Digitalising supply chains
Waves in the construction industry
Lounging with soft foam

READY TO TAKE ON THE FUTURE

GIVING BACK • A BOX FULL OF FISH
We live in interesting times. Never before have the tosses and turns in the world economy been as fast as they are today. New technologies are invented, and markets are disrupted.

At Walki, we are constantly looking for new ways to help give added value to our customers. This year we have implemented and completed several projects that have enhanced our capabilities to serve our customers even better.

The sizable project of building a new production line in Valkeakoski is now completed, and customers have received the first deliveries. Thanks to the latest technology in the production line, we are able to meticulously control the quality of the runs. For Walki’s customers, the new production line means even more consistent quality and more diverse products. And for employees, the investment takes work safety to a new level.

Making our solutions better is constantly on our mind. Testing new products inevitably takes a little toll on our deliveries as it means time away from normal runs. That is why we have upgraded our pilot plant, so we can test new ideas without causing any disturbance in our deliveries to customers.

Continuous research and development is a lifelong condition in the quest to make as environmental-friendly products as possible but also to make sure our customers get the features they want.

A big part of the inspiration to improve our products – or come up with completely new concepts – comes from our customers and suppliers. In this sense, R&D is really about collaboration. The idea for our unique Walki®Active solution is one example that we take cues from the market.

Product development is important, but equally important is to look at other processes, too. We have turned to Jonas Kjellberg, one of Skype’s founders and an expert on digitalisation, for inspiration on how to digitalise our supply chain. Excellent products are not enough; we also seek efficiency and the best quality for our customers in our processes. A digital supply chain saves time and money for everyone.

I hope you enjoy our magazine, filled with stories on how we use technology for the environment’s and our customers’ best interest.

Leif Frilund
CEO
Last year, when Lysipack, provider of industrial printing for flexible packaging, was on the lookout for a reliable partner with expertise in packaging laminates, its search stopped at Walki. Both the companies partnered to create innovative solutions that would help improve the quality of packaging in the food and retail segment.

“We have the right packaging and they have the right printing technologies and the right contact for end-users of the products. This makes our partnership unique,” says Pierrick Girard, Managing Director for Walki SAS, the sales office in France.

What also strikes a chord is their approach to stay efficient. It helps them achieve the most competitive pricing in a price sensitive business. “The process from the use of raw material to the delivery of printed material to the final customer goes through a very lean operation to maximize the value of each day,” says Girard. The order-to-delivery process is also fastened due to the location of Walki’s plant at Wroclaw, Poland – which is close to the growing industrial packaging businesses in Europe. For instance, deliveries from Poland to France can be made in less than three days.

At Lysipack they are impressed. “The new materials have been technically improved straight away and we are happy with the quality of operations,” says Laurent Charvin, CEO, Lysipack.

The fact that raw material is close at hand minimizes lead times for customers without compromising on quality. “We give them good service and they give good service to their customers,” notes Girard.

It doesn’t stop at good service though. Lysipack and Walki’s collaboration has paved way for unique innovations, particularly in one market. “The butter wrap market is already developed, so we are now developing the cheese wrap market with Lysipack,” says Girard.

Aromatised cheese is a case in point. Girard explains that the cheese packaging so far had aluminium (ALU) foil both outside and inside. But the end-user wanted a change in structure to avoid direct food contact with ALU. So Walki developed a new structure (Walki® Foil 82 T), which used ALU externally and Polyethylene (PE) on the inside. Now, Walki supplies the new structure to Lysipack, which then prints it for the end-user.

New breathable packaging has also been launched to allow new features, i.e., using aluminium foil outside for branding, combined with paper and specific plastic inside, which stays in direct contact with soft cheeses like ‘brie’. This unique plastic allows the cheese to ‘breathe’ - meaning it allows the exchange of vapour between crust cheese and paper and blocks liquid water to keep the integrity of the packaging. In doing so, the soft cheese retains its white coloured crust without yellowing, which happens when there is a lack of vapour exchange.

Another demand, Girard says, came from a blue cheese producer. “The end user changed the tray shape in which the cheese is placed and asked us to develop, with Lysipack, a high sealing-strength lid,” he explains. The result? The next generation lid is now in the making.

To make sure no piece of information falls through the cracks, both the companies take efforts to meticulously follow the communication trail. They keep all the channels of communication open, and relationship between teams, friendly. “We work to achieve our common goals and, in the process, we are growing together,” Girard points out.

Charvin agrees. He believes the communication between the companies has been extremely positive.

