

The Company

New Man at the Top: Michael Macht

Porsche's new CEO, Michael Macht, is a company veteran who has been with Porsche for nineteen years. When asked how he plans to keep Porsche on track for success, the 49-year-old production expert's reply is succinct: "Work, work, work."

By
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Photo by
Porsche

It was six in the morning, and the workers beginning their shift at the assembly line in Zuffenhausen were surprised to be greeted by a new coworker: Michael Macht, dressed in a blue overall. "I want to see the plant the way it really is. I want to talk to you about your problems and hear what ideas you have," said the executive, who proceeded to accompany the assembly of a Porsche 911 from position zero through position eight.

That was in June 1998, not long after Macht was appointed to the executive board of Porsche AG as the designated member in charge of production. Though his hands-on approach might have seemed remarkable to some, it did not surprise those who know him: Macht has always considered it a matter of course to acquaint himself thoroughly with the overall picture, paying attention even to the "little things" that others might consider unimportant. That is no less true today than it was eleven years ago, for the company's new CEO is always looking for ways to improve things, an aim he firmly believes can be achieved only through cooperation. As he says, "If you don't want to get left behind, you have to constantly work on getting better." Macht's guiding principle in a nutshell.

Macht established himself as an expert in optimizing work flow and production pro-

cesses at the very outset of his career. Wenzel Wiedeking appointed him as advisor on process optimization in 1992, and over the next few years the two succeeded in making Porsche competitive again. After seeing *kaizen*, the principle of lean manufacturing, firsthand in Japan, Macht invited Japanese production experts to come to Zuffenhausen. One of the *kaizen* experts' first measures impressed him so much he still enthuses about it today: "They merged the leather facilities in plants two and three—without interrupting production. That was pretty amazing," recalls Porsche's new CEO.

With its rigorous implementation of lean production methods, Porsche not only pioneered a new standard in Europe; it also opened up a new line of business for itself. Porsche Consulting GmbH was founded in 1994, and quickly developed into a highly profitable consulting firm under Macht, its first managing director, increasing its turnover tenfold in the space of four years to €6.6 million. Even then, Macht was convinced that "the methods we successfully implemented at Porsche can be applied to any field and any kind of business." The Porsche subsidiary will soon be celebrating its fifteenth birthday and counts hospitals, airlines, shipyards, banks, and road construction companies among its clients.

Porsche Consulting was also involved in Macht's most recent project: adapting the Porsche plant in Leipzig for manufacture of the Panamera. Due to its revolutionary production and logistics system, the plant is widely touted as the most modern automobile factory in the world. Today the Panamera and the Cayenne are produced on a single assembly line in a "model mix." And thanks to the sophisticated logistics system, the plant doesn't need a warehouse. The Leipzig plant is a prime example of Macht's strategy at work: he knows that efficient processes are crucial to a company's success. That's why he never lets up in his quest to optimize work processes—"a never-ending challenge," as he says.

His constant search to make improvements means he knows Porsche inside and out—and the employees know him. He's a familiar sight and an "old acquaintance" who has a track record of success in the company. Because he has tended to work behind the scenes so far, Macht is known less outside Porsche, and that may be the biggest change for him in his new office. His strategy, at least, has remained the same. In 1998, when he donned a blue overall and workers asked him what his recipe for success was, he replied: "Work, work, work." ◀

Biography

Born: Aug. 28, 1960, in Stuttgart

Studied: In Stuttgart from 1981 to 1986, graduating with a degree in mechanical engineering

Professional career

1986: Fraunhofer Institute for Industrial Engineering in Stuttgart, research associate

1990: Porsche AG, specialist for engine planning

1991: Porsche AG, head of the work organization department

1992: Porsche AG, advisor to the executive board for production and materials management; concept and organization of the PVP Porsche improvement process

1993: Porsche AG, advisor to the CEO, developing and implementing the so-called POLE program, short for process optimization through supplier integration

1994: Porsche Consulting GmbH, Bietigheim, managing director

1998: Porsche AG, member of the executive board in charge of production and logistics

2009: Porsche AG, CEO



Michael Macht: Lean production in his sights, the company's best interests at heart