

EKU AG counts on product innovations in sliding hardware

Stable revenues despite a competitive market

EKU AG, with its head office in Sirnach, (Thurgau) Switzerland develops, manufactures and distributes sliding door hardware solutions for the international furniture and building industries. EKU, an export oriented SME, along with other Swiss companies is suffering from the low Euro exchange rate. With annual revenues of CHF (Swiss Franc) 28.3 million the company missed its budgeted revenues slightly. However, after currency adjustments, the company is pleased to report a 4% increase over the previous year.

As a result of the high value of the Swiss Franc and increased competition in some countries, the year ended with a small revenue drop of 1.5%. More than 65% of EKU's revenues are generated in German speaking markets. In particular the major market Germany came in below expectations with revenues that were 6.9% lower than the previous year. A more upbeat result with a gain of 12.4% came from Switzerland. The rapidly expanding market Brazil registered a year-over-year revenue increase of 36%. Sales in the USA and Japan increased by 18% and 30% respectively.

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A year of innovations

“EKU thrives on product innovations and we will continue to strengthen the EKU brand,” says managing director Heinz Schmidhauser, insisting that EKU will persist in this highly competitive segment. New product innovation premieres were the focus of the “Holz” exhibition in Basel and “Glasstec” in Düsseldorf. Attendees from the professional public met the new EKU-SOFT CLOSE BUILDING with interest in Basel. This solution allows sliding doors of up to 100 kg to be operated gently and quietly. In Düsseldorf, the new EKU BANIO was introduced as EKU’s entry into the world of bathrooms. BANIO, the new sliding solution for all-glass shower enclosures stands out for brilliant design and intelligent technology. Our communication with the industry has also undergone a creative expansion with a broader offering for cabinet makers. On our web-based platform “Design-World” at www.eku.ch, we now offer construction ready building plans for design furniture pieces as downloads for those that may want build them.

Continuous improvement

EKU has 105 employees, the same number as in the previous year. In total ten apprentices are offered an education in the area of sales, construction, information technology and mechanical. In 2008 and 2009 we offered workshops under the umbrella theme “Changes – Ready for the future”; for 2010 the theme was focused on continuous process improvements. All employees were educated in the Japanese work philosophy KAIZEN – a continuous process improvement philosophy – often summarized as “Change for the better”. Workgroups develop, evaluate and, if appropriate, implement improvement suggestions for our own use. The goal is for our staff to internalize the philosophy to improve our ways and to simultaneously foster innovation and motivation as a side-effect.

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A look at 2011

The global market presents difficult business conditions due to the inherent currency situation. For 2011 EKU prepared itself with new and innovative products. At the end of May during interzum, the leading fair for furniture and interior designers in Cologne, Germany the new design oriented EKU-FRONTINO 20 was introduced. Just prior to the fair a panel of interzum industry experts awarded this product the highest industry standard award for "High Product Quality". The development of new and creative sliding solutions for the worldwide furniture and building markets is in high gear. With additional sales efforts in international markets, a focus on increased productivity and our new web based communication initiatives for cabinet makers and furniture manufacturers as end consumers we expect to meet our revenue goals for 2011.

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