt products to a number of different industries, from paper, to food, to construction and transport. A total of 2,000 businesses in Mexico rely upon German quality for their drive belts.

” It’s the German workmanship which customers appreciate most. I can say in all honesty that I’m selling outstanding quality.

Eloy Aguilera

That’s why he believes that Optibelt still has plenty of room for growth in the hotly contested Mexican market. To turn that potential into reality, the general manager regularly travels the length and breadth of the country, maintaining personal contact with customers. “My mission has only just begun.”

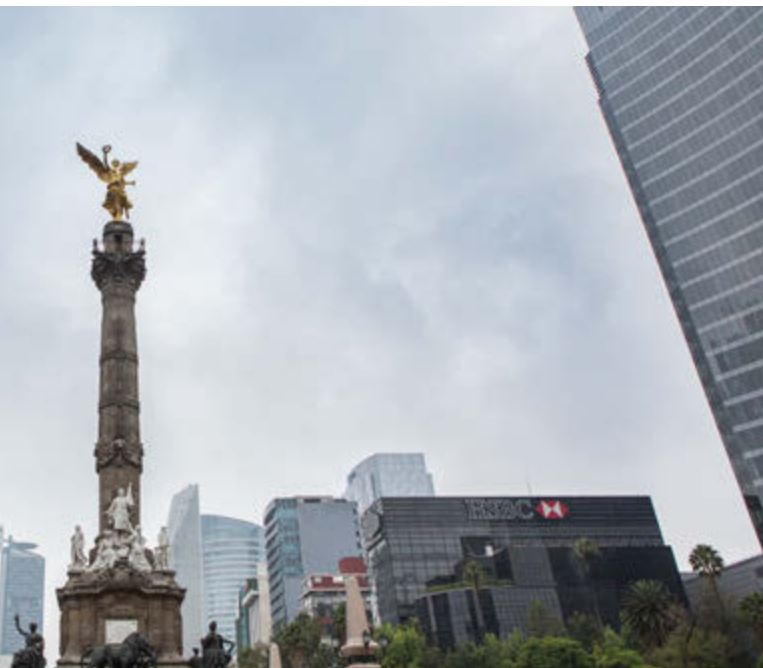


REALIST AND DREAMER

Eloy masters this mission much of the time with a song on his tongue, as we were often to witness.



Especially on our taxi rides, when he would join in every song he knew on the radio, loudly, ardently and knowing every word. And as we also found out: Eloy knows a lot of songs. He loves traditional mariachi music as much as he loves English-language pop, with whose help he steadily builds up his knowledge of the language. But a skill he would be hard pressed to improve is that of entertainer, which he was born with and which serves him well in his sales work.





The agave, especially the sisal version, is also an important source of fibre, making it a raw material used in numerous products.



Eloy combines typical German attributes with a Mexican zest for life.

It's a combination which enables him to master all of the disciplines of his varied working life, including finances, organisation, sales and marketing – and which customers and colleagues know to appreciate.



Eloy, who says of himself that he is a realist and sometimes a dreamer, succeeds again and again in providing us with an insight into the Mexican way of life. For instance, we visited one of his sales colleagues in Guadalajara, the stronghold of mariachi. We accompanied the two locals to a mariachi bar and participated in an exuberant evening featuring wonderful live music and typical Mexican delicacies.

We leave the agave fields behind us, their spine-crowned heads shimmering majestically beneath the sun, a sight that has become familiar to us as we travel around the west of the country. Like many things in this land, the Agaves have a long history and a long tradition. The indigenous peoples valued and cultivated the sugar-rich plant, whose buds and flowers they would often roast before eating.

And then there is pulque, Mexico's national drink, and the mezcal and tequila which are more familiar to us, all of them made from fermented agave juice – the last of the three, incidentally, exclusively from the juice of the blue agave (Agave tequilana). While tequila may taste like firewater in our latitudes, whose flavour has to be tamed with salt and lemon, here it reminds us more of a cognac which can bring forth a range of nuances depending on its age and type. As a taste it's come to epitomise the Mexican love of life, and which we're sure to miss it back in Germany.



The drink gets its name from the city of Tequila near the Pacific coast, where the Spanish probably brewed the first tequila in the 16th century. There are now around 130 manufacturers of it in Mexico, producing over 900 tequila brands – but none of them, as it happens, contains a worm. A caterpillar used to be added to the bottles of some mezcal varieties. The reason: if the caterpillar stayed preserved, it was a sign of the quality of the mezcal; but if it dissolved, then drinking the mezcal was not recommended.



City of Mountains in bright lights.



INDUSTRY MEETS PARADISE

We continue to drive in a northerly direction. Here in Monterrey, Mexico's biggest industrial city and one of Latin America's most important industrial locations, we meet Eloy's sales colleague, Hector.



La Ciudad de las Montañas — City of Mountains — as it is also known, is encircled by hills, has a population of over 1.1 million and is a melting pot of industry. Almost every sector is present there. This makes the city an especially attractive sales area for

Optibelt, situated as it is just two hours' drive from the US border. There was one thing here which again highlighted the contrasts of the country.

In Monterrey itself, industry sets the pace, but in the mountains around it, one natural spectacle competes with another.

Eloy and Hector take us on an excursion to the famous Monterrey waterfall. No sooner has the noise of the city faded between the enormous trees than another sound, no quieter, begins to ring in our ears: the chirping of millions of crickets, courting each other's company in the shelter of the undergrowth and accompanying us on our way through the primordial vegetation. The waterfall astounds us with its size and power — us and numerous tourists from around the world who come to see the spectacle. Eloy pulls a picture from his shirt pocket and shows us a yellowing photograph of himself and his wife at this precise spot 20 years ago.

Traditional handicrafts are still alive in many parts of Mexico, such as here among the carpet-weavers of Querétaro.



Mexico's national cuisine is colourful, diverse and truly delicious.



