BLANCO

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Growth with clever system solutions for the kitchen water hub

BLANCO 2021: The future is in safe hands

Most people have become far more aware of the value of their health during the coronavirus crisis, but there are other things that have come increasingly to the fore too. Since lockdowns and the associated restrictions on contact, they have been spending a lot of time at home, and have noticed that their kitchens, which are now being used much more intensively, are getting old and may be lacking in space, comfort and functionality. Despite or perhaps precisely because of the pandemic, many people have been looking to turn their yearning for a cosy home and new kitchen into a reality over the last year. For BLANCO, the water hub specialist and brains behind the BLANCO UNIT, 2020 was an extremely busy year for the high-quality system solution made for all activities relating to drinking, preparation and cleaning.

The pandemic created unexpected challenges for the international company, which has subsidiaries in Europe, Russia, China, APAC and North America. BLANCO initiated a raft of protective measures at a very early stage: “The health of our workforce remains one of our most important guiding principles,” stresses COO Andreas Ostermann von Roth. This applies to all employees worldwide, whether working in administration or production. Working from home was encouraged from the very outset and is still being successfully practised wherever possible today. For this purpose, the company invested in extra hardware and special telephone management software at short notice, so that the in-house sales teams, to give one example, could also work from home and thus continue to support their customers. The plants

adapted to the situation by implementing a consistent approach to safety, with a clearly defined hygiene concept. The number of meetings in the production halls were reduced to the bare essentials and shifts were carefully organised. At the same time, however, the aim was to continue to provide retailers with a high level of service. “Managing this balancing act was and remains an extraordinary challenge for all of us,” says Ostermann von Roth. Both during the first lockdowns in spring 2020 and now, one year later, "We were struggling with significant supply backlogs. However, we did not shy away from the costs involved in enabling us to supply our customers reliably. We managed to do this in more than 80 percent of cases, which is remarkable given the circumstances. But we strive to do better.” Customers are used to something else from BLANCO, says Ostermann von Roth, adding, “If you bear in mind that our team has so far shown itself to be highly flexible in the crisis and given 150 percent to meet customer requirements as best as it possibly can, I know that with such a great team we can lead the company safely into the future,” says the COO.

BLANCO – the international system provider

BLANCO is investing in many areas to ensure competitiveness and create a framework for future growth strategies. Despite massive global sales declines in the first two quarters as a result of the lockdowns, record sales of 408 million euros were achieved in the 2020 financial year, equating to growth of 3.1 percent. Domestic sales increased to 151 million euros. Revenue in international regions amounted to 257 million euros.

The company is investing in its Composite production network, with the plants for the globally successful Silgranit sinks, which are still the

strongest growth engine, being expanded in Most (Czech Republic) and Toronto (Canada). Productivity will also be stepped up at the German site in Sinsheim.

Investing in quality means certainty for the customer

BLANCO sees itself as a premium brand, which is associated with high quality, long product lifetime, superb performance features and excellent customer benefits, all worldwide. "Reliability is part of the company DNA; it drives us. We want to become an excellent and reliable system provider in our international markets as well, and increase our global footprint," says CEO Frank Gfrörer, setting out the company's goal. In particular, this will be achieved by setting up regional procurement and quality management organisations. To that end, the company is investing in the expansion of a global, decentralised quality management system. A new test centre is currently being set up at the headquarters in Oberderdingen/Germany. This will focus on the UNITS, which are technically complex and have to meet specific quality criteria as a system solution. BLANCO is taking an innovative approach to this and is committed to agile product development.

Sharing knowledge: turning customers into water place experts

BLANCO is also setting standards by establishing customer-oriented digital services, such as the new international virtual training platform for retail and sales partners, planners, fitters and employees. The Brand Academy also takes a global approach and is run from Singapore. In the future, expertise in product innovations, installations, maintenance and repairs, and the assembly of the UNIT components will also be the focus of practical instruction at the new centre for in-person training, which will be directly connected to the test centre.

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“You can see the new strategy taking effect everywhere now,” says CEO Frank Gfrörer. “One very important aspect is the increased focus on the consumer and the promise associated with a premium brand.” With its large number of new products, especially the UNITS as holistic system solutions BLANCO offers its retail partners appealing opportunities to set themselves apart from the competition and create added value. Whether destined for a family home or a singleton's kitchen, UNITS with integrated drinking water systems like the drink.soda impress users with their optimum convenience. Besides tap water, they dispense filtered and refrigerated still, medium and sparkling water, and the user can also set the quantity and temperature. The BLANCO UNIT represents a complete rethink of the kitchen water hub and encourages the sustainable use of resources. The high-quality, perfectly coordinated components, complete with a drinking water system or a simple mixer tap, bowl and waste separation system, fit seamlessly into kitchen life as a high-quality overall solution. BLANCO’s drink.soda water system has just been awarded the international iF design award 2021 for its ingenious product concept.

