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German American
Chambers of Commerce
Deutsch-Amerikanische
Handelskammern

**BMW Celebrates 40 Years with GACC
and 45 Years in North America**



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Breaking new ground

LB $\equiv$ BW

When I accepted the position at the German American Chamber of Commerce of the West in San Francisco I had many ideas about how my first couple of months would look like, both in the office with my new team as well as outside of the office getting to know the Chambers stakeholders and friends in the city, the Silicon Valley and the West Coast of the US.

Needless to say, none of my plans materialized as my arrival in San Francisco coincided with the unfolding of the coronavirus crisis in the US. Nevertheless, my tenure in San Francisco has so far been exciting and eventful. The COVID-19 pandemic has forced German Chambers of Commerce Abroad to rethink and innovate their portfolios in all areas of the world. Most of our services used to depend heavily on international travel and group gatherings. As a global network, we have moved closer together, exchanging ideas, sharing experiences, and supporting one another to achieve our common goal. It has been uplifting to collaborate so closely with colleagues from all around the world to keep supporting German businesses and the economy.

Here in San Francisco, we predominantly focus on innovation. Our vision is to drive innovation transfer and support German SMEs on their innovation journeys aiming to create economic opportunities and growth. A recent McKinsey study, which surveyed over 200 organizations across industries, points out that many businesses are deprioritizing innovation to concentrate on their "core business." I would strongly advise doing the precise opposite: Historical data shows that companies that invested in innovation during past crises delivered superior growth



*Sven Thorsten Potthoff,
CEO, GACC West*

and performance post-crisis. For example, organizations that maintained their innovation spending during the 2008/2009 financial crisis emerged stronger, outperforming the market average by more than 30 percent (McKinsey&Company). In other words, the return on innovation increases in a down-turn. Consequently, innovation expenses should not be seen as superfluous costs that can be saved during a crisis. Right now, it is the time to invest in innovation and use the disruption that the COVID-19 pandemic has brought with it to innovate and change the way your company is doing business. The German Chambers of Commerce Abroad are your partner for innovation worldwide and here to help ignite your company's innovation journey.

Yours sincerely,
Sven Thorsten Potthoff

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BMW celebrates 40 years with GACC and 45 years in North America

2020 will undoubtedly be marked by the unfathomable COVID-19 pandemic that has had a global impact. Yet, such heaviness reminds us that it's even more important to acknowledge and share celebratory milestones. And, for BMW of North America, this year holds many.

In 2020, the company is proudly celebrating a 40-year relationship with the German American Chamber of Commerce. Against the backdrop of this important partnership, BMW is, simultaneously, marking 45 years of operations in North America. And, in that time, the company has evolved and diversified its presence unlike any other automaker, creating a varied US footprint that spans coast-to-coast.

On March 15, 1975, BMW of North America opened its North

American headquarters in Woodcliff Lake, New Jersey with only one building and 150 employees. While the brand was already on its way to becoming a global phenomenon thanks to now-iconic products such as the 2002, 3.0 CSL, and 5 Series, the company's presence in the US was still limited. It was the establishment of BMW of North America that allowed the company to gain a foothold in the market and began building its reputation as "The Ultimate Driving Machine" in the hearts and minds of American consumers.



BMW of North America Headquarters in Woodcliff Lake, NJ today



Over time, BMW Group operations in the US expanded beyond traditional sales and marketing functions for BMW cars and motorcycles to include also the MINI and Rolls-Royce brands, financial services, technology research and development offices, a design consultancy and numerous regional offices, training, and vehicle distribution centers. Today, BMW Group in the US is a full-fledged, multi-billion-dollar entity with nearly 30 corporate locations in 12 states.

However, aside from the decision to build its US headquarters, perhaps no decision has been more significant for BMW Group in the US than the one made by then-chairman of the board of management, Eberhard von Kuenheim in 1992, to build the company's first full production plant outside of Germany, on US soil in Spartanburg, South Carolina.

Plant Spartanburg began producing vehicles only two years later and proudly celebrated 25 years of production last year. Now in its 26th year, the plant has been expanded five times and stands at more than 7 million square feet, making it the largest BMW plant in the world. Earlier this year, the five millionth BMW to be built in the United States – aptly, an BMW X5M

Competition Sports Activity Vehicle – rolled off the assembly line.

Thanks to a continuous investment of more than \$10.6 billion, Plant Spartanburg is today the global center of competence for BMW Sports Activity Vehicles, building BMW X3, X4, X5, X6 and X7 models for the US market and the world. About 70% of the plant's production is exported to 125 countries worldwide, making BMW the leading automotive exporter from the US by value for the past six years.

"More than half of the BMW vehicles



A BMW X7 Sports Activity Vehicle is assembled at Plant Spartanburg in South Carolina



BMW of North America Headquarters in the late 1970's



BMW of North American headquarters in Woodcliff Lake, NJ today.



