

Press release
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Sandler continues to grow despite the pandemic

Sandler's sales and team continue to grow. Additional capacity for the production of nonwovens for face masks and respirators has been added. The pandemic causes the requirements within the company to shift significantly. The U.S. subsidiary looks back on an eventful year.

Schwarzenbach/Saale / Perry – Notwithstanding the pandemic, Sandler is looking back on a successful year 2020. The nonwovens manufacturer achieved an increase in sales from 322 to 328 million Euros. Welcoming 60 new staff members, the Sandler team grew to 940, including 19 apprentices who started their professional careers in 2020. To contribute to the fight against the coronavirus, the Sandler team kicked up its efforts, putting decades of experience in filtration to effective use and utilising as much capacity as possible for the production of nonwovens for face masks.

In the wake of the first phase of the pandemic, supply shortages regarding protective masks quickly and dramatically exacerbated. "In April, we therefore we decided without further ado to invest in a new production line for nonwovens for face masks", CEO Dr. Christian Heinrich Sandler remembers. In record time, the new line was set up at the company's headquarters in Schwarzenbach/Saale (Bavaria). Production started in August 2020 and by September, the nonwovens line was running 24/7, making the CEO proud of his team.

In May 2020, Sandler became one of the founding members of the Mask-Alliance Bavaria. The company has since been applying its competence in this organisation, which set up a fully Bavarian value chain, manufacturing these medical products for use in fighting the coronavirus.

The pandemic also rapidly changed the requirements of Sandler's markets. In the automotive industry and furniture production orders declined in the second quarter 2020, while demand in other segments, such as nonwovens for disinfection wipes or personal protective equipment, increased markedly. At the same time, Sandler substantially invested in the modernisation of workplaces and factory buildings. As for the company's product range, Sandler continued to expand all of its market segments, among them applications in construction or hygiene products, also extending its range of efficient sound-absorbing materials for interior acoustics.

For Sandler, the pandemic gave rise to further challenges: At Sandler Nonwoven Corporation in Perry, Georgia, USA, a new production line was being set up inside a new building constructed specifically for this purpose. Advancing the strategic expansion of the U.S. site, specialists from headquarters regularly travel to Perry to contribute to the installation of the new line. Corona-related travel restrictions imposed by the U.S. Government delayed the on-site support, but the U.S. team steadily continued the assembly. Since late 2020, the German experts have been able to join their colleagues and apply their competences in

person again. In late December, first trial runs of the new production line were conducted; commissioning is now in its final stages.

In addition to concerns about maintaining supply chains, 2020 was characterised by significant fluctuations in raw material prices and freight costs. For CEO Dr. Sandler, the cooperation and team spirit within the Sandler staff are the reasons why the company was able to successfully navigate this tense situation: In all areas of the company, staff members working in divisions affected by declines in orders determinedly took on new tasks to assist their colleagues in segments where demand was increasing rapidly.

Sandler traditionally puts a large emphasis on sustainability, which in 2020 was again reflected in the expansions of both company sites as well as innovative product solutions geared towards conserving valuable resources. Sandler uses various natural and recycled raw materials in the production of both durable technical nonwovens and materials for disposable hygiene products. In cooperation with customers and suppliers the company ascertained which fibres are suitable for nonwovens production, for example pineapple, flax, bamboo, or corn. In April 2020, these innovations were at the centre of the “green month” on the company’s social media channels. Every week, Sandler introduced an alternative fibre. In addition, the campaign was linked to a fundraiser: For every shared post Sandler donated one Euro to an organisation that used the sum collected to plant 500 trees. Advancing its sustainability agenda, Sandler consistently pursues the goal of further reducing the ecological footprint in the manufacture of its products.

Growth and innovation continue to be Sandler’s predominant focus in 2021. “Building on the experiences and knowledge gained from the crisis year 2020, the Sandler team is excellently equipped to achieve these goals”, concludes Christian Heinrich Sandler.