AT HOME WITH THE 'LORD OF THE BELTS'

A few days later we meet his wife and family in person. We reach Querétaro, the city where the 'Lord of the Belts' lives and where the Optibelt warehouse is situated.

Singing as he goes, Eloy leads us through the endless aisles and shelves of the 2,000 square metre warehouse from which companies and outlets all over the country are supplied. "We have the complete range in stock," he says proudly.

It is from here that Eloy pursues his objective of making Optibelt the market leader in his native land.

He and his team work extremely hard to achieve this, bringing his unique mixture of German thoroughness and Mexican zest for life to bear on Optibelt's success story in Mexico.

” We're one big family at Optibelt and everybody contributes in their own way towards our success. I may carry a lot of responsibility, but there is a lot I can decide on myself. And I prefer to do that in a good mood,
Eloy Aguilera

Eloy explains to us when we say goodbye. Then he smiles at us, turns around and disappears into his office – with a song on his tongue.



Belts as far as the eye can see: every product in every size and version is available at Optibelt's central warehouse.





PERFECTO!

LUXURY BUSES



We depart very punctually and leave a lot of time to accommodate Mexico City's unpredictable traffic.

That's why we arrive much too early for our meeting at the premises of ETN Turistar Lujo, situated in the north of the city.



We wait a while in the car, not wanting to exaggerate the German cliché of excessive punctuality. As we sit there, Eloy and Tomas, our driver, tell us more about Mexico, its traditions and customs. As they talk, we watch staff entering the headquarters of ETN Turistar Lujo.



“Ah, there's Ismael,” says Eloy after some time, pointing through the dusty windscreen. We get out of the car and greet the man who will be providing us with a glimpse behind the scenes at ETN Turistar Lujo. As we slowly approach the main entrance, chatting to Eloy and Ismael, we notice another man whose appearance sets him apart from the rest. He's wearing a black suit and a

Ismael Cerano with one
of his reliable co-workers:
The **optibelt TRUCK POWER**



374,262 km

IS THE LENGTH OF MEXICO'S ENTIRE
ROAD NETWORK (DATE: 2011);

AS A COMPARISON: 643,500 KM
IN GERMANY (DATE: 2014)



6 km/h

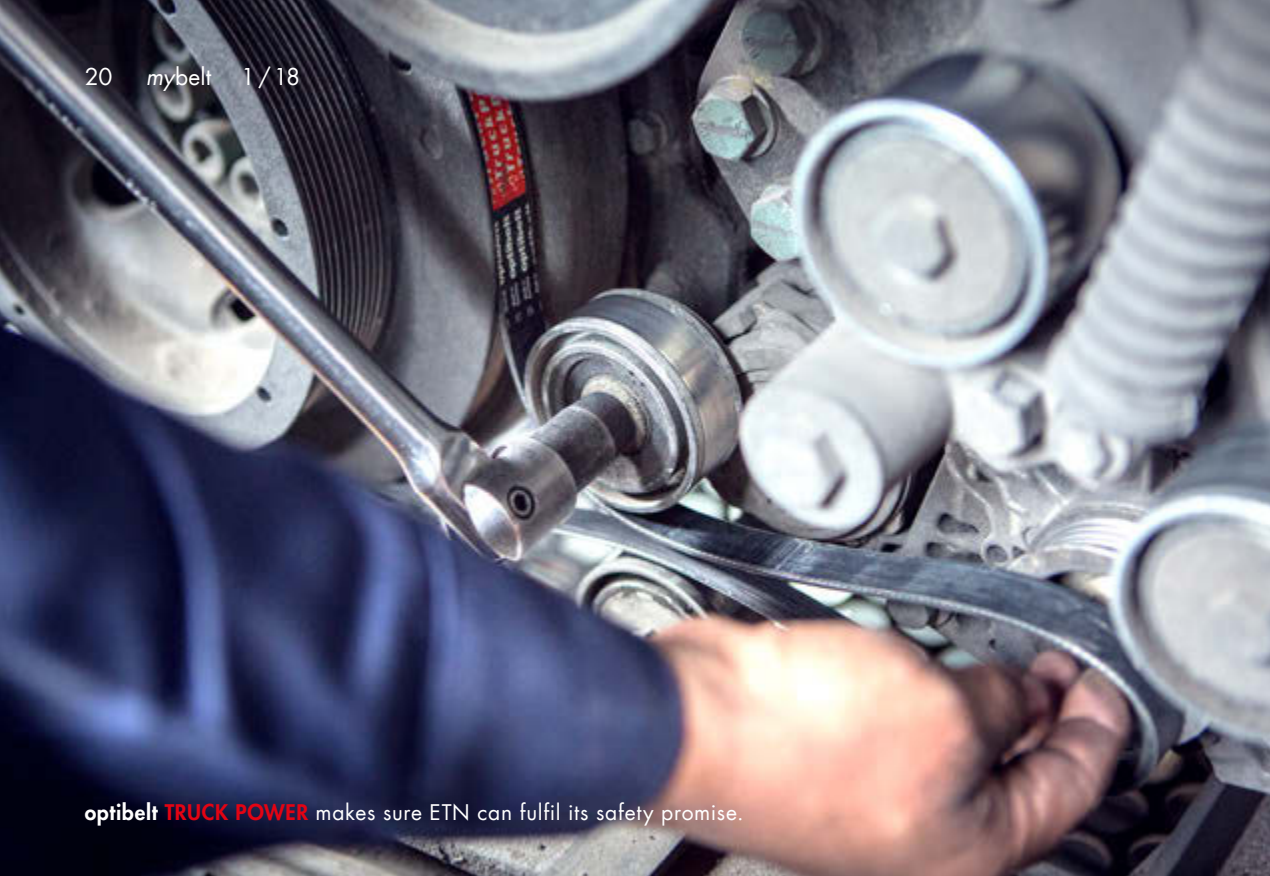
IS THE AVERAGE SPEED OF A CAR
ON ONE OF MEXICO CITY'S MAIN
ARTERIAL ROADS AT RUSH HOUR

white shirt with a tie. He seems overdressed for this climate. Just before we go in we see the man taking a seat in an upholstered wooden chair and exchanging a few words with another man.

