



## FINDING SOLUTIONS TOGETHER

One of the most common reasons why projects encounter difficulties is a lack of trust between those involved. This is where employees of the Schnitzer Group can step in and put the situation and communication back on track.

Projects can stall because the schedule was perhaps too ambitious, or there were technical issues. But often there are delays because the agreements made were vague or were simply not followed. What starts off as a minor misunderstanding can develop into a real crisis where it turns into a blame game and the focus is on protecting one's own reputation,

rather than the project itself. Specialists of the Schnitzer Group are called in to deal with such tricky situations.

„Part of our philosophy is to cultivate a culture of trust within the Schnitzer Group, which involves forgiving colleagues for their mistakes and correcting these together, as well as tapping into the knowledge

of the entire team to work out solutions,“ explains Peter Schnitzer. „For years, practicing this philosophy has come naturally to us as a relatively small unit, but we regularly encounter a completely different culture in a company or even in only one department.“ Our job here is to apply part of our second nature to difficult projects.



Employees of the Schnitzer Group meet with the project participants, one by one at first, to reconstruct the course so far and find out why the objective has not yet been achieved. They later hold meetings with all members of the project team and look for the right solutions together. Peter Schnitzer says: „We take on the role of a mediator or catalyst, but it often suffices to lead a dialog as an impartial moderator so that information can flow with specific goals in mind.“ This brings calm back to the project, and new milestones are set.

When working as external employees on the customer's project team, the Schnitzer Group experts actively integrate with the relevant organizational aspects of the project. Understanding the customer's requirements, demonstrating the necessary expertise and being willing to

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Dear Readers,

It is really important to us that we work

together as a team whose members trust and support each other in their project-related work. This requires us to constantly exchange information, offer our expertise to colleagues and ask them to share theirs. As we conduct projects not only in Germany, but also all around the world, we have set up a new company-wide technical platform for digital communications and information. Now we can share experiences more quickly and access a central knowledge database using SharePoint. If someone needs help with a project, they can ask the relevant expert for advice. This is an excellent way to tap into the collective intelligence of the Schnitzer Group.

Yours,

Peter Schnitzer



# NOT ALL COLLABORATIONS ARE STRONG

A leading international company for automotive interiors is awarded the contract to produce laminated PVC I boards and door panels for various type series of an OEM. A subcontractor is commissioned to provide the machines and operating resources to manufacture the components. To be able to handle the volume of the contract and provide a reliable global service, the subcontractor must, however, find a cooperation partner. Besides the fact that not all aspects of this collaboration are transparent, the interplay with tier 1 also proves difficult. While valued trust is lost mainly due to a lack of communication, the need for project management on all sides is identified as the main problem. When the cooperation partners can no longer meet agreed deadlines, and tier 1, in turn, fails to reach agreed milestones, the working relationship is jeopardized and the entire project hangs in the balance. Luckily, a project manager from tier 1 manages to avoid a complete breakdown as he

identifies potential for internal improvement and brings on board the Schnitzer Group as a strong partner. „First, we had to gain a full overview of all projects and create a reliable timeline,” says Christian Locher, project manager at the Schnitzer Group. „It was also important to improve communication in order to promote mutual understanding.” It helped that the Schnitzer expert had not been involved in past events and succeeded in remaining impartial. This quickly resulted in an informal atmosphere enabling the Schnitzer Group to manage the flow of information, tasks and issues to be deescalated without any red tape. Moreover, cyclical on-site controlling helps assess deadlines for operating resources and systems in terms of their feasibility. „Agreed timelines became robust again, and we were able to provide the end customer with reliable information,” explains Mr Locher. „We have, therefore, rebuilt the trust of everyone involved in their working relationship.”

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provide comprehensive on-site support are the basis for achieving a trusting working relationship with customers. And this is greatly appreciated, as we see from the latest customer satisfaction analysis that was conducted by an external provider using the German school grading system (where 1 is the best grade). The average

grades for the Schnitzer Group were 1.25 for satisfaction with collaboration, 1.5 for practical implementation, and 1.35 for flexibility in projects. „The positive feedback from our customers motivates and also obligates us to continue to cultivate our culture of close collaboration,” says Peter Schnitzer.



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# SUCCESSFUL PROJECTS NEED MORE THAN SOLID PLANNING

At first, it sounded like a run-of-the-mill inquiry to Andreas Tobschirbel of the Schnitzer Group. The company wanted to relocate its production environment to a supplier, without any disruption to the provision of services to the customer. The timeframe also seemed feasible as a good five months were planned for transferring production. But even after the first few discussions, it became clear that this would be a large-scale project. After all, 65 tools, 700 operating resources and five production facilities needed to be relocated, never mind the task of defining complex commercial processes and integrating customers and suppliers in the electronic data exchange.