The benefits of this partnership are aplenty. Most importantly, it brings together varied skills – technical, sales, operational, and supply chain – that make a powerful combination, and a magical partnership.
Proper building structures ensures that there will be no moisture problems in the future.

Walki will participate in the BAU fair in Munich in January 2017 for the first time. BAU gathers everyone involved in the international community of planning, building and designing buildings. More than 250,000 visitors come every year from all corners of the world to see what the 2000 exhibitors from more than 42 countries have to offer. Come check out our membrane and facing solutions for the construction business at stand A3 523!

A BREATHABLE REMEDY

Buildings, just like humans, need regular health check-ups. While some symptoms require only a nip and tuck, others - like structural dampness - call for closer inspection. Find out why and how Walki’s new solution is making waves in the construction industry.

The idea came from the market,” says Heikki Korpela, Business Development Director, Technology & Innovations at Walki. “There was a need to avoid structural damages to the buildings caused due to dampness. It was the main reason why we started,” he says.

Korpela’s right. Buildings are falling prey to moisture and mould. A report by World Health Organization (WHO) states that 75–86% of all problems with building constructions are caused by moisture. Trapped moisture, either due to external intrusion or condensation from within, causes dampness, which further damages structures.

Walki’s unique solution, Walki® Active, is an answer to this very problem. It’s a dual-purpose, vapour variable membrane made from PP non-woven and a functional film layer. Simply put, it is a membrane that helps increase the life span of buildings.

“In many countries, plastic films or other tight vapour barriers are commonly used as moisture barriers, and that triggers moisture challenges,” says Korpela. Designed to adapt to the environmental and climatic changes, Walki® Active’s key feature is its variable water vapour barrier property.

“When the air humidity is low, the vapour barrier property of our laminate is high, and when the humidity is high, the barrier is low,” explains Korpela. Which means during winter, when it is warmer indoors than outdoors, vapour tends to flow from inside to outside but the functional film layer acts as a vapour barrier. This ensures that virtually no vapour can flow into the structure during cold weather. During summer, on the other hand, the polyethylene-copolymer film opens to allow water vapour to flow from outside to inside.

“By using this membrane, we can ensure moisture does not condense in the insulation layers inside the buildings,” Korpela points out. There is thus merit in introducing this solution early on. After all, fixing moisture problem after construction is a lot more expensive and cumbersome than correcting a drawing at the design stage. This is why Walki’s new offering promises to be a more cost effective and sustainable option.

The journey so far has been both demanding and interesting, says Korpela, since the window to develop the product was quite narrow and requirements were high. Within a short span of time, several factors had to be considered. “We had to map the polymers that would fulfil the water vapour barrier requirements, find suitable polymer structures that will enable us to produce the product, and make minor adjustments to our machinery to make it suitable for production,” lists Korpela.

But the end product has been worth the time and effort. Korpela believes Walki® Active has immense potential in the booming construction industry, which is looking for ways to improve the quality and lifespan of buildings. Having started with Germany, Walki intends to expand to other European markets with similar demands. A dose of good health is finally available.

 Proper building structures ensures that there will be no moisture problems in the future.
You have just driven back from work and you’re relaxing on your favourite sofa. Soft foam is a crucial element in these simple everyday actions. Your car is filled with it, your sofa is probably padded with it, and it softens the mattress on your bed. It might even be in your shoes.

Chances are that the foam has been made using a Walki product, since Walki is one of the most experienced global suppliers of soft foam process liner materials. Customers across Europe, North and South America, and increasingly in Asia and Africa, turn to Walki on the basis of its experience and reliability in the field.

“Productivity, environmental friendliness, and runnability are the most important factors,” explains Arno Wolff, Vice president Sales and Marketing Technical Products. “We offer these as well as a long and reliable record of experience in the business, a variety of high value solutions, and the ability to help customers cut costs in their production process.”

Soft foam is produced by injecting polyurethane onto the inner walls of foaming tunnels, each up to 60 metres in length.

The even quality that results from using Walki®PeelFoam to line the walls ensures trouble-free foam production, makes it easier to keep foaming lines clean, runs more easily on a polyurethane line than when using standard polyethylene films and conventional process paper, and keeps the foam free of moisture and dirt when the foam is in stock.

With Walki®Peel Foam, paper is peeled off when the foam block is allowed to set or ‘cure’. The polymer layer is retained, continuing to protect the block from cracking, improving the foam quality, or other damage during storage.

Walki-Foam products respond to the need of the customer to eliminate waste of chemicals, which account for as much as 97% of production costs.