The latter sits down and takes the first man's feet into his hands – his head lowered all the while.

We stop and look, somewhat surprised. It's like a scene from an old film, and it seems almost over-embroidered to us. Maybe this is ETN's managing director? As we pass the man and the shoe-cleaner, we see the man inspecting his shining shoes carefully. Then he hands the shoe-cleaner a note and says to him appreciatively: "Very good, thank you!" He straightens his suit and walks past us towards the ETN reception.





optibelt TRUCK POWER makes sure ETN can fulfil its safety promise.



MARKET LEADER IN THE LUXURY SECTOR

Soon after its founding in 1991, bus company ETN Turistar Lujo earned itself an exceptional reputation far beyond the boundaries of Mexico. ETN Turistar Lujo buses can be found at over 70 destinations in 24 Mexican states, making ETN the industry leader in the luxury transport sector.



The company offers its passengers and employees every conceivable comfort: the buses are naturally equipped with air conditioning and extra-wide seats in which every passenger can select their own entertainment programme using a touch screen. Ismael Cerano is one of the company's 1,500 employees.

He has been working at ETN for 25 years and, as the head of the maintenance department, he is responsible for managing the entire fleet of buses. We talked to Ismael about the scene we had just witnessed.

We asked him whether the man having his shoes polished held an important position in the company. Amused and chuckling, Ismael answered: "Yes, of course. He's one of our drivers."

Noticing our perplexed expressions, he explained, laughing: "We promise our customers the ultimate comfort, safety and wellbeing throughout their journey with us. That's why we place a lot of emphasis on all our customer-facing staff looking clean and appropriate.



If a driver looks presentable, then we give the customer the impression of a serious and dependable company. Having your shoes polished is essential for him in a dusty place like this. The buses, the drivers – everything has to be just so."

Ismael Cerano



1.03

US-DOLLARS IS THE AVERAGE
COST OF A LITRE OF PETROL
AT THE PUMP

APPROX.

320

CARS PER
1,000 INHABITANTS

THE BEST SERVICE THANKS TO OPTIBELT



ETN Turistar Lujo has been equipping its entire fleet with Optibelt drive belts for the past few years to ensure that it gives its best every single day.



“We used to have a lot of breakdowns because the drive belts couldn’t stand up to the stresses they were exposed to for long enough. In our industry that was absolutely unacceptable, because at the end of the day we carry a lot of responsibility for the wellbeing of our passengers. So my team and I spent three months carefully evaluating different belts made by different manufacturers. **TRUCKPOWER** by Optibelt convinced us completely. You can tell straight away that this company has spent more than 140 years supplying different drive solutions.”

Optibelt has since not only begun supplying drive belts but also training staff in a total of 14 of the company’s own workshops, one of which is situated at the headquarters in Mexico City.

Buses are inspected there in immense detail so as to forestall breakdowns and faults. “The good thing about Optibelt drive belts is that they have a very high mileage and only need to be changed twice a year or every 75,000 kilometres. I can’t think of a single time we ever suffered any damage because of a worn Optibelt belt. Really, it’s never happened at all,” the head mechanic tells us.

” We can rely entirely on Optibelt’s promise. We’re very proud to be working with this German company because it allows us to offer our customers the very best service.

Ismael Cerano

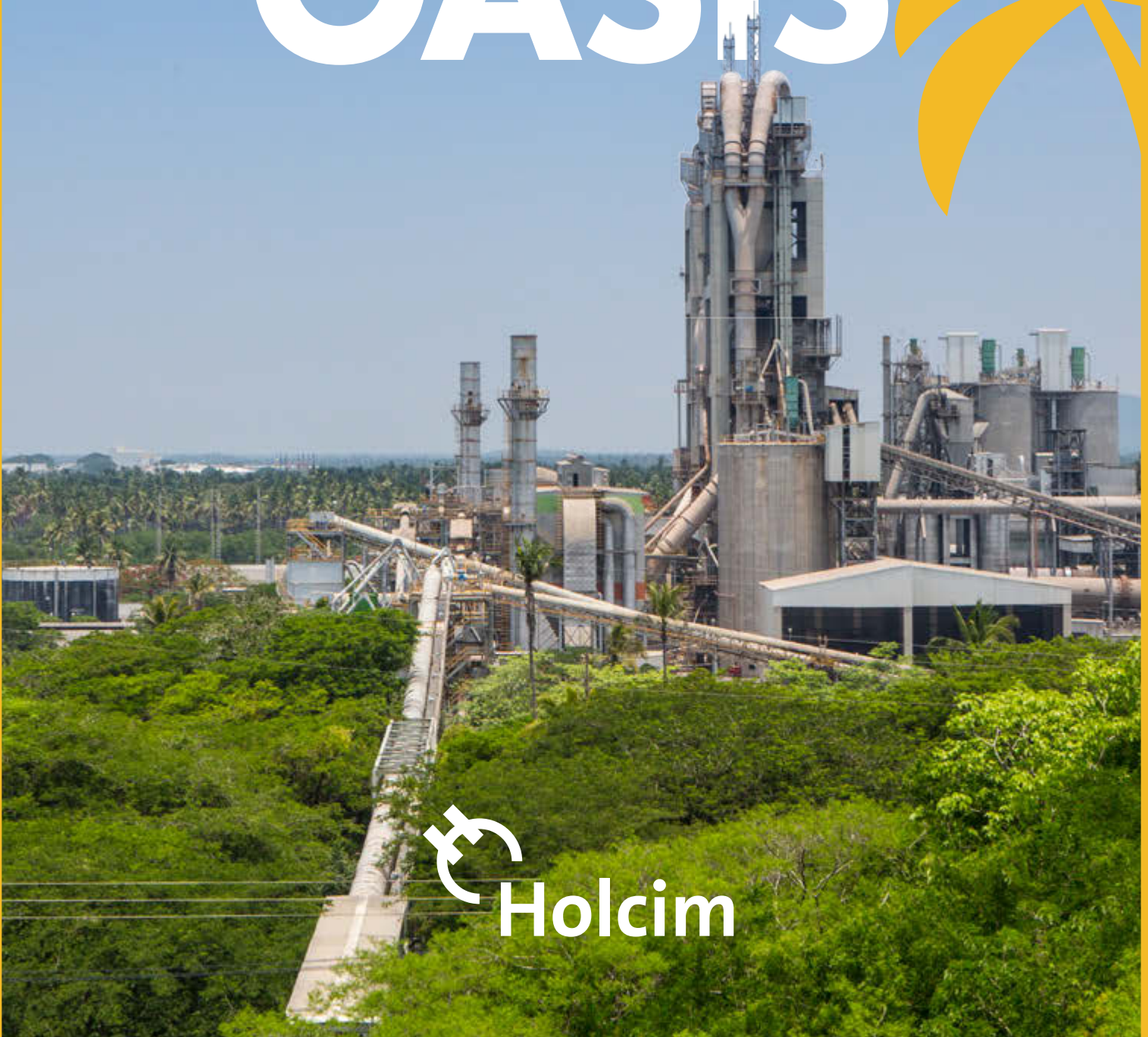
After inspecting the workshop and the engine compartment of a bus thoroughly, Ismael shows us the passenger compartment with visible pride, and acquaints us with all of the equipment and conveniences which ETN passengers enjoy. We can confirm that he is entirely right: everything is designed to perfection.



