

Sanitätshaus Pfänder

Scientific Success through Specialisation

The Sanitätshaus Pfänder – Specialist Centre for Orthopaedic and Rehabilitation Technology in Freiburg is fundamentally a full-service provider. However, its specialisations and know-how concentrations are unmistakable. In combination with a well-structured company at the new site in Haid Business Park, Pfänder is today an indispensable service provider in the region. The Managing Directors Mike Dehn and Theo Falck explain the development and philosophy of the company to MTDialog.

What boosts the satisfaction of a medical supply store's managers and employees? Answer: not participating in any tenders for medical aids. The Sanitätshaus Pfänder in Freiburg answered the question for itself in this way. Current examples include tenders for walking frames and bath lifts. By not supplying these products at unprofitable margins, the Baden-Württemberg-based company has yielded without a fight to the competition, which is really quite intensive in the Freiburg region.

Of course, in accordance with current legislation, the Sanitätshaus Pfänder does require contracts for the supply of medical aids. The com-

pany relies on accession agreements – mainly from the Leistungsgemeinschaft RehaVital [RehaVital Joint Venture], the Fachverband für Orthopädiotechnik [Orthopaedic Technology Professional Association] and the Bundesinnungsverband [Federal Association]. That means relying on solidarity with sectoral organisations – in its own best interest. This removes a lot of the usual bureaucratic burdens from the company. And in terms of purchasing, RehaVital offers additional added value.

Otherwise, the Management Board, represented by proprietor Mike Dehn, Managing Director Theo Falck and the Technical Operations Manager Jochen Adler, and the 70 em-

ployees at the head office in Munzinger Strasse, in the branch in Emmendingen as well as in the small OT workshop at Freiburg University Hospital are very eager to engage – especially when it comes to the best possible care for their patients within the operating range of around 50 kilometres from Lörrach to Offenburg and in the Breisgau-Hochschwarzwald district. For achieving this purpose, the two Managing Directors are an ideal team. As a qualified orthopaedic technician, Adler predominantly takes on technical aspects whereas business economist Falck is responsible for economic aspects including the transaction modalities with the funds.

A functional new building for optimised operating processes.



It all started in 1865

The history of the Sanitätshaus Pfänder goes back to 1865. In that year, Isidor Nosch founded his factory for knives and surgical instruments. Following his death in 1910, the business was divided between his sons Paul and Max. Paul Nosch managed the surgical instruments part that was relevant for the continuation of the company, but he died in 1944 during a bombing raid on Freiburg. After his death, orthopaedic specialist Stephan Adolf Maier took on the factory and changed foci.

Orthopaedic specialist Herbert Pfänder took over the company in 1971 and

gave it the name it still bears today. In 1973, the company was strengthened by the addition of orthopaedic specialist Eberhard Dehn. He took it over in 1989. In the course of the succession plan, his son Mike took over the helm in 2004. As an orthopaedic technology specialist, Mike Dehn brought with him the ideal qualifications to manage the company.

Prior to this, business economist Theo Falck joined the business in 2000 and is today strengthening the company management. With the move to Haid Business Park at the start of August 2012 the company finally left behind previous cramped conditions.

nology, followed by Rehabilitation Customised Design, the Rehabilitation Standard sector and the Medical Supply Store. Particularly noteworthy is the high level of technical skill in the specialised fields of tailor-made and custom-made medical aids.

Individual care dominates

Orthopaedic technology is divided into the sectors of Orthotics, Prosthetics and Orthopaedic Shoe Technology. Orthotics range from simple technology in the form of steel-leather appliances to carbon fibre technologies. The latest analysis procedures are shaping the work on orthotics and prosthetics. These include, for example, gait labs and computer-assisted body measurements and gait analyses. The novel neurostimulation of stroke patients also falls under the field of Orthotics, for which close collaboration with Freiburg University Hospital is in place. In November 2013, the Otto Bock ActiGait system was implanted into a patient for the first time and subsequently programmed by Pfänder.

