

DME CASE STUDY

DESIGN
MANAGEMENT
EUROPE

Walter Knoll AG & CO. KG

Germany

At a glance

Walter Knoll is the oldest upholstery brand in Germany. Founded in 1865, the Knoll dynasty has been creating new standards on the furniture market over six generations, creating classics in the history of furniture making and standing for modernism in furniture design all over the world. In 1993 the company was taken over by the Rolf Benz family. That marked the start of the rehabilitation of a monument of German cultural history.



Since 1995 the company has enjoyed persistent growth, and is among the most profitable in the industry. The number of employees has risen from 89 to 210. In the year 2007 Walter Knoll yet again achieved turnover growth in two figures, as it has been doing for years, stepped up its international activities and succeeded in boosting the brand's image all over the world. Sales revenue rose to 60 million euros, including the turnover from licensed partners in the USA and

the company's Australian subsidiary. Somewhat more than 50 percent of Knoll's products are destined for export.

The new Brand Centre at company head office in Herrenberg has met with a warm reception from both customers and partners.

Since it was opened in 2006, it has been the venue for multifarious encounters with the culture of the company. The creation of top-quality products is what comes across at all points – the synergy of high tech and craftsmanship is really perceptible. The Brand Centre contains the new multifunctional building its heart, and at the same time presents itself as the focal point of a global network.

Walter Knoll products serve to shape living spaces – with classic and modern designs, based on carefully selected materials and painstaking craftsmanship, offering maximum comfort and a long service life. Quality textiles and leathers form the basis of this handmade upholstered furniture, of which every product is a unique example. In partnership with internationally renowned designers and architects, including Sir Norman Foster, Ben van Berkel, Kengo Kuma and EOOS, Walter Knoll aims to occupy a global position in the premium interior design market.

Its approach has been crowned with success. In 2007, Walter Knoll's Circle Sofa won the Design Prize of the Federal Republic of Germany. Its Andoo Chair was rated as 'best of the best' by the Red Dot Award.



"Andoo Chair" EOOS



"Sen" Kengo Kuma

Fifty international design prizes in the last 10 years testify to the quality of our products, the uniqueness of which has been confirmed by the professional judgment of design prize juries. They are innovative, attractive and recognisably themselves.

Walter Knoll's new Brand Centre points to the future. In the autumn of 2006 the new corporate head office was opened on a new site at Herrenberg in Baden-Württemberg. More than 12 million euros were invested in new buildings and refurbishment. The entire complex consists of buildings from the Gründerzeit, industrial premises dating from several different epochs and present-day construction. It witnesses in a quite special way to the history of European industrial architecture. The transparent new building in the centre underlines the firm's skill in combining highly complex materials in an aesthetic and functional design.

Walter Knoll's new headquarters facilitates encounters with the culture of the company, and signalises its changeover from a manufacturing firm to a branded company.



What comes across at all times is the creation of top-quality products. At many points the real synergy of high-tech and quality craftsmanship becomes perceptible. The Brand Centre underlines the company's commitment to the Baden-Württemberg site, presenting itself at the same time as the central point of a global network.

Here you can both experience the past history of industry and get a sense of the shape of things to come. In a way that is unique to the world, the four-storey new building includes upholstery and sewing workshops along with administrative offices and exhibition space. All the storeys have the same architectural design. They are equipped with innovative building utilities and varying functionality. The glass design moreover makes it possible to look into the building from the outside. The company's architectural creed follows its value-oriented strategy, to add the individual signature of German culture to the formal idiom of world design.

Design

Walter Knoll practises a remarkable partner-ship with designers and architects. This is because innovation can only arise from thoroughgoing communication, from in-depth engagement with the processes that are involved and the clarification of ideas.

This can then form the basis of a search for the blank space, the gap for something that has never been created before.

So CEO Markus Benz likes to spend a lot of time talking to designers and architects, with a view to discovering whether they might fit in with the design canon of the company. This was how Markus Benz actually 'discovered' three young Austrians who did more than just fit the Walter Knoll design canon. Today these EOOS designers are among the stars of the international design industry and their creations for Walter Knoll are among the most successful products the company has ever brought out.

This long-term and sustainable style of cooperative partnerships with designers and architects is an important component of the company's success. Living up to the highest expectations – that is one of the aims that Walter Knoll's furniture aims to achieve. After all, people have a relationship with their furniture. In the best possible case, they become reliable partners over many years. Quality means making the customer's wishes come true – an agreement that creates confidence.

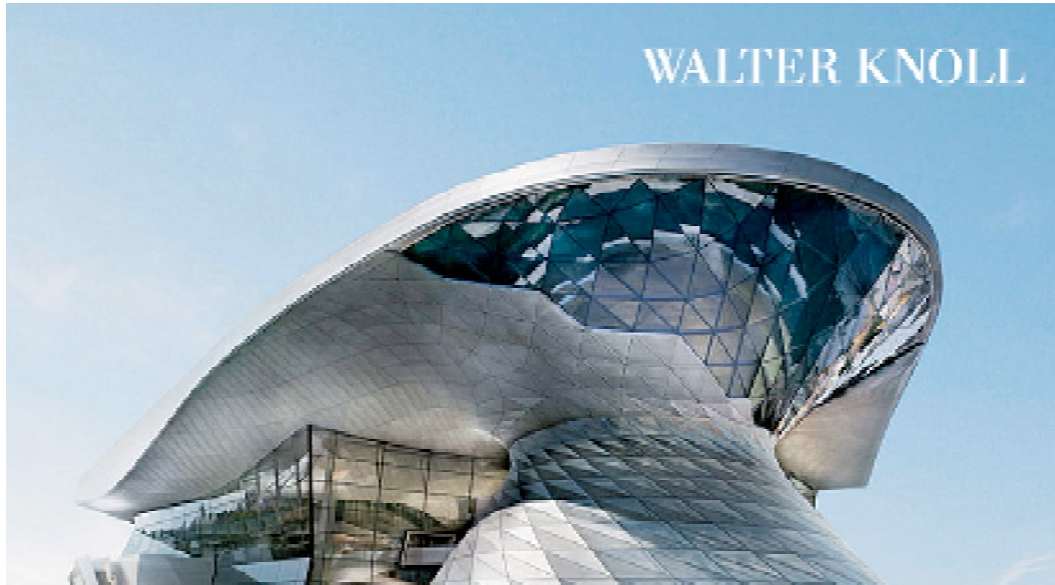


Successful products are always the result of effective teamwork. Masterly craftsmanship, carefully chosen materials and technological precision contribute to the creation of formal perfection. The design defines the character, but it is the material that lends an article of furniture its peculiar charm.

And the material that is used will live up to the highest expectations. That is what Walter Knoll stands for – backed up by the skills of the company's employees.



The brand



BMW Welt, München

The combination of different elements makes people pay attention. Leading brands are joining with Walter Knoll so as to give their customers something that is really special. Maybach, Mercedes, Porsche or Volkswagen, banks in Dubai, power companies in Shanghai, museums anywhere from Stuttgart to London, as well as worldwide premium brands – all these rely on Walter Knoll products to improve their public profile.

The company's brand positioning is unique, seeing that Walter Knoll is the only company in the premium bracket that is equally active, on a 50-50 basis, in the residential and office sectors, and has attained to a leading position internationally in both these markets.

This positioning generates synergies which express themselves in continued growth, and of course also add to the attractiveness of the company's products.

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