CEMENT



OASIS



Holcim



It looks like a scene from *Fitzcaraldo* or *Avatar*. The whole thing looks slightly unreal, the rich green and the palm trees that seem to scrape the sky. Strange sounds emit from the rainforest. A bird? Or even some kind of mammal we don't know? Or something else...

We're travelling along a narrow road through the rainforest, on the way to a very special industrial settlement. It's supposed to be where the Holcim cement factory is situated – the Brasilia of the cement industry, so to speak. A monument to the Industrial Revolution in the middle of the jungle. And it feels like an eternity since we saw or heard anything but jungle. We slowly begin to wonder whether our driver has somehow got lost. Only Eloy's constant humming and singing reassures us.



HELLO HOLLYWOOD

All of a sudden, the impenetrable green opens up to reveal the imposing sight of Holcim cement factory, which almost seems to grow out of the rainforest.

Nothing more can be heard of the strange voices of the jungle, and the distant sound of motors tells us we have reached civilisation. The contrast could not be more striking. Surrounded by the last vestiges of tropical rainforest, the factory's cement towers jut surreally into the sky. Not even a Hollywood director could have dreamed up the scene. The nearer we get to the gates, the more we realise just how big the operation is.



MEXICO'S RUHRGEBIET

We are in Colima/Tecomán in the west of Mexico. This company's location is idyllic, but it is also tactically intelligent: if you approach the factory from other directions, you soon realise how well connected it is.

From it, products are taken away firstly by rail and road in every direction, and later loaded onto ships. The factory has been situated in this beautiful place since 1993. Later on, Jorge Franco, head of production at Holcim, tells us that Holcim was founded in Switzerland in 1912 and then moved to Mexico in 1964.

But before the heavy trucks and specialist firms moved in to erect the factory, conservationists and wildlife specialists arrived.



Amado Gómez and Gerónimo Moreno



Indigenous animals were carefully captured and given a new home in a compound at the edge of the site, so as not to disturb the ecological balance of the habitat. Before beginning our tour of this grey work of art in the jungle, we're told in detail about the safety regulations and given protective clothing. The standards in Mexico are very high, the number of accidents is correspondingly low.

HEAT, DUST AND OPTIBELT

"Heat, noise and dust" await us, warns Romeo – but it feels as if they're already there. Romeo introduces us to Amado and Gerónimo. The two of them are engineers who monitor what happens on the premises.

We hear how over 100 people are employed at the factory, and that the global corporation Holcim maintains other sites in Mexico. But this, as we had suspected, is by far the most exotically located.

When we take our foray around the site, it's quickly evident how extreme the conditions are here. Safety is a subject which comes up repeatedly. After all, it is the main reason why Holcim relies on Optibelt products. But Optibelt's drive solutions had to be subjected to some sophisticated testing before they could be used in the imposing crushers that weigh over 25 tons and contain over 100 hammers, each weighing 135 kilograms; and used in the countless conveyor belts and innumerable other martial-looking machines.

"After that, it was perfectly clear that there was no getting around Optibelt," says Amado. "Our CPC30 cement is a brand product of the utmost quality," adds Gerónimo.

” We also expect that same quality from our suppliers. We know how good Optibelt's quality is and we're completely satisfied with its products. That's why almost all our machines are equipped with belts made by Optibelt.

Amado Gómez





SWALLOWED BY PARADISE

The way the two of them supply each other with answers in a verbal one-two is testimony to their close friendship. The staff here interact warmly and closely, just as they did on our visit to Monterrey.

Holcim places much emphasis on the satisfaction of its workers. Buses bring them back home through the jungle after their shifts.

Jorge Franco proudly explains how Holcim is one of Mexico's highest-grossing companies, producing 12.6 million tons of cement each year.



The **optibelt RED POWER 3 S=C Plus** high-performance narrow V-belt dependably drives Holcim's heavy machines.



The working processes obviously have to be highly efficient and controlled down to the last detail in a company of this scale. A computer indicates when the belts need changing. Again, nothing is left to chance.

We bid farewell to the three of them and their workplace. The noise of the machines grows quieter as we leave. As the gates close behind us, we're confronted again by the jungle's rich green wall, like a giant rampart of palms. We get back into our car and set off on the next leg of our tour of Mexico. A few minutes later we look around and the cement factory has vanished. It's as if paradise has swallowed it whole.





