

# PRISMA

The WILD Group  
magazine



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# CHANGES AT THE HELM.

The newly formed management team balances stability and change to lead the WILD Group into a successful future.

Following more than 11 years of success, a change is now taking place at the helm of the Group: at 65, Josef Hackl is retiring - a transition to a "new business model" as he calls it. His successor will be Arthur Primus. As COO, he will be steering the WILD Group alongside CTO Wolfgang Warum and CFO Michael Wratschko. Since the beginning of this year, the joint management of WILD GmbH has been in the hands of Christian Rabitsch, Michael Wratschko and Wolfgang Warum.

In this interview, the management team speaks about WILD as a "most-trusted" partner in both good and challenging times, about alternative approaches to strategy concepts, the clear

focus on the company's own strengths and the appropriate level of perfection.

*Why are you optimistic about the future of the WILD Group?*

**Josef Hackl:** "The world has become more complex at a breathtaking pace. Amidst all this heterogeneity, however, our focus became increasingly clear. At WILD, we know what our task is, who our customers are, which new customers we want to bring on board and which technologies and services we cover ourselves or together with our partners. We have increased WILD's benefit to our customers in an evolutionary,



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continuous manner. In combination with our “most-trusted” strategy, it has proven the right recipe both in the boom years and during the pandemic.”

*Where is the journey heading now?*

**Wolfgang Warum:** “Despite major uncertainties in the procurement and energy markets, the WILD Group has grown by around 40 percent in recent years. We expect sales to grow again this year. We owe this success to a positive symbiosis of specialists, networked thinking and teamwork. We will remain on this course in the years to come. An agile, adaptable organisation that can meet the ever-changing requirements of the market.”

*Mr. Primus, you’ve known the WILD Group for a very long time. What made you come back?*

**Arthur Primus:** “My positive memories, especially those of the successful development of the medical technology division, were what galvanised my decision to return. The WILD Group is a real gem in Austria’s business landscape and the products it manufactures for highly specialised niche players are hugely exciting.”

*So WILD is a great place to work?*

**Arthur Primus:** “Absolutely! And this is precisely the message we need to communicate. We will win over the best minds for



*Christian Rabitsch, Managing Director WILD GmbH*

our team only if we manage to radiate a positive work culture towards the outside world. In future, our motto will be: People know us, they appreciate us and they want to work with us.”

*Mr. Rabitsch, which strategic course will you pursue in your new position?*

**Christian Rabitsch:** “On the one hand, we place the focus on ‘operational excellence’. This means we want to further enhance our processes and skills, and attain the appropriate level of perfection for the respective requirement. On the organisational level, my vision is to move even closer together and pull in the same direction as ONE WILD, as a single company. We put our own interests and compartmentalised approaches aside. Always keep our eyes on the needs, tasks and the satisfaction of our customers - it’s a core part of our DNA.”

*What investments are necessary to that end in the near future?*

**Michael Wratschko:** “We continue to invest heavily in the modernisation of our machine park and in fully-automatic facilities. After all, our customers’ demands on precision are growing. New work steps are becoming necessary, for which we must expand our range of services.”

*Finally, the following question for Mr. Hackl: Is there a message you wish to convey to the people in the company?*

**Josef Hackl:** “Don’t rely on experience. It’s more important to assess the current situation and act accordingly!”



*Arthur Primus, COO WILD Group*



# FOSTERING SKILLS AT WILD.

**Tomorrow’s specialists need our full attention today. That is why WILD is increasing the number of apprenticeships within the company, offers numerous upskilling programmes, and promotes an autonomous choice of career paths.**

INTERNAL

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Costs, processes, key figures. For quite a long time, a company’s alleged success factors were viewed from a very sober perspective. Today, it is common knowledge that a company’s employees and the value attributed to them are much more essential determinants. “It is ultimately the talents, values and ideas of our purchasing agents, developers, project managers, assembly workers, and apprentices that will determine our ability to survive in the future. Therefore, the struggle to get the best minds is rarely about money, it is much more the human factors that make a real difference”, affirms Andrea Gritsch, who is in charge of People & Culture Management in the WILD Group. She identifies the following crucial factors: “Genuine appreciation towards the individual, a meaningful answer to the question ‘Why should I work here?’, autonomy in choosing your career path and a stable corporate culture that provides guidance to employees.

## A THREE-PRONG TRAINING SYSTEM

WILD realised the importance of addressing these tasks and developed its own strategy programme to this end, which is already starting to bear fruit. “There’s a very solid volume of applications and we can fill vacancies quickly. There are some occupational groups, however, where we lack new

blood, for instance in machining and surface engineering, metal engineering or mechatronics”, Gritsch explains. The company is increasingly investing in the training of its own skilled staff, who are currently receiving a lot of attention. Apprentice training is based on a three-prong system: this means that, in addition to in-company training and vocational school, apprentices can further expand their basic knowledge in an external training centre. “In addition, we promote their individual development. Be it a training course in presentation techniques or a communication workshop - everything on the schedule is jointly decided and individually agreed with the apprentice”, says Gritsch. The mentors, who act as the apprentices’ confidants, also have a say in this and aim to establish an open and appreciative communication.