With regard to prosthetics, high-tech appliances with the latest developments in myoelectric arm prostheses and microprocessor-controlled femoral prostheses particularly deserve to be mentioned. Knee and hip

Competent employees for specialised services

The company is certified in accordance with DIN EN ISO 9001:2008 and presents itself as an absolute full-service provider, but with clear foci. "We are a medical supply store, but our range of services and our key skills are better described by the term *Specialist Centre for Orthopaedic and Rehabilitation Technology*", specifies Mike Dehn. This is also illus-

trated by the number and the skills of the employees in the various departments. Orthopaedic technology has 30 employees, including five senior orthopaedic technicians and two trainees, the Rehabilitation Department has ten employees, the Medical Supply Store sector has seven and Management has 13 including one trainee. Correspondingly, the order of the departments is also of economic importance for the entire company. First is Orthopaedic Tech-



In the field of rehabilitation aids, Mike Dehn (l) and Theo Falck are specialists for children's wheelchairs.



Wide range of goods on display.



Medical supply store goods in the show room.



Production of sitting supports for children.



Even high-tech products still need to be plastered.



The orthopaedic technology workshop is characterised by light and spacious working spaces.

disarticulation prostheses are part of the range of services as well as the traditional wooden shaft.

Orthopaedic shoe technology relies on decades of experience in the production of custom-fit appliances for the relief of symptoms and the correction of malpositions. Insoles are the main focus. Theo Falck explains: "We would like to further expand our services in the field of orthopaedic shoe technology. The problem is that we have been looking in vain for a specialist orthopaedic shoe maker for a long time."

Rehabilitation technology is divided into customised design and the standard range. The standard range comprises all current rehabili-

tation medical appliances from wheelchairs, baths and toilets, as well as daily living aids, nursing beds and anti-pressure sore systems. Of course, Pfänder also sells the previously mentioned standard walking frames. They fall under the full-service provider's so-called white goods.

"However, much more important for us are the complex supplies that, firstly, make us not interchangeable and, secondly, are of course much more economically interesting", Falck points out. Thus Pfänder is concentrating in particular on customised design for children's care and generally on sitting and lying supports as well as postural and po-

sitioning systems. This also includes certain special mobility aids such as rehabilitation buggies and therapy bikes.

The Medical Supply Store sector has a conventional range including braces, compression hosiery and linens, together with breast prostheses. As in all of the other sectors, the Medical Supply Store sector also works closely with everyone involved in supply: with patients and their families, sponsors, health insurance funds, hospitals, rehabilitation hospitals, facilities for the disabled and support groups.

To attract new customers, there are complementary activities on special occasions such as Diabetes Day,

wound symposia, Vein Days or innovative technology presentations such as the Genium leg prosthesis system.

New site optimises processes

2012 marked a profound and urgently required turning point. The medical supply store had been settled in the Stühlinger district for decades. However, this residential mixed use area is far from ideal for an expanding company, as it limits its options. The consequences for Pfänder were basically devastating. As part of the expansion, five separate sites were developed – with every conceivable negative consequence. As of 2010, Dehn and Falck's plan to look for a new location and unite the company in a single building was starting to take shape. They wanted an alto-

gether new building according to their ideas.

They found the right place in Munzinger Strasse in Haid Business Park. Following completion of the company's new home, the business could be relocated in August 2012.

In the new building, all departments are now centralised. Taking into account the core capabilities, a completely new corporate identity was developed that the employees identify with and that has a recognition effect with customers.

Dehn is still enthusiastic: "Through the centralisation we were able to optimise processes and boost synergy effects between the departments. The whole building is like a bespoke suit that's tailored to our needs." The entire Pfänder team designed the building's plan and layout together according to their ideas. The result is

a harmonious healthcare provider as an integrated whole. Despite the investment costs, it has had a positive impact. "It is also possible to achieve growth and earn money by establishing optimal in-house organisation and communication structures", Falck says.

According to Falck, its location in a business park hasn't caused any disadvantages for the business. Customers are predominantly mobile, there is ample parking available and public transport is very good. Hard figures prove this and particularly the performance expertise of the Sanitätshaus Pfänder: In 2016, a total of 14,000 customers were served at the new site – 7,000 in the Orthopaedic Technology sector, 3,500 in the Rehabilitation Technology sector and 3,500 in the Medical Supply Store sector.



Fitting the shaft to a high-tech prosthesis.



Assembling custom-fit orthoses.



The finishing touch.



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