“Our solutions can reduce waste in the production process by as much as 3%,” says Wolff. The solution eliminates web breaks which are chemical leaks that lead to process interruptions. After peeling, the paper can either be recycled or resold, so the customer gets added value in the form of potential extra profit.

“We have been offering the best solution for this production process for more than the last three decades,” says Wolff. “We use the best possible paper from Scandinavia that’s perfectly suited for this product. We are not trying to cut costs by using anything but the very best quality. That’s because product performance is the main impact factor for customers.”

Walki-Foam’s production is based at the group’s Valkeakoski and Pietarsaari plants in Finland with additional back up in Germany. “Our pilot machine allows us to develop new products, such as those with flame retardant qualities and polyethylene terphthalatate, or P.E.T. film,” says Wolff. “The most important aspect for customers is overall cost, but it’s also necessary to meet the safety regulation demands and environmental considerations.”

Walki-Foam products are highly competitive in the soft foam process liner market. They are not trying to cut costs by using anything but the very best quality. That’s because product performance is the main impact factor for customers.

Walki-Foam is the choice for the most demanding applications, such as those for flame retardant qualities and polyethylene terphthalatate, or P.E.T. film. The most important aspect for customers is overall cost, but it’s also necessary to meet the safety regulation demands and environmental considerations.

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Walki’s solutions for the production of soft foam used, for example, in furniture offer optimal reliability and productivity.

**FLEXIBLE PRODUCT LINE**
Walki’s standard soft foam carrier materials come in two main groups, Walki®Cover Foam and Walki®Peel Foam, designed to meet the specific needs of different producers.

Walki®Cover Foam is a non-peelable variety gives especially good resistance to the chemicals used in foam production, thus lowering the amount of chemical consumption, keeping machinery clean and in turn cutting production costs. This type has a variant in which the polymer coating has been added to increase the evenness of the foam. Walki®Peel Foam also has a highly heat-resistant polymer layer variant and improves the evenness of the foam block density, offers optimal paper strength and stiffness, eased machinery cleaning, and provides extra protection of the foam blocks during storage.

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**INNOVATION**

**What’s up in China?**

Walk over 15 years of prior experience in paper and packaging industry, Sandy Xian joined Walki in 2013. As China Sales Head, she helps Walki build a genuine and strong bond with the Chinese business partners.

“Do you like your work at Walki, a Finnish-origin company?”

For most of my career, I’ve worked with foreign-owned enterprises in China. Before joining Walki, I was employed by another Finnish company. My Finnish colleagues are always open-minded and helpful, with responsible and performance-oriented attitudes, rather than office-theoretical. They respect their Chinese years and background experience. So, I have integrated into Walki’s corporate culture quite smoothly. I am also fond of the flexibility and what it is like to do business in this international arena.

“China’s economy has been slowing down. How do you see this challenge for the business? I would rather say that this also applies to other areas. Nowadays, both our customers and competitors are striving to avoid redundancies and reduce production costs. When every player works more proficiently, it is our duty to develop new products and solutions for its supply chain. Many small and medium-sized manufacturers are likely to be cut out in the competition and are not that popular here. However, Walki is one of the leading players in China’s paper packaging industry. We are likely expected highly competitively and provide high-quality products for large-scale and quality-driven clients.

So, what will you suggest Walki to further enhance its competitive advantage?

I think it is crucial to continuously attract and achieve our market competitive advantage in the setting of better cost control. The solution needs to be simple and highly responsive to the dynamic change in the Chinese market. As far as possible, the company may further exploit its competitive advantage in R&D to ensure the added value of our solutions can always fascinate quality-oriented clients.

Walki’s Chinese factory is based in Changshu. Do you have anything to say about that city?

It’s a city rich in Chinese cultural heritage, which makes it rather different from other places. Shanghai is also well-known for its busy industry and a large clothing trade centre is located here. We are invited to shop there and then enjoy your relaxation time at a spa.

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RFID is taking the ever-important Apparel market by storm

Retail apparel is the driving force behind the emerging RAIN RFID market as the leading retailers have long been requesting for more sustainable RAIN RFID tags.

In practice this means that inlay manufacturers can make use of the etched RFID antenna on their label and tag structures. This is highly relevant since the etching process is a dirty chemical process that is fighting an uphill battle in getting manufacturing licenses, while the Walki 4E antenna production process is clean with no hazardous chemicals at all.