## YOUNG PEOPLE ARE LOOKING FOR MEANINGFUL JOBS

WILD and PHOTONIC are coveted employers not only because of the numerous innovative products that are manufactured here. There’s a great longing for meaningful work out there. Especially the young generation of skilled workers are excited to play a part in the creation of medical technology products that can save lives or improve the quality of life for many people. In this regard, the WILD Group offers ideal





conditions, since the staff tasks are compatible with their individual values. "Young people in particular are proud when they are given responsibility. Many accept the confidence placed in them with enthusiasm," Gritsch happily states.

**SECURING LOYALTY IN THE LONG RUN**

To guarantee consistency in the projects and a continuous advancement of skills, however, a company also needs people who will commit to the company for many years, or even decades. Positive employer branding alone will fall short of the mark. In-depth knowledge of the personal background and skills of the individuals is more important. An all-in-one talent management software helps WILD identify a person's strengths early and develop them in a targeted manner. The employees also have access to a learning management tool that shows current and future workshops.

**AGILE STRUCTURES LEND AN OPEN EAR**

Especially when structures, processes and technological requirements are subject to constant change, there's need for reciprocity. It can only prevail when there's a culture of intensive exchange between colleagues. In the WILD Group, silo mentality and rigid structures have long given way to an open and agile culture and collaboration which are evident in all business units. They are also reflected in an agile project management, a discipline that WILD truly masters. "The requirements for complex development and industrialisation projects have changed fundamentally. Previously, people would draw Gantt charts on the basis of a waterfall model. Today you apply complexity models that require different approach strategies to achieve optimized throughput times with maximum quality", stresses CTO Wolfgang Warum. The company encourages this out-of-the-box thinking in many ways, including a multi-annual training programme with several live workshops. Moreover, staff are given numerous

options and are granted autonomy in shaping their areas of responsibility. "The path they want to embark on must be discernible, be it in terms of specialisation or towards a management position", so Gritsch. "We listen to their ideas and innovations, we discuss them in a spirit of appreciation and advance them in a targeted manner". Exploring individual work models can also help reconcile private and professional life.

**ACADEMIC SUPPORT FOR NEW LEARNINGS**

There is a wide variety of training and upskilling programmes on offer. For instance, 14 WILD employees recently underwent extensive training to improve their skills in supply chain management. In the process, WILD's Supply Chain Academy received academic support from the University of Applied Sciences FH JOANNEUM in Kapfenberg. "This cooperation helped forge the perfect interface between theory and practice. Armed with the knowledge from the academy, employees find it easier to avoid the 'same as always' approach, take a holistic view of a problem and jointly work out the best possible solution for the customer", stresses Christian Rabitsch, Managing Director of WILD GmbH. The topic of lean thinking is also deeply embedded in the Group's culture and was significantly bolstered by a lean excellence programme already successfully completed by numerous employees from all the Group's sites.

**YOUR CONTACT:**

**Andrea Gritsch**  
**Mail:** andrea.gritsch@wild.at



# CLEVER DESIGN ENSURES THE ABILITY TO DELIVER.

**Future ability to deliver a product will depend on its design. WILD guarantees this with a whole set of new ideas and measures.**

Bottlenecks, fragile supply chains, extremely long waiting times. The list of supply chain headaches is long. A fundamental rethinking has taken place in many companies as a result. In addition to technical expertise and time-to-market capabilities, those who develop a product must also focus on an additional factor – the ability to deliver. Christian Rabitsch, Managing Director of WILD GmbH, explains how this is done: “One of the most important levers is the close interlinkage of procurement and development at the earliest stage possible. We seek solutions and new ideas together to develop designs that actively take the availability of parts into account.” Ultimately, specifications such as tolerances or the choice of material will determine how easy or difficult it will be to procure a product. “The decisions taken during development today will have an impact on availability in three of four years from now. This is why WILD questions the individual requirements at the beginning of a project and tries to assist in working out alternative solutions”, stresses Head of Development Michael Reissig. “This is how we create the room for manoeuvre we will need in the future.”

## INTENTIONAL REDUNDANCIES

Especially in the case of medical devices, where product changes must be avoided wherever possible due to the complex marketing authorisation process, the objective is to identify alternative parts and critical components early, and to take them into account for authorisation. “In terms of the costs and time required, it makes little difference during the initial authorisation. When there’s a problem later, however,

you save yourself an enormous amount of time”, says Reissig. When applying that approach in practice, the company relies on alternative bills of material incorporated in the background. Sophisticated master data management is of equal importance. If need be, it can facilitate efficient use of the potentials built in the design during product development.

