



«WE VIEW TRANSFORMATION
AS AN OPPORTUNITY»

Feintool has a clear roadmap for the sustainable growth of the technology group. In this interview, CEO Knut Zimmer explains the cornerstones and opportunities of «Strategy 2030».

2020 was a year of crisis – globally. What were your company's greatest challenges during this time?

The greatest challenge was certainly the coronavirus pandemic, which affected our different regions and technologies at different times and in different ways. In this context, protecting our employees' health was, and still is, our main concern. And we succeeded in doing so; our crisis management plan functioned quickly and extremely well. We did experience a few infections, but no hotspots, and no fatalities. We were able to maintain production throughout, but sales faltered in the first half of the year. Nevertheless, we were able to generate operating earnings that were slightly in the black for 2020 as a whole and we have emerged from the crisis stronger than before.

How would you assess Feintool's future today?

We're looking ahead with optimism. The transformation in the automotive sector – an industry that is crucial for us – represents both a challenge and an opportunity. This process is being driven by climate change and digitization, to name just two influencing factors. We have positioned ourselves extremely well for this strategically, technologically, and organizationally. Studies forecast global growth for the automotive industry between now and 2040. Those are bright prospects. An effective response to the COVID-19 pandemic will also further boost the recovery of the automotive market.

You recently updated and refined your corporate strategy – what are the key cornerstones?

Our Strategy 2030 provides answers to the issues of the future that are of economic and social relevance to the industry. Our vision is: «We make the future of mobility possible with high-performance sheet metal technology.» In this context, electric mobility is of tremendous strategic importance to Feintool. In addition, we're protecting our business through diversification, with a broad range of products that are in line with market requirements. To become the market leaders in our segments, we foster innovation, follow quality management best practices, and we continually focus on cost control and group-wide talent development. All of this is enshrined in Strategy 2030. This is how we will remain reliable over the

long term and generate sustainable profitability to the benefit of all stakeholders.

Sustainability is also part of Feintool's new strategy. What are your priorities in this area?

The strategy development process itself is playing an important role in the sustainable growth of the company. We will be taking the next step in terms of sustainability in 2021 and will set goals for ourselves. On the product side, it's impossible to develop technologies without meeting numerous environmental and energy management targets. The market already demands that. The development of our high-tech FB one press is a prime example of this. On the operational ecology side, we know that the CO₂ we generate from our production activities results from the plants' energy requirements. This is therefore the single most important lever we can use to reduce our carbon footprint and is thus a top priority – which is why our plants in Germany all switched to green electricity at the beginning of 2021. In Switzerland, we are already close to achieving carbon neutrality when it comes to sourcing electricity. In the United States, Asia, and the Czech Republic, we are examining how we source electricity and what the options are, although conditions vary greatly from region to region. We're relying on a two-pronged approach, focusing on both the energy mix and our environmental programs to increase efficiency. Another key area of Strategy 2030 focuses on how we can further our role as an attractive international employer. We view all of our sustainability activities in a global context and now report on selected UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

What sustainability achievements are you particularly proud of?

Getting started with sustainability reporting was important for us. We were also able to reach a milestone with the new Strategy 2030. And on the business side, we are proud that we recorded orders received in all our regions. We are growing particularly fast in Asia, which is already becoming apparent in China thanks to numerous market launches. The first bipolar plates for hydrogen fuel cells were also ordered here – a major market success for us.