Already several billions RAIN RFID tags have been sold to the retail market and RAIN RFID business is expected to grow 30% per year. One of the global pioneers in providing RFID solutions to the apparel market is SML which is collaborating closely with Walki to usher in a completely new era.

Walki 4E antenna technology is the leading technology of choice for sustainable and eco-friendly RAIN RFID (UHF) fiber-based antennas, enabling both Internet of Things (IoT) solutions and true visibility in retail operations. As retail stores and businesses keep targeting omni-channel operations, these features are in high demand throughout the industry.

Hit the Ground Running

Philip Calderbank, RFID Consultant for SML, comments that Walki 4E technology is giving SML the means to expand its business profitably in a very sustainable way. The recent cooperation with Walki has proven that Walki 4E paper antenna product has now matured to a point where it can become a real game changer on RAIN RFID markets.

"We started testing in late 2015 and those tests are ongoing. So far, we have been able to demonstrate that the technology works to customer’s satisfaction on a thin label, so we now want to see how the Walki RFID inlay will work on thicker brand identification labels as well as in a fabric label — what we have today is a strong eco-product with a very thin label."

Hangtag — with only two thicker paper layers — and an antenna/substrate that uses no PET at all. We soon hope to be able to prove that the Walki technology will work in kinds of labels and on all types of products.

Sipi Savolainen from Walki says that working side by side with SML in this project has been a very rewarding experience.

"It is a wonderful opportunity to work this closely with one of the world’s biggest players on the global RAIN RFID market," says Savolainen. "In fact, SML is one of the largest apparel branding and packaging companies in the world, with operations in 30 countries and as many as 21 production sites. Furthermore, SML has five product development centers which make sure that the company keeps its eye on the horizon."

Stand by for Launch

Philip Calderbank recently visited Walki 4E manufacturing unit in Pietarsaari, Finland, and was quite impressed by what he saw. He fully expects that — while there are still some hurdles to cross with regards to the test phase — the new product will be launched in late 2016. He points out that incorporating RFID into the garment itself opens up new and exciting opportunities for development.

"A more wearable RFID element certainly provides additional approaches," he says. Among key issues here are less prevention and brand authentication as RFID is woven into the garment, it becomes a part of actual item identification.

"For us, this is clearly a new, important application to explore."

The efficiency of the new system makes it possible to reduce the amount of glue, which is better for the environment as we will use fewer raw materials to achieve the same barrier properties. Less glue also means less moisture is applied to the board, thereby reducing swelling and shrinking of the fibres, resulting in improved flatness, he says, adding that the new drives and Siemens S7 logic will also significantly boost production speed.

Erdmann says the decision to upgrade the glue laminating machine came about as a result of growing customer demand.

"In recent years, we’ve seen demand for glue laminated products increase considerably — especially from our Walki® Pack Metalex and Walki® Pack Tray and Walki® Pack Tray Lid product ranges," he explains. "Both are manufactured in the same machine and will benefit from the new, upgraded process."
DARE TO SHARE

Everyone is looking into digitalisation and disruption these days. Walki sought inspiration from serial entrepreneur Jonas Kjellberg.

The only thing that is certain is that the technical development is just gaining more speed all the time.

Digitalisation is on everyone’s lips right now. Every entrepreneur is thinking fervently on how to disrupt their industry, and big companies that have been around for several hundred years are also hopping on the digital train.

According to Jonas Kjellberg, there are two ways to make use of digitalisation:

1. You can either improve existing systems by making them digital, or you can introduce a completely new way of doing things with the help of digitalisation.

2. Disruptive change. Digitalisation is on everyone’s lips right now. Every entrepreneur is thinking feverishly on how to disrupt their industry, and big companies that have been around for several hundred years are also hopping on the digital train.

According to Jonas Kjellberg, there are two ways to make use of digitalisation:

- You can either improve existing systems by making them digital, or you can introduce a completely new way of doing things with the help of digitalisation.
- Disruptive change.

According to Kjellberg, one solution for big companies is to let a small part of your company go all start-up banana, while you make sure that other operations lay on solid ground.

"Think of a big tanker vessel navigating in unknown waters. You cannot do any fast turns because then you might run into trouble. But if in front your tanker you can have several smaller speedboats racing at an incredible speed. If one or two crashes, it will have no impact on your big vessel."

Despite the challenges, innovation has never been easier to implement. There’s code available thanks to open source, and expensive hardware for implementing Internet of Things", he says.

What is more difficult to change is the attitude and way of working. Bigger companies usually do their research and development activities behind locked doors, and no one is given a sneak preview before the product is ready to be launched. Kjellberg encourages a new approach.