## KEEP IT SIMPLE

When WILD questions customer requirements, there is also a focus on the selection of specification options. “Especially in the case of key components, we look out for parts that are widely used. After consulting with the customer, we sometimes build in components that are ‘oversized’ but more available, or even vice versa. As compared to a supposedly ideal version that will be manufactured only in low volumes, we thus guarantee the ability to deliver in the long run”, Rabitsch emphasises. An important contribution comes from special software that analyses the life cycle of specific components, identifies the volumes and risks behind each component, and proposes alternatives”, Reissig adds.

## YOUR CONTACT:

**Michael Reissig**

**Mail:** [michael.reissig@wild.at](mailto:michael.reissig@wild.at)





# CIRCULAR ECONOMY THOUGHT THROUGH TO THE END.

**If you take the issue of sustainability seriously, you must approach it comprehensively and implement it holistically. WILD currently focuses on awareness, energy saving, and resource reservation.**

Turn off the lights, shut down equipment or spot the power guzzlers. Simple things like these are a first step towards greater sustainability. For intelligent and sustainable resource and energy conservation, however, a holistic approach is required. That is precisely what the WILD Group has done. Based on the concept of circular economy, the technology partner has devised lines of action for all its corporate areas. The topics of energy conservation, precise analysis of waste substances and awareness trainings for staff are currently at the top of the to-do list. The latter is the responsibility of none other than CEO Josef Hackl himself. "Seeing the circular economy through to the end means a fundamental shift of our thinking patterns and practices. This is why the trainings take place as oral briefings in small groups", Hackl explains. The group members jointly examine the type of energy used by WILD in detail and try to identify any energy conservation potentials. "The interesting part is that everyone finds something! The issue of energy costs is currently omnipresent. The ideas are often small but together they make a real difference. The potential of all these measures amounts to energy savings of 10 to 15%", Hackl affirms.

The next big step will be the commissioning of a new photovoltaic installation at the end of February. With a total output of 666 kWp, it will cover roughly 20% of the electricity demand at the Völkermarkt site. "In addition, we have completely overhauled the heating system and fitted it with new actuators, sensors and a new digital controller.

**The topics of energy conservation, precise analysis of waste substances and awareness trainings for staff are currently at the top of the to-do list.**

*Josef Hackl, CEO WILD Group*

Alongside monitoring, we are currently working on an adjusted fresh air supply and an energy-optimised reduction of the production hall conditions during night, weekend and company holiday periods", stresses Hackl.

The third set of topics actively addressed by WILD is the resource-efficient use and disposal of substances. The company analyses all waste substances, ranging from aluminium shavings produced during milling to cardboard boxes for packaging. "How are these developing in comparison with sales? What can we reduce? What is the efficiency of these materials when they are recycled? All of these factors play a role in our considerations", says Hackl. This is precisely why awareness trainings are so important in all departments. "For instance, initiating a sustainable attitude in the work of design engineers will result in numerous optimisations that reduce scrap and rework in manufacturing, thus helping us produce more sustainably and more economically." This is also the perspective of Arthur Primus, who will take over all sustainability issues as COO from April.

**YOUR CONTACT:**

**Arthur Primus**  
**Mail:** arthur.primus@wild.at



# ENERGY SAVING MADE SIMPLE.

Save energy. Reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. WILD is introducing a series of easily quantifiable measures towards sustainability. Yet you can only grasp their magnitude when you put them into perspective.



## 40 PARCEL DELIVERY VEHICLES

In 2023, the new photovoltaic installation and other energy optimisation measures led to a 27% (900 MWh) reduction in the power drawn from the grid. This corresponds to the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of 40 parcel delivery vehicles.



The company saves 140 kWh of electricity a day simply by turning off the fans and electric motors of its heating system during the night. This equals the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> absorbed by 1,200 beech trees during the same period.



## 2 FAST CHARGING CYCLES

When two electric vehicles draw a maximum current of 250 KW to charge their batteries, this is the same amount of energy used in a year by more than 300 employees at WILD GmbH's Völkermarkt site.

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T +43 4232 2527-0, E-Mail: sales@wild.at

**Responsible for the contents:** CEO Josef Hackl, CTO Wolfgang Warum

**Editorial staff:** Andrea Patterer and Sabine Salcher

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### THE WILD GROUP

The WILD Group is comprised of the WILD brands which are established in Völkermarkt and Wernberg (Austria) and Trnava (Slovakia), as well as Vienna-based PHOTONIC. The technology partner develops and produces optomechatronic systems for medical and industrial applications as well as optical technologies exclusively on behalf of its customers. Approximately 500 staff members are always the first choice whenever precision and reliability are called for and wherever innovation takes place.