Following detailed project planning, the core team in charge of relocation got to work. Pre-production had ensured that there would be no supply shortages when machines were dismantled and temporarily non-operational. Once equipment was disassembled, the close to 100-ton shipments could get underway – until one single permit that had been incorrectly issued brought the move to a standstill. The consequence of this? The entire authorization procedure had to start from scratch and was expected to

take five weeks. There was no way that production would start again on time. So Andreas Tobschirbel and his colleagues decided to adjust the tools to be able to use them on the supplier's existing machines. But this plan also failed initially due to bureaucracy or, more precisely, due to unpaid bills. „We came to the con-

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clusion that the delays were not so much a result of an inability to act," says Mr Tobschirbel. „We are aware that good communication can be a rare commodity in project teams. But what we hadn't experienced before was that plans and deadlines are postponed or simply ignored without having been discussed.“ ☺



## NATIVE SPEAKERS IN CHINA FOR SUPPLIER QUALIFICATION

*More and more customers, in particular Chinese companies, are asking Schnitzer in China to provide supplier qualification services. For this reason, employees of the Shenyang subsidiary are taking an internal advanced training program, set up according to German standards, in project and quality management. „Due to language barriers with local suppliers, it is more efficient to use Chinese employees to ensure that the required standards are implemented quickly,” explains Stefan Mangold of the Schnitzer Group Shanghai who manages the training. „This allows us to be more efficient and continue to boost customer satisfaction.“ ☺*



**SCHNITZER GROUP  
FOUNDS COMPANY  
IN THE US**

Since January 2015, the Schnitzer Group has been serving its customers on-site on the north-American market. Schnitzer Group USA Inc. offers customers systemic project management services from the new location in Charlotte in the US state of North Carolina. The founding of what is now the fourth foreign company is testimony to the Schnitzer Group's consistent expansion strategy and strengthens our market presence on the American continent. The close network within the Schnitzer Group helps provide even more successful support for global customer projects. ☺



# FRANCONIANS RISING HIGH

The town of Weißenburg with 20,000 inhabitants in the Franconian lake district also happens to be where a Schnitzer Group office is located. It was founded 13 years ago by Klaus Rößler and Peter Schnitzer after they met on joint projects and regularly worked together afterwards. Weißenburg is located near plants such as Audi and BMW and their major suppliers. The plastics centers in Schweinfurt and Würzburg are also nearby.

Gernot Tutsch was the first employee in the Middle Franconian office in 2007 and played a significant role in setting it up. Peter Lehmeier initially assisted both of his colleagues as a university student,

and he now works for the Schnitzer Group as a plastics engineer in various development and systemic projects. Andreas Helfenberger, the fourth link in the chain, has extensive experience in the automotive and non-automotive sectors. So what do these men have in common, apart from being Weißenburgers through and through? Speaking on behalf of the quartet, Klaus Rößler says that „we feel a strong connection to automobiles and plastics, and we are passionate about working with technology and production methods. And – all four of us are endurance sports enthusiasts and always looking for new challenges, outside the workplace too.“ ☺



# A STRONG TEAM

Whether they are playing sports or working on a complex customer project, Andreas Helfenberger and Peter Lehmeier are a force to be reckoned with in the Weißenburg office. Both men were born here and trained as tool-makers. With a degree in plastics and elastomer engineering, Peter Lehmeier has been managing both development and systemic projects since he joined the Schnitzer Group three years ago. Andreas Helfenberger joined the team in 2013 and is mainly involved in the areas of systemic project management. ☺



## SCHNITZER GROUP

**Schnitzer  
Anlauf- und Projekt-  
management GmbH**  
Paradiesstrasse 4  
88239 Wangen im Allgäu  
Germany  
Phone +49 7522 7079 69-0

**Schnitzer  
International Swiss GmbH**  
c/o OBT AG  
Hardturmstrasse 120  
8005 Zurich, Switzerland  
Phone +41 43 818-2536

**Schnitzer  
Consulting Shanghai Co. Ltd**  
c/o German Centre, Pudong  
88 Keyuan Road  
Zhangjiang High-Tech Park  
201203 Shanghai, China  
Phone +86 21 2898-6184

**Schnitzer Group USA, Inc.**  
4341 Triple Crown Dr. SW  
Concord, NC 28027 (Charlotte)

info@schnitzer-group.com  
www.schnitzer-group.com