IN SAFE HANDS

Ceramics have a long tradition in Mexico.
And companies like Daltile – and Optibelt –
make sure they have an important future.

 daltile®



CERAMICS: MEXICO'S WHITE GOLD



8:01 am local time. A beautiful morning. We look out from our hotel upon a vibrant city with a breathtaking backdrop – Monterrey, the City of Mountains.

Monterrey's foremost landmark is the Cerro de la Silla, which can be seen from afar as a striking silhouette, reminiscent of a saddle. Founded in 1596 on the Santa Catarina river, this city is one of Mexico's primary industrial metropolises. The ceramics industry is one of the most important sectors in Monterrey, a conurbation which is home to 4.1 million people. And leading the way is the Daltile factory which we're visiting today.

A twenty-minute drive in blazing sunshine and 35 degrees takes us to the gates of the factory at the edge of the city.

Eduardo Gonzalez is already standing at the entrance. He is 25 years old and has been working for Daltile for five years, where he is now head of the production line.

He is a friendly, self-confident, open man who carries an immense responsibility: he ensures that all of the imposing factory's production processes interact smoothly and that the machines are serviced and running.



HAND IN HAND FOR SAFETY



Our tour can begin. Almost. Before we can set foot in the production halls, Eduardo provides us with protective goggles and ear defenders and acquaints us with the safety regulations.

Then he opens the big, heavy gates and we disappear into the factory's endless production lines where 4,000 people manufacture high-quality ceramic tiles. We notice a big poster right at the beginning of our tour.



Every one of its members has painted his or her hand-print and signed it. This represents their promise to observe safety at work and internalise all the safety regulations.

Eduardo Gonzalez

Safety is big stuff at Daltile – the poster helps to remind employees about it every day. And it works. “We’ve reduced accidents to a minimum. The wellbeing of our workforce is top priority,” says Eduardo.



The **optibelt VB S=C Plus** is a classic which is used under extreme conditions at Daltile.

” Optibelt is a well-known brand admired for its outstanding quality and the longevity of its products. Even if the belts become brittle due to extreme long-term use, they still continue to work without problems,

Eduardo Gonzalez

says the head of production. “But we don’t let it get that far. For safety reasons, the belts are changed regularly each year as part of general maintenance.”



**MISTER
100 PERCENT**

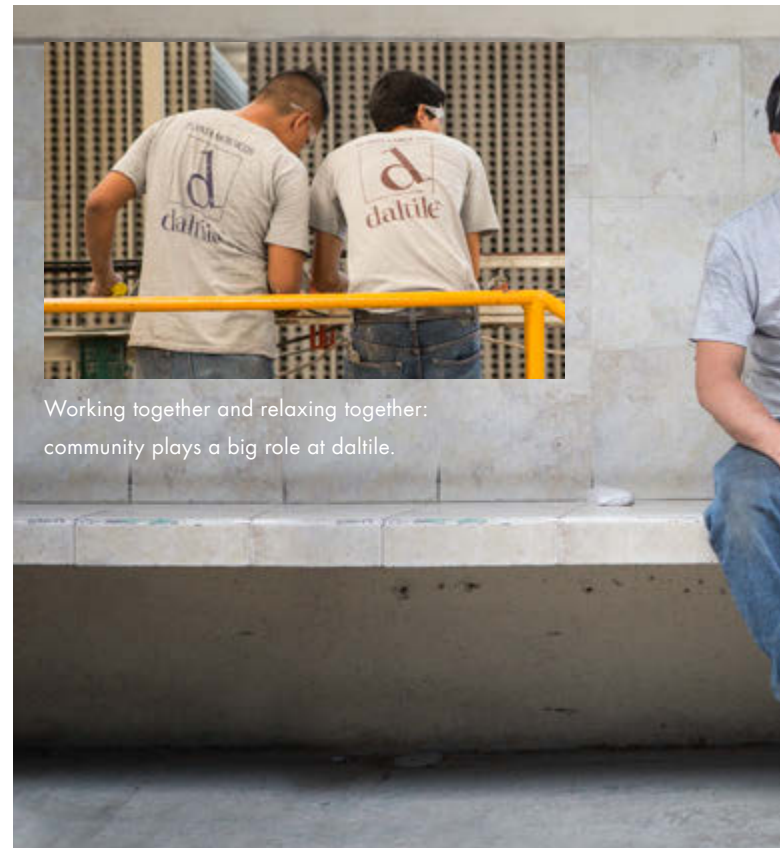
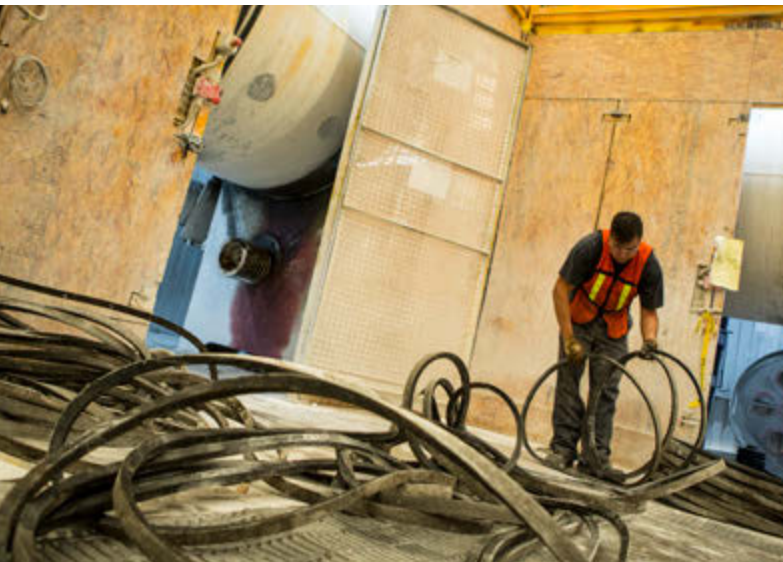


As well as its comprehensive regulations, Daltile relies on high-end machines and components to maximise the safety of its workforce – and its production process.