"There are lots of great start-up companies, collaborate with them instead of trying to invent the wheel all over again by yourself. In today’s world success starts with sharing."

Digitalisation at Walki

Digitalisation is today present in all areas of the supply chain. Making sure that Walki’s supply chain makes the best use of digitalisation lies on Jani Peltoniemi’s shoulders.

What kind of benefits does digitalisation give customers?

Digitalisation will have a revolutionary role when it comes to re-planning of information flows. The target is to streamline the information process starting from demand recognition all the way to the payment of the goods. By planning information flows together with our customers we can achieve faster, more reliable and lower total costs of supply.

What will Walki’s supply chain look like in the future?

It will be constantly changing. Five-year development plans cannot be done due to the speed at which digitalisation is developing. But for sure Walki’s supply chain will be more agile, adaptive and better supported by information management tools compared to today. Our ideology is to take multiple small steps instead of putting all of our efforts into single large projects.

What are the challenges in the digitalisation process?

One needs to bear in mind that digitalisation itself does not solve any problems. It is very easy to succumb to “installing a new software” and hope that it does the trick automatically. You still have to be in the driver’s seat and do the actual problem solving. One challenge is the difficulty to choose the right partners. Getting everyone committed when there is no clear picture of the end result or payback is another challenge. It’s all very complex. A good dose of courage and collaboration is needed to make it work.

Jonas Kjellberg

Jonas Kjellberg holds an MBA from Uppsala University and an engineering degree from the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm. Before co-founding Skype he worked for Swedish investment company Kinnevik and UK-based Wyatt among others. He is also the chairman of iClickit, later sold to Apple. He has published a book together with professors from Harvard and Stanford, ‘Gear up’. He’s a popular speaker and holds lectures at Stanford University.

Disrupt according the Oxford dictionary:

1. Interupt an event, activity, or process by causing a disturbance or problem
2. Drastically alter or destroy the structure of something

The word originates from Latin’s disomumpre which means broken apart.
The new EcoFishBox™ from Stora Enso is set to revolutionise the way in which fresh fish is packaged. The new corrugated board solution is 100 per cent recyclable and takes up seven times less space than a conventional Expanded Polystyrene (EPS) box. Furthermore, a state-of-the-art laminate liner solution from Walki provides an effective barrier against moisture, water and fat.

“Traditionally, EPS has been the packaging solution of choice for fish because it’s light, with good insulation qualities,” explains Vesa Penttinen, Sales Development Manager, Stora Enso Packaging Solutions. “However, the recycling process for this fossil-based packaging material is not comprehensive and it poses a serious threat to the environment.”

And in talks with customers, Stora Enso found out that in addition to the environmental problems, the productivity of the fish packaging process also needed to improve.

“This new product will not only reduce packaging costs but also facilitate a huge leap in productivity,” says Penttinen. Stora Enso’s virgin fibre corrugated board packages are made of renewable Finnish wood fibre. Corrugated board packaging is fully recyclable, and the recycling rates are among the highest in the world. In Finland, 99 per cent of all collected corrugated board material is recycled.

Furthermore, corrugated packaging offers savings of up to 60% when it comes to waste handling, transport and recycling costs. In comparison with an EcoFishBox™, which is delivered as a flat corrugated board sheet, a traditional EPS box takes up seven times as much space in storage and during transport.

“It’s reasonable to assume that seven times less space means seven times fewer trucks on the road and seven times less pollution,” says Jan-Anders Fagerhed, Technical Service & Development Manager at Walki.

The EcoFishBox™ is not only better for the environment – tests have also shown that it offers good insulation for fish logistics. Its outstanding waterproof, moisture-proof and fat-proof properties are the result of two fibre-based barrier liner solutions provided by Walki. The outside liner is a Walki Line Aqua PE-laminate, while the inside liner is a Walki Line Ultra PET-laminate.

“Each liner has a thin polymer layer that provides an effective barrier against contaminants like water and moisture and leaking agents like fat,” says Fagerhed. “The combination of the two liners makes the box waterproof, and fat proof on the inside.”

“We chose Walki as a partner because of our long history of knowledge-sharing and innovation. Walki’s record as a developer of food safety corrugated board raw materials is well known – and safety is non-negotiable for us,” adds Penttinen.

Another advantage of corrugated board boxes is good printability. Company logos, images and other information can be printed directly on the corrugated board material in up to five colours, giving the packaging a more premium appearance.