Not only do the UNITS offer households greater convenience and sustainability, but they also make the consulting, planning and setting-up process easier and more reliable for kitchen retailers. The multi-level UNIT Partner Programme, whereby participating retail partners in the DACH region can qualify as water hub experts, provides information on this and assists retailers with their marketing by supplying a wide range of POS materials and other services, such as installation training. In addition, the recently launched wide-ranging online campaign for the drink.soda UNIT signals a fresh new dynamic for the BLANCO brand at consumer touchpoints.

Responsibility and commitment create a sense of security

BLANCO has also invested in expertise and staff development as it looks to achieve its strategic goals. At the end of 2020, the family-owned company had 1,542 full-time employees, including 1,102 in Germany and 440 at its international locations. BLANCO was named Top Employer 2021 for the eighth time in a row (Following a study by the German business magazine “Focus”) and is considered to be one of the best employers in southwest Germany. Numerous programmes for employees – from professional and personal further training opportunities to flexible working hours, pension schemes and healthcare – contribute to employee motivation and satisfaction. "We attach great importance to high-quality HR management, along with appealing general conditions and interesting opportunities for development,” says CFO Rüdiger Böhle. “It’s basically the overall package that sets us apart as an employer.” Not least, this includes a voluntary commitment to the Global Values, which provide support for successful collaboration both internally and externally.

Social responsibility is also important to the company. BLANCO has been involved with the humanitarian organization arche noVa since 2019, as a way of helping in international crisis areas where access to drinking water is difficult or even impossible. BLANCO’s partnership with the Dresden-based non-profit organisation focuses on the construction of mechanical water pumps and the training of locals for the independent maintenance and repair of the pumps, which noticeably improves living conditions for the local people (www.arche-nova.org).

The 2020 financial year in figures (rounded *)

Consolidated total sales	408 million euros (+ 12 million euros / + 3.1%)
Domestic sales	151 million euros (+ 9 million euros / + 6.7%)
International sales	257 million euros (+ 3 million euros / + 2.9%)
Percentage of sales generated abroad	63 percent
Investments	18.4 million euros
Employees (full-time/end of 2020)	1,542
of which in Germany	1,102
of which at international locations	440

*) Please note that rounding may result in differences from the exact figures for percentages, absolute values and comparisons with the previous year.

With BLANCO, even kitchen chores turn out to be sources of joyful moments. BLANCO is the premium brand for the well-thought-out kitchen water place in private homes. At its core, the BLANCO UNIT is based on three founding pillars: »Drink.Prep.Clean.« and it is characterised by a wide array of seamless combinations of sinks, high-end mixer taps, water optimisation, filtration, cooling and complementary accessories – from the soap dispenser down to the food waste disposer. This range of functions as well as the design, color and material options make it easy for every kitchen lover to find the perfectly customized UNIT at BLANCO.

Founded over 95 years ago, the company is now one of the leading manufacturers of components for the kitchen water place worldwide. With subsidiaries in Europe, North America and Asia, plus its trading partners, BLANCO has a presence in about 100 countries all over the world and offers its customers a portfolio that is perfectly tailored to consumer needs. The company headquarters and key production sites are in south-west Germany.

The company headquarters and key production sites are in southwest Germany. The BLANCO Group generated consolidated annual sales of 408 million euros and had 1,542 employees (full-time) worldwide by the end of the year, of whom 1,102 worked in Germany and 440 at the international locations.

Founded in 1925 by Heinrich Blanc, today BLANCO is part of BLANC & FISCHER Family Holding and has won multiple employer awards. www.blanco.com.

Image captions:

Image 1:

“BLANCO 2021: heading safely into the future” was the motto of this year’s annual press conference. The kitchen water hub specialist is investing in many areas to ensure competitiveness and create a framework for future growth strategies. The company is in a strong position: Despite massive global sales declines in the first two quarters as a result of lockdowns, record sales of 408 million euros were achieved in the 2020 financial year, equating to growth of 3.1 percent, as reported by the Management Board at the virtual press conference on 9 June 2021. (left to right): Andreas Ostermann von Roth (COO), Frank Gfrörer (CEO/Chairman of the Board) and Rüdiger Böhle (CFO).

Image 2:

BLANCO headquarters in Oberderdingen, Baden-Württemberg/ Germany, where the company was founded in 1925 by Heinrich Blanc.

Image 3:

The globally successful Silgranit sinks continue to be the strongest driver of growth. Employee at the Silgranit plant removes sink blank from the moulding station.

Image 4:

Employee at the plant for Silgranit sinks during a quality inspection.

Image 5:

UNITS with integrated drinking water systems such as the drink.soda also offer filtered water in three options (still, medium, sparkling), plus tap water. The user can also set the quantity and temperature. The BLANCO UNIT marks a complete rethink of the kitchen water hub. It also encourages the sustainable use of resources.

Further images:

Photos: BLANCO