



Åke Nyblom, Tobias Marian and Ole Nyblom have a good co-operation thanks to mutual trust and shared values. Eco-friendliness is one of the factors uniting Berger Ecotrail and Ahola Transport.

Bigger load, less fuel

Reducing the environmental impact of road transports has been an important goal for Ahola Transport for many years. Buying weight-optimised and energy-efficient trailers from Berger Ecotrail, a world leader, is thus a logical choice.



Berger Fahrzeugtechnik

- Established 1994 in Radfeld, Austria.
- Part of Berger Group, which also owns the logistics company Berger Logistik.
- Employs around 90 people (prior to the completion of the new factory)
- Annual net sales of around EUR 31,5 million (prior to the completion of the new factory)
- Follows a company philosophy based on four E's: Economy, Ecology, Efficiency and Excellence.

A philosophy of keeping the wheels turning but in the eco-friendliest way possible has linked the Austrian Berger Fahrzeugtechnik Ges.m.b.H and the Finnish Ahola Transport since 2005. Since then, the co-operation between the trailer manufacturer Berger and logistics company Ahola Transport has continued to grow stronger.

"I would say we have a long-term partnership, not just relationship between a supplier and buyer. It is collaboration built on trust where both partners present their ideas and then see if we can do business."

So says Tobias Marian, Head of the Sales and Service Department at Berger Ecotrail.

Strategic co-operation

Together with Ahola's Purchasing Director Ole Nyblom, he has built up the companies' co-operation over a long stretch of time.

"Our co-operation has been great since day one,," Marian says.

Over the years, Ahola Transport has bought

a couple hundred trailers from Berger. The most recent deal was completed this summer.

"We have, in addition, shared various strategic projects over the years, some of which are ongoing right now," says Transport Director Åke Nyblom from Ahola Transport.

Ahola Transport and Berger have, in fact, collaborated on trailer development. Ahola Transport's role has been to test the trailers, which Berger has then developed further.

"By using each other's best knowhow, we hope to continue our collaboration in the future," Nyblom says.

Profitable and eco-friendly

Ahola Transport's keen interest in Berger's products lies in how the trailers are both lighter and more fuel-efficient and have a high level of quality and traffic safety. Their functionality is excellent, in addition to a focus on the environment.

"Ever since our establishment in 1994, we have manufactured weight-optimised trailers. We have also developed them non-stop and we are the benchmark in our field. There is nothing like our product on the markets," says Tobias Marian.

For Berger, it is partly about meeting market demand, partly about a philosophy.

"We increase our efficiency while simultaneously taking the environment into account. Whatever you use our trailers for, you win," Marian says.

The trailers weighing from 4.2 tonnes can fit more freight than competitors' trailers and simultaneously save on fuel and fees on toll roads. In practice, this reduces the number of trips by up to seven per cent and profitability increases while the environmental

impact is minimised.

"We are the lightest on the market and at the same time determined to maintain our technological edge on the competition," says Marian.

According to him, the company's high quality standard spawns at least partly from the current owner Gerhard Berger's background as a Formula 1 driver.

Expansion and a new plant

In recent years, Berger has also experienced annual growth of around 20 per cent, and just now the market is on the brink of reaching higher demand for light and fuel-efficient trailers than ever before.

"Demand is huge right now. This and the fact that we have been manufacturing at full capacity for three years led to the decision to invest in a new plant," explains Marian.

The new plant in Radfeld in Austria was completed in the summer and will manufacture more than twice the number of trailers compared to the old plant.

"It is by far our largest investments ever," reveals Marian.

Berger's intention is to meet demand and shorten delivery times, which have been too long with the plant running constantly at full capacity. In addition, they wish to invest in the latest technology to guarantee customers an even better product and improve working conditions for employees.

"A workplace has to be pleasant. That is how we retain and attract expert personnel. Doing something for the environment isn't just a marketing trick, but an entire philosophy for us. We wish to be greener on all fronts," says Marian.

This is why the new plant also uses geo-

thermal energy and minimises its environmental impact.

Global co-operation

Berger's leading position on the markets is also highlighted by its collaboration with the tyre manufacturer Goodyear, steel company Tata Steel and component manufacturer SAF Holland, with the intention of ensuring that all the components used in Berger's trailers are as light as possible and simultaneously meet the highest safety and quality requirements.

"These are huge companies but all three selected us as their R&D partner to achieve new lighter and more eco-friendly products," says Marian.

"They always do a little bit more and, after a short while, the relationship starts to build up long-term."

Using Goodyear tyres and Tata Steel's steel, Berger has reduced its trailers' weight and improved their fuel-efficiency without compromising the trailers' applicability. The steel enables a thinner frame and guarantees even more stability. A new tyre development enables a maximum load on two axles instead of three, which helps avoid the higher tolls that apply to five-axle combinations in many European countries.

"It had a lot to do with the fact that we are prepared to try new things, but also with our flexibility," says Marian.

He believes that this is the result of something Berger shares with Ahola Transport.

"Firstly, we are family-owned, secondly, we have a very flat decision-making process. The owner is always available to discuss things and we employees have a lot of freedom to make decisions. And if you can make fast decisions, you are automatically flexible."

Benefits of a family business

Tobias Marian is certain that family-owned companies often think differently.

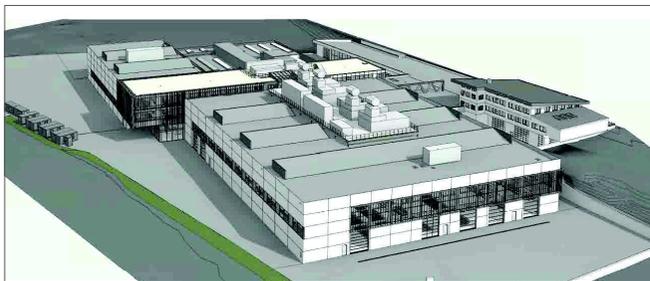
"Without a doubt. To begin with, we think in the medium and long term. This applies to the entire management. We simply don't focus on the low-hanging fruit," he explains. According to Marian, this has to do with the owners having an interest in both the company and their reputation. The relationship with both personnel and customers is valued more.

The impact that this way of thinking has had on the collaboration with Ahola Transport is, undoubtedly, a big deal. At the same time, Marian values the Nordic corporate culture in place at Ahola Transport.

"They don't just follow the rules and regulations laid out in agreements. They always do a little bit more and, after a short while, the relationship starts to build up long-term," he says.

According to Ole Nyblom, that is exactly what their co-operation with Berger has evolved into.

"We understand each other very well. We look forward to continuing our collaboration and are eager to see how the new plant in Austria will develop Berger's operations," he concludes. ■



The new factory of Berger Ecotrail will produce more than twice the amount of trailers compared to the old factory.