The EcoFishBox™ was recently announced as one of the winners of the Scanstar Nordic packaging competition. “We expect a great future for this new technology, since the market is changing towards durable and air-tight roofing membranes,” he sums up.
Next-generation flame retardant materials are an essential part of Europe’s construction growth.

“Making our houses as safe as possible is on homebuilders’ minds. Walki has developed a new product that does the trick. “Customers tell us the hottest topic in the insulation market is fire safety, and meeting new fire safety regulations” explains Juuso Rinkinen, Technical Services & Development Manager at Walki, says Juuso Rinkinen, Technical Services & Development Manager at Walki.

“After all, we’re talking about making paper unburnable”, remarks Rinkinen.

At Walki’s Valkeakoski production plant, paper is first treated of honeycomb board material, it can be important that the end uses such as corrugated board and honeycomb board – especially for indoor displays and light constructions – and end use in Valkeakoski. Special attention has been given to make the processes as safe as possible.

“We have followed the latest safety standard in every single step. The need for flame retardant material is not only restricted to the construction industry. Jan-Anders Fagerhult, Technical Services & Development Manager at Walki, says that flame retardant materials could be suitable for other end uses such as corrugated board and honeycomb board – especially for indoor displays and light constructions – and for specialty packagings and other wrapping materials.

The jackhammer is gone from the backyard of the Valkeakoski plant. The new production line has moved in, and the first deliveries have left Valkeakoski.

“It was quite a sizable operation, but now as the new production line at the Valkeakoski plant is ready, it was well worth the effort. The first test runs were done in April, and in the end of May the first deliveries to customers were made”, explains Lucas. “To be ready in 2020, we have to keep ahead of those changes. “R&D is a strategic department for us” explains Lucas. “To be ready in 2020, we have to already be thinking about it in 2016.”

The first test runs were done in April, and in the end of May the first deliveries to customers were made. Karl Salminen, Executive Vice President, Construction, is extremely pleased with the outcome. “The technology in the production line enables us to meticulously control the quality of the runs. Every single data parameter from every run is stored, which enables us to go back and track changes. This enhances our process control as we can go back to the exact minute of each run and look at the data.”

For Walki’s customers, the new production line means even more consistent quality and more diverse products. With increased capacity also comes an even higher reliability of deliveries. As working environment safety is a starting point in every process, safety is a starting point in every process, says Salminen. “It’s extremely important for us, and our customer too, to produce our products in a safe manner.”

The production line will mainly run products for the flexpack and construction industries, although it will also cater to other sectors like the medical industry. Especially in the construction business Salminen is anticipating growth.

“The EU’s 20-20-20 target, that among other things aims at a 20% improvement in energy efficiency, will increase the demand for multilayer laminates,” says Salminen.

The new machine at Valkeakoski has been a team effort from the beginning to the end. Everyone at the plant has been involved in one way or another. “It’s been great to see how everyone has worked together. The people who will run the production line have literally been involved in building it as well, carrying stuff and helping the construction workers in every possible way. Everyone has really committed to this project”, says Salminen.

Also from a project management view, the work with the getting the new production line up and running receives the highest possible score from Salminen.

“It has been a textbook example on how to manage a complex project”, he says. “Everything has gone by the book.”

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For the fourth consecutive year, Walki has joined forces with its customer International Paper (IP) to participate in a healthy lifestyle event known as the Papermaker’s Run. The run takes place in Kwidzyn, in northern Poland.

Every spring, the International Paper mill in Kwidzyn hosts a unique sporting event together with the International Paper mill in Kwidzyn. The 10-kilometre Papermaker’s Run winds along the streets of the Polish town of Kwidzyn, before continuing through the grounds of one of the largest paper mills in central and eastern Europe.

“The event seeks to promote a healthy lifestyle and encourage people to practice sport regularly,” explains Tomasz Kuszowski, Plant Director for Walki’s plants in Jatne and Kwidzyn, in Poland. “IP is one of Walki’s most important partners and we’re happy to work together on initiatives like this that also represent our values.”

Isabelle Kliger, Walki’s CEO, who participated for the fourth time.

In 2016, more than 3,400 participants from 28 different countries around the world took part in the event, including 12 Walki employees from the Jatne and Kwidzyn plants, as well as Walki CEO Leif Frilund, who participated for the fourth time. This was also the first year that the Papermaker’s Run attracted more than 1,000 female runners. The youngest participant in the 2016 run was only 16, while the oldest was 87 years of age.