This is because even a short shutdown in the factory can quickly cost thousands of dollars. Daltile had to look long and hard to identify a dependable partner, and they found one ten years ago in the shape of Optibelt.

Eduardo is aware that he can only produce high-quality products if Daltile doesn’t compromise on its technical equipment.

That’s why he’s a driving force behind the switch to Optibelt. “We have a saying in Mexico: “The donkey works twice as much.” We aren’t donkeys at Daltile. That’s why we have already equipped 95 percent of our machines with Optibelt products and we want to reach the 100 percent mark soon. The German company’s range is wide and they simply supply the right solution for everything. We’re very satisfied,” concludes Eduardo.



Working together and relaxing together: community plays a big role at daltile.



” We Mexicans are very helpful, social and friendly people. And here we’re a very special community.

Eduardo Gonzalez

We have arrived at the middle of the company premises. We’re surprised to see before us a rich green football pitch with freshly painted lines. Eduardo tells us how important collaboration is at the company.

It’s like in a football team, where individuals can’t achieve much but collectively you can. Football tournaments are regular events on the works premises, and people barbecue together.



The company also holds a big party every six months where the families of the 4,000 employees are warmly welcomed. The endless conveyor belts come to a standstill and live bands set the rhythm in the factory instead. People dance, laugh, feast and enjoy improvised cinema in a factory hall, set up for movie-lovers. The company also organises its own children’s fete each year, featuring numerous attractions to delight young visitors.

” That’s the way we are at Daltile: we’re there for each other and we want everyone to be well.

Eduardo Gonzalez

The gates of the production hall open. Eduardo looks at his watch, shakes our hands to say goodbye and hurries over to some men, who have just begun a football match to mark the end of their shift.



A GREAT COMMUNITY



As we walk around the production lines with Eduardo, we’re impressed at how the endless phalanx of cogs and belts interweave. But we notice something else: the friendliness and wonderful human warmth with which we are received.

It’s natural: we’re visitors and we’re treated well. But the atmosphere is genuine. When we mention it to Eduardo, he nods.



NEWS & FACES



FACES

TOP TRAINING

The quality of Optibelt's training is outstanding. This has been confirmed once again by IHK NRW. Congratulations to all of the trainees and dual-tier students at Optibelt who made this result possible – and especially to Eckhard Neumann, who took his exams as a process mechanic in plastics and rubber technology and was chosen as the state's best trainee by IHK Düsseldorf.

DOWN UNDER ON TOP



Optibelt Australia opened a new branch in Brisbane in September 2017. With a warehouse measuring 262 square metres (primarily for Optibelt drive belts in the **optibelt VB, SK, RED POWER, BLUE POWER, KB, SUPER X-POWER** and **SUPER TX**) and its own workshop department, Optibelt Australia guarantees top support quickly for industrial clients in the Queensland and Northern South Wales regions.

NEW WAREHOUSE IN COLOMBIA

The Arntz Optibelt Group has opened a new warehouse in Colombia measuring around 1,200 square metres. It will supply belts to general industry, automotives and agriculture – and will do so much quicker than before. The new hall is in Cali, capital of Colombia's Valle del Cauca department within the 'Zona Franca del Pacifico' free trade zone. Because of its access to the Pacific, Cali is considered Colombia's 'Gateway to Asia' and a geographical hub of Latin America's Pacific integration.



The warehouse will initially be used mainly to supply customers in Colombia, but in a second phase it will also supply customers in Latin America as a whole. The new location is well situated for transport, very near to a local international airport and near to Colombia's main port, Buenaventura. Ten new jobs have been created for the new warehouse. The team in Colombia, led by Danny Mañosas, therefore now has four sales representatives for the Colombia and Central America/Caribbean regions, two office workers, and three externally employed staff for the warehouse.



optibelt AGRO POWER, CLEVER FARMER

Agricultural equipment is becoming more and more sophisticated. Farming and agricultural machinery construction are undergoing rapid technical development and constant innovation. Bigger, faster, further (as well as smaller, lighter and more efficient) is the order of the day, combined of course with maximum efficiency and durability. **optibelt AGRO POWER** facilitates these developments. Our range of drive elements requiring minimum maintenance and offering enormous durability and optimum power transmission is now complete. The special structure of **optibelt AGRO POWER** drive belts and our high-grade, fibre reinforced rubber mixtures enable them to withstand highly dynamic loads and all the rigours of long-term use.



OPTIBELT TESTS IN NEW WAYS

Optibelt opened a new test bay this summer featuring an innovative, energy-saving test process for high-performance belts drives. The new testing concept will be implemented stage by stage up until 2019. The new test bay cost around four million euros and will save 1.1 million kilowatt hours of energy each year, as well as 660 tonnes of carbon. With an area of 2,200 square metres, it offers twice as much space as its predecessor and enables series-accompanying quality tests, the testing of new developments and customer-specific tests. An environmentally friendly concept developed by Optibelt itself uses servo-controlled drives to load the belts, and continuously transmitted measured data. Faults are quickly detected and testing times reduced significantly. The implementation of this energy-saving concept was supported to the tune of €650,000 by the Federal Environmental Ministry's environmental innovation programme. This reflects the first application of an innovative technology on a large scale, one which supersedes existing processes and gives a demonstration of things to come.





COMPANY

INDUSTRY EXPERTISE – DRIVING INNOVATION

FROM PRODUCT TO SOLUTION PROVIDER

Reinhold Mühlbeyer, Chairman of the Executive Board at the Arntz Optibelt Group, talks about willingness to change, new forms of collaboration and the question of how a producing company develops to become a service provider and solution supplier.

SELLING SOLUTIONS AS A SALES CONCEPT

The demand for custom solutions is growing in every industry. Selling solutions is becoming an increasingly important part of Optibelt as well. Is the age of product orientation finally over?



