

Selfstorage Europe / focus

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COMPANY FEATURE

Self Storage Europe

Dein Lager GmbH - A look behind the scenes

You may have heard about an Austrian company that has an ambitious vision for the German Self Storage market and continues to expand strongly, even in today's financial climate. Can the news about this company be true? What lies behind the scenes and, what must be done differently to ensure the success of further expansion plans?

Today in Germany there are approximately 50 self storage facilities. Dein Lager is active in the whole German-speaking region and already they are the market leaders. The company has 13 facilities in Germany, eight in Austria and two in Switzerland. With its origins in Austria, Selfstorage Dein Lager GmbH has been a big success with its expansion programme in Austria, Germany and Switzerland. The company intends to continue to expand in 2009 by opening another nine facilities, which have already been bought or are under construction.



Heinrich Hoyos

Know-how and the team

So what makes Dein Lager different? The company's success and its continuous growth are primarily down to the team. Four years ago, the founders of the company and their partners Martin Gerhardus and Heinrich Hoyos made the decision to build a world-class team and to put the company onto a broader footing. In the initial phases, two experienced managers became the backbone of the new enterprise. The first, Paul Visotschnig, who is responsible for real estate and the company's projects while under construction, was the leader of the real estate department with the south LIDL for more than 14 years. The second, Martin Brunkhorst, has been an active participant in the Self Storage Industry for many years. As a former manager with Shurgard and Federation Chairman for the German Self Storage Industry, there are not many managers in Europe with his self storage know-how. Martin is the Operations Manager and he is responsible for the company's expansion in the north of Germany.



Martin Brunkhorst

The team recently welcomed Hubert Spallart, a marketing professional who has built up more than 44 world brands for Unilever and has gained a professional insight into the international marketplace over recent decades. Under his guidance, Dein Lager will soon become even better known than it is today. With Hubert Spallart's know-how, it is anticipated that the company will enjoy a quantum leap forward in the way

self storage is marketed to the customer, and in the creation and development of the company's brand.

In addition to the excellent leadership qualities of the team, a high value has been placed on employees' motivation. And, to this end, all of Dein Lager's employees enjoy an extensive training programme, before they take up their responsibilities in any of the company's facilities.



Martin Gerhardus

Long-term action

"Continuity and long-term planning are the strategies for this continually evolving industry," says Martin Gerhardus, founder of the company. "Most of our customers live in a fast-changing society. We should, therefore, provide a feeling of security and dependability for our customers," states the company's Supervisory Board.

"Apart from our dynamism and growth, the pillars of our company are founded in our conservative approach to economics. This defines the company's long-term plans and economic investment considerations to ensure our continued growth.

In this environment, our customers can enjoy peace of mind because they know that our employees are trustworthy and we offer a pleasant and secure environment in which to store their belongings. Motivated employees, with excellent training in the practicalities of the self storage industry, ensure the economic success of the company."



Hubert Spallart

Customer and location

Dein Lager's priority is securing high-quality locations in German-speaking cities. Germany especially is at the centre of the company's

expansion plans. Heinrich Hoyos is responsible for Dein Lager's expansion in the three German-speaking countries of Europe. Dein Lager opened its first facility in Munich in 2002 and since 2005 has set in motion an ambitious expansion strategy aimed at the German market. At the moment there are four facilities operating in Munich, three in both Berlin and Hamburg and one in Nuremberg, Frankfurt and Wiesbaden. The most important consideration is not the size of the city, but the location of the development. "Our strategy is to find an excellent location that is better and more convenient than that of other operators," says Martin Brunkhorst. As well as the 13 facilities in Germany, 12 new sites are either under construction or in the planning stages. By the end of 2009, the company will have invested €150 million

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in Germany alone.

The company is also active in the Swiss self storage market, with one facility already open in Zurich and a second opening in early 2009. "The market, whether it is in Austria, Germany or Switzerland, demands new locations. We find that our facilities that are in the best locations very quickly enjoy occupancy levels of 70 to 80%," explains Martin Gerhardus. "However, in spite of our



growth, the company is conservative at its core and every new project is financed at the start of construction work. And, although we are very active in the real estate business, we believe that the storm of the current financial crisis will pass us by," adds Martin. As important as the right location is to the company, customer confidence and contentment is of paramount importance. That is why Dein Lager invests between €6 and €7 million on each new development. "At present, up to 80% of our facilities have been purpose built. Therefore, we guarantee generous access and loading areas, as well as modern and high-quality units. Our customers are, therefore, able to enjoy peace of mind as they do not have to worry that their belongings may go mouldy or get dirty. As well as this, internal cameras and a motion-activated security



camera service protects all of our facilities. We listen to our customers' concerns and try to offer an excellent service," explains Martin Gerhardus. "Although, we did not invent the self storage concept, we believe that we have recognized our customers' wishes by our experience, our communication skills and by the way we have defined our product. We are confident that our strategies are working and we hope to further develop our position as the market leader," says Martin.



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