

An Unconventional Company Culture

Austrian moldmaker Haidlmair focuses on its 550 people in a very unconventional way, as it continues to be a leading specialist in building high-quality tools for beverage crates, folding boxes and garbage containers.

A fleet of 22 all-electric cars is waiting to be picked up by their new owners at BMW Knöbl in Steyr, Austria. The BMW i3s will complement Haidlmair's fleet of company cars and will be available for business and private use for the company's employees.

Based in Nussbach, Austria, a small town in the Austrian state of Upper Austria (which comprises 90 percent of farmland and forest) tool and moldmaking company Haidlmair wants to transform parts of its fleet to eco-friendly e-vehicles that are charged with electricity generated from renewable energy sources, while at the same time offering their employees access to company cars at a very competitive rate.

This unconventional approach to creating a unique company culture makes all the difference when retaining employees and their happiness. However, this is just the latest of many initiatives the Haidlmair family has taken to create a special workplace. Company founder Josef Haidlmair, who established the company in 1979, and his sons René and Mario Haidlmair, have always focused on their employees. The reason is not just because of the company's rural location where it is hard to find new staff, but because they understand that a company's culture is a reflection of what an organization stands for, and as the voice of a business, employees are key to ensuring that it succeeds.



Globally known for building high-quality tools for beverage crates and more, moldmaker Haidlmair focuses on its people in a very unconventional way. Here, at the company's headquarters in Nussbach, Austria, employees can use the company's tennis court, driving range, restaurant or the company-owned boats at a local lake.

"When you provide a work environment that your staff enjoys spending time in, it can help to improve their performance," Mario Haidlmair says.

"One of the most important things is that our people feel at home in our family business, that they trust us and know they can always approach us with any idea, complaint or problem. Everyone should be able to voice their perspective respectfully. Trust is the cornerstone of any company that thrives. Moreover, we have created an environment designed with an air-conditioned production area, LED light-

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Josef, Mario and Rene Haidlmair focus on their 550 people in a very unconventional way to create a unique company culture which makes all the difference when retaining employees and their happiness.



To date, Haidlmair has built around 1,500 molds for beverage crates which has become synonymous for the Austrian-based company which also run a 40,000-sq-ft. modern facility in Ontario, Canada.

ing and the necessary safety measures to help people feel comfortable where they work .”

Happy, Supported People Are Productive

Many companies try to build a culture that thrives, but it's easier said than done. While identifying a desired culture is easy, implementing and practicing it every day is hard. Haidlmair takes culture one step further by focusing on boosting employee motivation and morale by creating an unconventional workplace through unconventional means.

What are these unconventional means? Haidlmair shares a few here:

Recreational activities: Team outings are a great way to facilitate bonding with team members, reduce employee stress and give them the chance to get to know one another outside of the office. Haidlmair has always put a lot of effort into creating recreational facilities for their employees that are unique. For example, a tennis court, a driving range, a Go-Kart garage and a company-owned guest house, including a restaurant and night club.

Even more unique is Haidlmair's bi-annually organized, all-inclusive vacation offer for all its employees (280 of all 550 employees work in Haidlmair's HQ in Nussbach, the remaining employees work in Germany, Hungary and Canada), which is subsidized up to 95 percent by the company. “This year we went to Cyprus; two years ago we stayed at a hotel in Mallorca, Spain,” Mario Haidlmair says. “It's always fun. These trips are something special and offer heaps of opportunities for our employees to get to know each other, which is the nuts and bolts of our business.”

Employee incentives: Apart from recreational activities, which include company-owned boats at a local lake for employees to use free of charge, the so-called “Haidlmair Card” gives employees access to discounts at local shops, fitness studios, skiing and 15 other sports activities. Additionally, the company has invested in land and houses to help young employees rent apartments at an affordable rate.

Innovation: Employee creativity and innovation are essential for the success of any business, so Haidlmair has rented a small mountain hut in a very remote area in Upper Austria, with no internet or phone connection and



Haidlmair is constantly investing in state-of-the-art equipment, including an M2 Cusing multilaser from Concept Laser and an automated production line comprising four DMU 80 five-axis milling machines, three set-up stations and an automatic pallet rack system with 132 positions.

limited power, to offer a unique space for creativity, communication and collaboration. Many of the company's new developments and ideas have their origin in this unique spot.

Education and training: Education and training is of utmost importance at Haidlmair. "More than 80 of our employees in Nussbach are skilled toolmakers. So far we have trained 200 apprentices in-house and many of them remain with the company," Haidlmair says. "We have been running our training workshop since 1985 and constantly invest in the latest machinery. Today, our apprentices are trained on a DMC 635V, a Hermle C20U, Emco Emcomat 20D and FB-600L, a DMG ecoMill 600 V and a turning machine from Voest. Each year, eight to 12 trainees begin their four-year training at our training workshop."

In addition to classic CNC programming on the milling and turning machines, apprentices learn how a digitalized value chain works, starting with CAD/CAM design and downloading programs right through to company-specific process chains. This comprehensive and practical training

in the digital value chain is the reason why all newly-hired skilled workers at Haidlmair start off in the training workshop.

All trainees also get to use the largest CT scanner in Austria and an automated production line including four DMU 80 five-axis milling machines, three set-up stations and an automatic pallet rack system with 132 positions. A special feature is that the four five-axis machines act as a networked cluster or a uniform manufacturing system. The workpieces are loaded and unloaded via the automated pallet changer, which allows for unmanned 24/7 operation.

Trainees who stand out with excellent performance are even given the opportunity to gain experience at one of the company's foreign locations in Canada and Hungary. While the former is too small to implement the same dual training model (around 35 people work in the Toronto-based factory), Haidlmair together with other companies in the region has established a dual education program in Austria called "KTLA," which combines on-site training with a university or higher education degree. The Hungarian subsidiary has adopted the apprenticeship program, which is something Mario Haidlmair is extremely proud of, as the country does not support any apprenticeship programs.

The latest achievement in terms of training is the Haidlmair Academy, which in cooperation with the Limak Austrian Business School, offers postgraduate training for managers. This added training enables employees to gain a degree in management, like an MBA.

"Forward is the direction," Mario Haidlmair says. "This is my motto and I never tire of repeating it every day. It's true for technology and production technology but even more so for people." **MMT**

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