REINHOLD MÜHLBEIER Not quite. After all, customers still expect constant product improvements and high quality without having to ask for them. But it is also true that those two factors in themselves do not guarantee long-term competitiveness.

Thinking more broadly is the order of the day. If you want to sell solutions, you have to know your customers and their needs, today and tomorrow. To do that, you have to analyse industries and trends and possess the strategic foresight to bring together different expertises and requirements meaningfully on the customer and supplier side. That's why selling solutions is more than just a new name for a sales strategy.

So are we moving away from pure product sales and towards offering solutions with industry and technical expertise?

REINHOLD MÜHLBEIER Yes we are, but that is not actually a new thing for Optibelt. To be precise, we've been offering comprehensive solutions for over 145 years, not just selling products. As a family-run company, Optibelt has always been forced to reinvent itself and open up new areas of business successfully. This requires high-quality products — and on that basis, genuine solutions for customers.

As we enter 'Industry 4.0', it is becoming especially clear that Optibelt has the experience and the environment to recognise and analyse the needs of whole industries and the particular problems of its customers, and then to offer them economically viable solutions. It is not without reason that this is Optibelt's key brand promise: we won't stop searching until we're able to offer the perfect solution.

SOLUTIONS ARE EXPENSIVE? BREAKDOWNS EVEN MORE SO.

"Custom solution" always sounds expensive — "Small series, complicated, cost-intensive". So how much actual economic benefit do custom solutions really bring?

REINHOLD MÜHLBEIER Let me begin by saying that a custom solution can sometimes be a relatively simple product-component system. A traditional (belt) product can be augmented by another component — such as special pulleys or drives that significantly improve or increase longevity and maintenance intervals.

Another solution lies in the production of very small series and individual parts. Building-block systems (with standardised, freely combinable components) can provide more diversification without giving buyers grey hairs. Take material handling as an example: Optibelt offers a variety of different basic belt types which can be individually configured according to the customer's profile of requirements. The number of basic components is manageable, and because there are so many possible configurations, every order can be fulfilled individually yet economically. For customers, individual solutions can often be quicker and cheaper to obtain thanks to building-block systems.

INDUSTRY KNOWLEDGE – INDIVIDUAL EXPERTISE

Many customer requirements and requests can be fulfilled very accurately using products manufactured in a modular approach. But what about solutions that are genuinely new from the outset and for which there are no building-blocks?

REINHOLD MÜHLBEIER That's right — the building-blocks of the future don't yet exist. Genuinely customised solutions are created even earlier — at the drawing board or in the mind. And when it comes to that, you can only really develop new things meaningfully if you know what the question is or what the problem in hand is. Only if you have industry expertise and you're close to your customers can you understand and even perhaps anticipate their real issues.

At Optibelt this means moving away from product-oriented research and towards customer-oriented dialogue. It is from these industry observations, discussions with customers and the latest findings from research & development that we can begin to

RENE KUNCKE'S PERSONAL DRIVE SOLUTION

Nobody likes roadworks. Rene Kuncke knows that, so he avoids breakdowns like the plague. When he reduces worn-out motorway lanes to dust using his Wirtgen W 250 i asphalt milling machine, raw power comes into play. No fewer than four low-vibration



optibelt 5V KB kraftbands drive the machine relentlessly onwards – with significantly fewer maintenance intervals.

No downtime thanks to
optibelt 5V KB



synthesise marketable solutions, often in the form of development partnerships. It may cost more time for everyone at the beginning, but in the end it's a better fit and a better result: for instance, if the design of a drive is much more compact, powerful and/or lower-maintenance, resulting in a unique selling point which drives sales.

THE OPTIBELT RECIPE

So, genuine solutions are based one way or the other on creativity, openness and innovation. How does Optibelt maintain its power to innovate?

REINHOLD MÜHLBEYER You can't force innovation, but you can do your homework – looking, watching and listening, firstly to customers, with all their requirements and ideas, and secondly to your own processes. Just by using increasingly accurate simulation models and more detailed measured data, we can continuously generate ideas on how to improve designs and materials. Incidentally, the same applies to the flow of value at Optibelt: if the process from taking down the order all the way to controlling the production system is good enough, then custom solutions become easier and cheaper to make. Optibelt has created some very modern structures and workflows in this area recently, from which our customers are benefiting considerably.

That sounds like a long-term strategy which offers customers and ourselves specific benefits.

REINHOLD MÜHLBEYER That's right. Understanding your customer exactly, possessing the industry expertise and continuously improving your processes are all just the beginning. You have to continue to pioneer new approaches, try things out and, where necessary, switch to a new approach. You have to buy in knowledge and bring in experts if it benefits the customer. In recent years it has been essential for Optibelt to bring in the necessary expertise in the fields of clutches, special pulleys and subassemblies, sometimes by means of tactical acquisitions. These are all things which we can go about doing with a lot of clarity because of being independent of any group – and also because we always look for customer benefit and not for quarterly results.

Mr Mühlbeyer, thank you very much for talking to us.



...
**MORE THAN 261 MILLION LITRES OF TEQUILA
ARE PRODUCED IN MEXICO EACH YEAR?**

According to a 1978 regulation, only agave drinks produced in the region surrounding the city of Tequila may call themselves Tequila.



DID YOU KNOW THAT



...
**MEXICO AND LUXEMBOURG
ARE THE ONLY COUNTRIES IN
THE WORLD WHOSE NAMES
CONTAIN THE LETTER X?**

...
**HOT CHOCOLATE WAS
THE SACRED DRINK OF
THE AZTECS?**



...
**THE FIRST COCOA TREES WERE
CULTIVATED BY THE MAYA IN
MEXICO AROUND 1000 BCE?**

U AT... ..

