



TECHNICAL TALKS

We need to talk

5/5/2022 , 5 min.

In the face of mass cancellation of the world's trade shows and the ongoing corona crisis, KHS' Technical Talks have established themselves as an effective and future-proof tool for entering into direct dialog with the customer. Armin Wille, head of Service Sales, gives us an insight and talks of the future plans KHS has for this format.

PHOTOGRAPHY / ILLUSTRATION

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When at the beginning of 2020 the corona pandemic hit us, with all of the contact and travel restrictions it brought with it, companies and their personnel began looking for creative ways of staying in touch with their colleagues, customers and

suppliers around the globe. Thanks to modern cooperation and communication programs, working from home and virtual meetings formed a replacement for elaborate business trips and poorly ventilated conference rooms. In addition to phone and email, new digital formats made it possible to maintain regular contact and exchange information, knowledge and ideas.

KHS very quickly discovered this format for itself and subsequently devised its series of Technical Talks that closely emulate real discussions with customers in digital form. The idea gradually developed further from the initial events that informed customers about topics such as the discontinuation of components and new service products for KHS Kisters packaging machines. Webinars evolved as 'live' events, where a TV camera takes the place of the participants. In these sessions lasting 60 minutes, KHS experts present various products and conversions, focusing on the respective highlights and benefits thereof. In several feedback sessions an intensive exchange of information with customers is then sought in order to clarify specific requirements and directly answer any questions in talks – or digital chats. “Our virtual events have long ceased to be an ‘emergency measure’ limited to the pandemic,” smiles Armin Wille, head of Service Sales at KHS. “Rather, they form an independent platform that keeps its options open when it comes to presenting our customers with attractive issues that go above and beyond service. We’re looking very closely at where exactly we’ll be establishing this in the future.”



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On camera: Armin Wille (right) and his colleague Werner Ageling from Kleve talk about packaging alternatives in their very own TV studio.

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High relevance

One pertinent topic at the moment is environmentally-friendly packaging. This concerns ways of reducing carbon emissions or the conversions needed to implement the EU's Single-Use Plastics Directive, among other things. Issues that are of crucial importance to the customers themselves are integrated into the event to ensure that a genuine dialog can develop. This includes part discontinuation across the entire KHS portfolio, for instance, the technical solutions to which are directly and jointly discussed where possible.

»In view of the great interest shown by our customers, we're going to successively expand our program of technical talks.«

Armin Wille

Head of Service Sales, KHS Dortmund

The concept has been designed for global use right from the start, whereby the individual events take place regionally owing to the time difference. "We're at our desks at a time that suits our customers; this is absolutely no problem at all," states Wille. Technical Talks have already been held with PepsiCo in Asia, for San Miguel in the Philippines, with Heineken in Nigeria and in - Brazil for the entire South American Coca-Cola network, for example.



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Together with his team, managing director of KHS Brazil Franz Beissel has also established KHS' Technical Talks quickly and professionally in South America.

Talks in South America

The language barrier is more of a problem, he says. “You always assume that everyone speaks English – but is it good enough to be able to converse fluently and clarify more complex issues?” KHS had to find its own answer to this in Brazil where the idea from KHS headquarters was adopted, realized independently and integrated into the company’s extensive range of digital services. The largest state in South America is traditionally much more digital than many other regions in the world and for the local KHS production sites online training courses or even online line optimization have long been a standard procedure. “Thanks to the great groundwork done by our colleagues at the main company in Dortmund, we were able to establish our Technical Talks in South America quickly and professionally,” says Franz Beissel happily, managing director of KHS Brazil. “Even when times are difficult, our customers expect us to talk to them ‘personally’ and discuss current topics directly with them in their mother tongue. In this respect, our digital customer meetings are a welcome means of staying in contact.”

“The team in Brazil is doing excellent work and has really accomplished something regarding the standard of our talks,” says Wille, returning the compliment. “This has encouraged us to train colleagues in other regions so that they can stage Technical Talks themselves in their own national language. The support we provide here from headquarters chiefly focuses on planning and coordination. We also offer various courses that train local employees to lose their inhibitions in front of the camera – with such a big audience, it’s understandable if you’re a little nervous.”

Success story

Wille is particularly proud of the very positive feedback KHS has had. It shows him that the format is well received – both with regard to its duration and its quality. The most pressing question for lots of participants is where and when they can sign up for the next event! “Everyone agrees that talking to acknowledged experts in real time is of huge benefit – both to our customers and to KHS.”

Since the launch about two years ago, over 40 Technical Talks have taken place. “In view of the great interest we’ve had, we’re now going to successively expand the program.”

KHS also plans to further extend coverage by staging a targeted campaign on online and social media channels. There’ll be no restrictions regarding the circle of participants: the focus isn’t on segregating interest groups but on running a wide-ranging platform for presenting and exchanging information in digital form.

Any further questions?

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