“Walki was one of the business partners invited by IP to co-sponsor the third Papermaker’s Run in 2012,” says Kuszowski. Walki has been supporting the event ever since. “The event was the most successful ever.”

Since that year, the Papermaker’s Run has become the most prestigious running event in Poland. Even so, a decision was taken earlier this year to increase the pace of improvement.

“We needed to speed things up because we weren’t seeing the step change we wanted,” says Steinfurt Plant Manager, Graham Moghul.

The system, which is known as shop floor management, focuses on improving communication and transparency and getting the machine operators actively involved in the continuous improvement process.

“Every morning, the process teams hold team meetings to discuss what happened during the previous day and the plan for the present day. This allows them to quickly figure out any problems need fixing or if they’re facing any challenges on the given day that require a particular action,” explains Hogben, adding that, in most cases, the issues are identified and resolved then and there by the team on the shop floor.

Problems are addressed wherever possible by the process operators and only cascaded up to the next level when necessary,” he says.

Since the shop floor management system was introduced in January, the results have spoken for themselves. OEE – or the extent to which the equipment in the plant is being optimally utilised – is up over five percent, while overall waste generation has been reduced by a massive 15 percent. Meanwhile, KPIs relating to quality and on-time deliveries are performing even better than before. Perhaps most importantly, Hogben says it has had an overwhelmingly positive impact on the working environment.

“I’m thrilled by how well the teams have adapted to this system,” he comments. “It’s clear to me that, when people are given the opportunity to say what they think and impact the working environment, it makes them feel empowered. And that, in turn, creates a happier, more productive place to work.”

Stephan Schober is one of three shift supervisors on the shop floor in Steinfurt. He has been with Walki since 2000 and says that the way of working in the plant has improved tremendously over the years.

“At first, there’s always some resistance to change, but, once we get used to the new systems, we can see that they actually make our lives easier. This new system makes it easier to spot problems and fix them, while communication - both within the team and between the team and management - has improved a great deal,” he says.

Marko Siltala, who is responsible for lean development on Walki Group level, says that it’s important for everyone to know their targets and that they feel they are able to suggest and implement improvements to make things in a smarter way.

“The benefits will also be seen by the customers in improved quality of our products and services. After the successful pilot in Steinfurt, our target is to launch a similar approach to all our plants,” he says.
Continuous improvement is a priority at Walki. However, testing new solutions and improvements always means time away from normal production lines. With upgraded pilot lines this problem has been alleviated. Customers will benefit from continuous improvements and there will be less disturbance on the main extrusion and production line.

The pilot extrusion line allows evaluation of new polymers and papers, new material combinations and different polymer surface finishes. It has been upgraded to allow more exact temperature adjustments, and a faster change over time to five layer structures from normal three layer systems.

The renewed flexo pilot press enables the evaluation of new inks, lacquers, and substrates, while helping to identify the optimum running parameters, like anilox rolls, printing sleeves, inks etc.

“By investing in our own pilot plant facilities we are staying one step ahead of the majority of our competition,” explains Rune Skåtar, Director of Development and Innovation.

“Without our pilot plant concept, to do evaluation of new materials, combinations and techniques in small scale, we would need to wait much longer for right timing to fit into the production line cycle and also spend much more valuable production time for optimizing the product.”

The ability to simulate what can be done at a full-scale manufacturing operation brings clear benefits to customers. The machines help minimize cost, both through enabling a full pre-screening process before a production run, and minimizing down-time on a production line. It also allows Walki to take proactive actions, not only innovating in response to customer requests. Wild innovative ideas can be worked through and tested without justifying using production facilities or fearing the consequences of failure. Finally, a more flexible R&D process means a better response time to the customer.

The long-term benefits could be even greater, explains Skåtar. “Our key competence is the ability to create different compositions, transducing the customers’ requests into physical values like strength requirements, barrier properties, sealing behavior or other material needs like anti-static, low friction, gloss properties. Hundreds of different compositions can be created. And we have that with more proactive research, we collect more data and over time this leads to better decision-making.”

This investment is about more than just the machines. “It shows our commitment to innovation and team work between the different functions also within Walki. This is something every area in Walki – from sourcing and operations right through to sales and marketing as well as the end-client can and will benefit from.”

Leading research through collaboration

Walki’s R&D department believes that everything is possible. As well as supporting business areas that may not have the required resources and skills, the department is outward looking and works to maintain a high quality network across material suppliers, universities and research institutes.

“Environmental and sustainability concerns place more and more requirements on used materials, packaging composition and our production facilities. With continued investment in research and development, Walki is well placed to meet those requirements,” says Rune Skåtar.