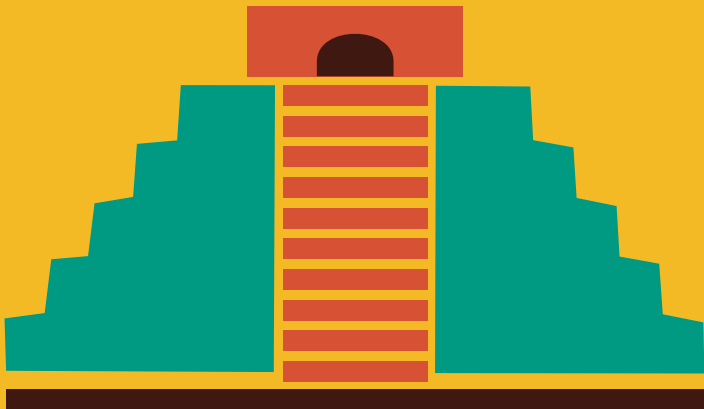


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**THE CHIHUAHUA –
THE WORLD’S
SMALLEST DOG –
IS NAMED AFTER A
MEXICAN CITY?**



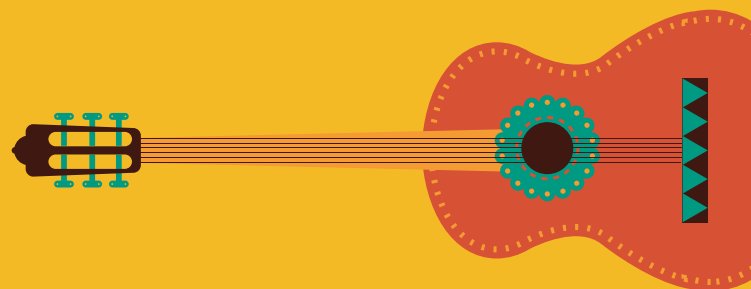
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**THE BIGGEST PYRAMID IN THE
WORLD IS IN MEXICO?**

It is also the biggest monument ever built.



...
**MEXICO CITY SINKS BY 15 TO
30 CENTIMETRES EACH YEAR?**

The reason: Mexico City was built on a dried-up lake, which means an awful lot of mud. As the groundwater is used up, the mass of the ground below the city shrinks, causing it to sink steadily.





Eloy Aguilera,
Sales Director Mexico

JUST BETWEEN US...

YOU'VE BEEN TO GERMANY A FEW TIMES SINCE YOU STARTED WORKING FOR OPTIBELT. TELL US HONESTLY: AS A MEXICAN, WHAT DO YOU THINK OF US?

A lot of things are different there than they are here in Mexico – not just the weather and the food (laughs). Everything is very orderly and accurate in Germany. Things are more disciplined on the roads, and there are precise rules and regulations for everything. That's great in a lot of areas. It isn't for nothing that a lot of products made in Germany are considered the best in their industries – like Optibelt. You work on every single detail, meticulously and with unshakable perfectionism, for as long as it takes to achieve the best possible end-result. It's impressive. But sometimes in Germany I rather miss the sense of ease which is everywhere here in Mexico.

HOW DOES THAT SENSE OF EASE EXPRESS ITSELF?

Everywhere and at all times. When we're with family and friends, and at work. In most of Mexico's companies there's a friendly relationship between workers and often with managers. We're serious about our work but we laugh a lot as well. It's good for the mind and the body.

Perhaps that's why the World Happiness Report places us among the 15 happiest nations in the world, ahead of the USA and far ahead of Germany.

HOW MUCH OF A ROLE DOES FOOD PLAY IN THAT?

In Mexico we have a saying: "Full stomach, happy heart." That shows you just how important food is to us. We enjoy every bite, we celebrate meals and the company we eat them in.

IMAGINE YOU LIVED IN A WORLD WITHOUT BELTS: WHAT WOULD YOU DO FOR A LIVING?

Not a nice thought, because it would be a world where nothing worked! But okay: I think I would be a showman, entertaining people on Mexico's stages, getting them to laugh and making their hearts dance to Mexican music.

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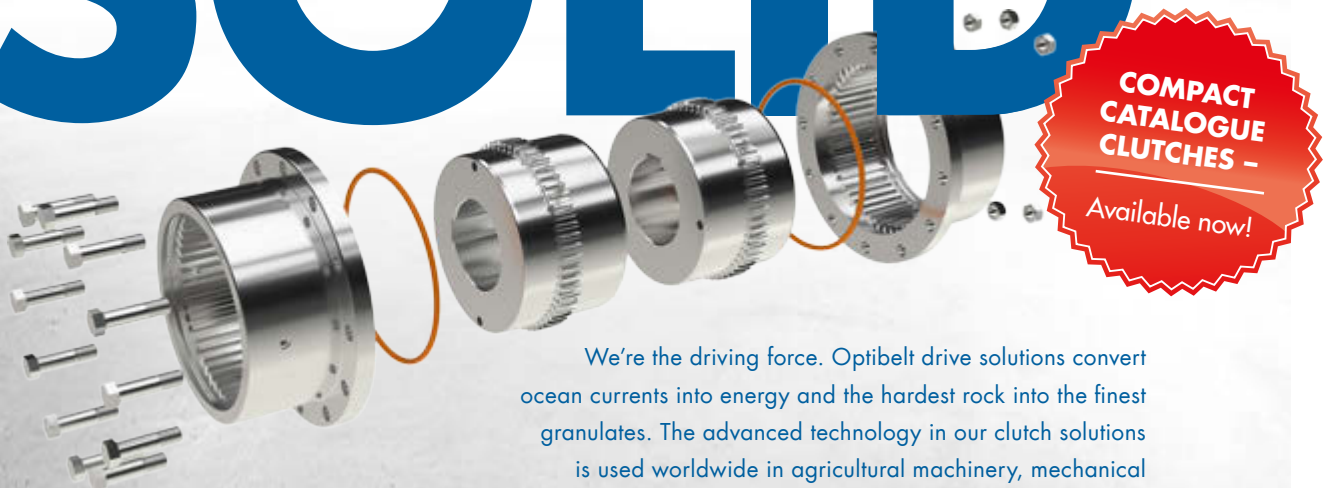


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