

The Butterfly Breeders

Creaholic SA, house of innovation in Biel

The whole world is talking about innovations. Creaholic in Biel produces them. Creaholic partners Elmar Mock and André Klopfenstein explain how innovations can benefit sustainability and why sustainability is so important to their own corporate culture.

“An idea is like a caterpillar, and we make sure the caterpillar pupates. We also think about the question: How will the caterpillar turn into a butterfly – and how will the butterfly fly? In short, we are butterfly breeders,” explains Elmar Mock, founder and partner of Creaholic. The difficult part

is asking the right questions, he believes. Flexibility is essential, as are different experiences, perspectives and talents. “Biel is one of the few cities to offer this unparalleled combination – a unique mix of languages and cultures. The same is true at Creaholic: we have 25 different nations working for us in a highly diverse range of professions. So we are all used to formulating our thoughts, feelings, visions in a way that the person we are talking to – colleague or customer – can understand!”

At Creaholic the staff are called partners, not employees. “Everyone who works for us must be at least one-third entrepreneur. We have an extremely flat hierarchy

and work with participation models. When a partner sees a project through and sets up a spin-off company, we hand over the start-up to the partner.”

Venture, test, convince

Not all ideas can be put into practice. A usable idea is often preceded by two dozen unusable ones. “We always take a big

“We always take a big risk.”

risk. At the beginning of the project we never know whether the idea will actually

PROJECTS AND PROTOTYPES IN BOXES : “THIS IS OUR MEMORY BANK,” SAY ANDRÉ KLOPFENSTEIN, MARCEL AESCHLIMANN UND ELMAR MOCK (FROM LEFT TO RIGHT) .





A CLEAN BUSINESS :
 CREAHOLOGIC'S INNOVATIVE HAND
 WASHING MODEL IS MORE
 CONVENIENT, MORE HYGIENIC
 AND MORE FUN, AND USES
 10 TIMES LESS RESOURCES.

be successful. Convincing our customers is the first crucial step in this process. After all, the customer will generally base his assumptions on what he already knows, not what he could have or what he could achieve." At the former soap factory on the Schnyder site in Biel they do not build castles in the air; they conceive and develop concrete prototypes and products for sectors such as medical engineering, telecommunications, food and packaging.

Sustainable savings

One idea that has already reached the prototype stage and is about to give rise to a new spin-off is a hand washing system that saves money and energy. "This centers around sustainability," says Dennis Crottet, physics graduate and Creaholic

“Biel helps us keep both feet firmly on the ground.”

partner and the mastermind behind this project. "We asked ourselves whether it was possible to cut down on the use of resources despite the growing population and increasing need for hygiene – when washing your hands, for instance." The impressive result is a hand washing model that uses ten times less energy and water than a conventional one. All it uses is just

one yoghurt potful of water; the soap is dispensed directly with the water out of the tap. For Mock and his partners, their

“The key is to look for solutions: not people to blame.”

own company is a prime example of sustainability: "I believe that a company should always belong to the people who work in it. That has nothing to do with communism but everything to do with taking responsibility for your own future, working actively for your own wellbeing, your ideas and your aspirations. And you should also be able to benefit from what you build up." Extremely low staff turnover levels demonstrate that the people at Creaholic are always motivated and happy. For Creaholic partner André Klopfenstein, sustainability is not a dogma but pure logic: "Obviously you're not going to rain on your own parade by wasting resources; you use them sparingly and sensibly. As in all areas of life, the issue is to find solutions, not people to blame!"

Information
www.creaholic.com
www.woodwelding.com
www.spinewelding.com

FACTS & FIGURES

Creaholic SA in Biel creates innovative product ideas, products and services by integrating innovation, technology and design. The innovation house was set up in 1986 by **Elmar Mock**, one of the inventors of the Swatch watch. A second branch opened in Venlo in the Netherlands in 2000. Thirty creative specialists, designers, engineers and technicians have already handled more than 600 projects for a wide range of customers including Roche, Nestlé, Boehringer Ingelheim and Tetra Pak. This has resulted in more than 150 patent families and various internal and external spin-offs, such as **Wood-Welding SA**, whose unique technology for "welding" wood formed the foundation stone for a groundbreaking new medical operating technique. The spin-off won the Swiss Technology Award in 2003 and the Swiss Economy Award in 2006. **Marcel Aeschli-mann** is a qualified engineer, managing partner and co-owner of Creaholic and WoodWelding. Mechanical engineering graduate and software engineer **André Klopfenstein** is the Creaholic partner responsible for operational business.