What’s up in Sweden?

Jens Desthon has been with Walki for three years. As Sales Manager for Sweden, he knows how to woo Swedish customers.

What does your Swedish customers appreciate most?

For Swedish customers, it’s absolutely vital to have a customer-oriented approach. You need to constantly work on defining the added value and solutions that can generate true customer value. We work continuously on improvements, and recently we conducted a big survey to see how we are doing and what our customers think of us.

What product are you selling on the Swedish market?

In terms of formats, it’s real wrappers for the paper industry. But we also sell high barrier materials such as construction, the food industry and the packaging sector are experiencing growth. There is a wide interest in energy efficient products and solutions.

The Swedish economy is growing. Can it be discerned in your business?

During the three years I’ve been with the company, our net sales in Sweden have grown over 40 percent. The growth is partly due to increases in our traditional products such as reel wrappers, but we are also experiencing strong growth in construction solutions as the construction of new housing that picked up after a couple of years of slower growth. Sweden suffers from an acute need of new buildings has picked up after a couple of years of slow growth in construction solutions as the construction of new housing that picked up after a couple of years of slower growth. Sweden suffers from an acute need of new buildings has picked up after a couple of years of slow growth.
Leea Häkkinen, Manager, Management Systems at Walki Group, has always wanted to make the world a better place. During the years, she had donated to charities but was looking for another way to help.

“I wanted to do something concrete, something that would show that the money is actually making a difference.”

In 2004, Häkkinen started to sponsor Omin, a four-year-old girl from Rajnandgaon in the middle of India via World Vision. For Häkkinen, it was clear she wanted to sponsor an Indian girl.

“I chose India, because the status of women and girls is not good there. Girls aren’t often sent to school. Also I wanted to sponsor a child in a country that was relatively stable so I could go see her one day.”

Omin’s parents are illiterate rice pickers, who travel around the region to find employment. It is common that children are forced to work at an early age. Ending the cycle of poverty is difficult if children are denied the possibility to go to school.

Häkkinen chose to sponsor a child through World Vision. One of their conditions for being included in their sponsorship program is that the family has to settle down so the kids can attend school and don’t have to work. In addition to schooling, World Vision provides healthcare as well as health and hygiene education. As mal-nutrition is still a big issue in Indian World Vision projects, the children also get a warm meal at school.

Last autumn, Häkkinen finally got to meet Omin in person, after ten years of writing letters and sending pictures.

“I was prepared for anything but we were welcomed with open arms everywhere we visited. I got to meet Omin and all of her family. We had a wonderful day together.”

World Vision doesn’t hand the sponsorship money directly to the families of the sponsored children, but the sponsors can donate directly small amounts every other year. With Häkkinen’s last year’s donation, Omin’s family was able to buy a refrigerator. For Häkkinen it was important to choose an organisation that doesn’t just go and implement changes as outsiders but educates the community and enables locals to lead small projects in villages.

On her trip to Rajnandgaon, Häkkinen got to meet a lot of people, from schoolchildren to farmers, who all benefit from the charity programs.

“I wanted to see how World Vision works and how the money is directed. When we talked to people, they kept on saying how the projects had really changed their lives.”

Häkkinen hopes that Omin – among other girls sent to school in Rajnandgaon – will get a profession so that she can pass on her appreciation for education to her own children as well, and in this way end the cycle of poverty.

Ambition to make the world a better place shows also in Häkkinen’s current position at Walki. She has worked for the company since 1987 and is now Manager at Management Systems and in charge of the sustainability reporting at the company. Walki has done charity work as well: the company donates annually to different social and environmental charities, for example enabling unprivileged kids to do sports.

“I believe that everyone can help. Maybe we can’t solve everything, but even small actions count.”

Evee Häkkinen finally got a chance to meet Omin, her sponsor child.
Walki

- Operates in 7 countries
- Has 10 production plants
- Over 900 employees
- And over 300 million euros in annual sales

Walki is an expert on technical laminates and protective packaging materials. Here are some examples of where you can come across our products from our various market areas:

BUILDING AND LIVING: Breathable construction membranes

FOOD, RETAIL, TRANSPORT PACKAGING: Frozen food packaging and yoghurt lids

OFFICE: Copy paper wrapper

PAPER AND FOREST: Logging residue cover

ALSO IN THESE AREAS YOU FIND OUR PRODUCTS:
- Steel and metals
- RFID and flexible circuit boards
- Technical

We made this base material for billboards, too!