The interior lobby of BMW of North America Headquarters as it was in 1975



The first BMW to be built in the U.S. (an Alpine White BMW 318i) sits alongside the 5 millionth (a Toronto Red Metallic BMW X5 M Competition Sports Activity Vehicle).

we sell in the US are built right here in the US, so we cannot overstate the importance of Plant Spartanburg to our sales network,” said Bernhard Kuhnt, president and CEO, BMW of North America. “BMW Group has long considered the United States to be our second home and we are proud to say that the US is in fact home to the biggest BMW plant in the world.”

Throughout its 45-year US history, BMW has continuously adapted its business to the mobility needs of today and tomorrow. Complementing its foothold in manufacturing, the company currently operates diverse subsidiaries focused on design and technology innovations, venture capital, and more.

Among them is a full-fledged design studio and consultancy, Designworks, that is focused on the future of mobility and beyond. From its headquarters in Newbury Park, CA, Designworks develops sustainable mobility concepts for both BMW Group and other companies. Rooted



An early aerial shot of BMW Group Plant Spartanburg in South Carolina. Opened in 1994, Plant Spartanburg celebrated 25 years of production last year and set a new production record for the plant.

in industrial design and practical solutions, the forward-thinking entity focuses on new solutions to meet the needs of a growing population and urban density.

Up the California coast, in Mountain View, the BMW Group Technology office is also at the forefront of global trends – those in technology. The office reflects the spirit of technological innovation embodied by its Silicon Valley surroundings, bringing associates together for a common goal: identifying and implementing new technologies and trends relevant to BMW.

Another example of BMW's commitment to innovation in the US is BMW i Ventures. Also located in Silicon Valley, it is BMW Group's venture capital unit for investing in fast-growing technology start-ups. The unit makes savvy financial investments in technologies of the future, including areas of digital vehicle technology, autonomous driving, shared and on-demand mobility and electromobility.

Through continuous investments in its business, people and community, BMW Group has not only made the US market a strategic hub, but also its second home.

Let's see what milestones the next 45 years have in store. ■

BMW Group in the US is a full-fledged, multi-billion-dollar entity with nearly 30 corporate locations in 12 states.



BMW Sports Activity Vehicles are loaded onto a transport ship for export. Approximately 70% of the BMW vehicles built in the U.S. are exported to 125 countries worldwide making BMW the largest vehicle exporter from the U.S. by value for the past six years.



An aerial view of Plant Spartanburg today. At over 7 million square feet and an annual capacity of up to 450,000 vehicles, BMW's U.S. plant is its largest in the world.

Climbing out of Covid-19

By Clarissa Dann, Deutsche Bank Corporate Bank

With the current wave of coronavirus pandemic peak of infections now behind North America and Europe, what sort of economic recovery can be expected? Clarissa Dann of Deutsche Bank's flow team takes a closer look at how consumer behaviour and demographics are determining factors.

Is it a V-shape, is it a U, a 'swoosh' or just one long underground tunnel? As economies around the world prepare for life after Covid-19 lockdown, what shape are the green shoots of recovery taking and where are the clues to how quickly they will bloom?

In a webinar hosted by the German American Chamber of Commerce (GACC) on 9 June 2020, Torsten Sløk, Deutsche Bank Securities' Chief Economist explained that while the shape of slump to recovery looks set to be a very deep V (see Figure 1), it was important for companies to "do your homework" and "check what the daily indicators of change mean for your business".

Some of these indicators are explained in Deutsche Bank's flow article, "Exiting the Covid-19 ravine" (5 June 2020), where data from Google, online restaurant tool OpenTable, levels of US small business re-openings and hours

worked all point to a tentative emergence from economic lockdown, along with rises in European discretionary expenditure on luxury goods. Germany leads the pack in restaurant re-openings (see Figure 2).

Slow recovery

While the virus peaked in Europe two months ago and market stress is going away as the epicentre shifts to Latin America and other regions, behavioural changes, explains Sløk, look set to slow growth over the coming quarters, at different rates depending on demographics and prevailing government policy.

In the US, over-55s account for 40% of consumer expenditure with those aged 65 or older taking a 20% share. Given that consumer expenditure drives more than 70% of US GDP, if this age group cuts back its expenditure because it withdraws from the workforce following Covid-19 containment and increases precautionary savings, economic growth is not going to significantly improve anytime soon.

In short, the following behavioural changes look set to be the new normal with an inevitable impact on a whole range of business sectors:

■ More spacing between seats, reducing capacity at restaurants, cinemas, sport events, concerts, conferences, trains, buses and aeroplanes because of social distancing rules

■ Fewer consumers travelling on holiday until a vaccine becomes available

■ Increased use of personal transportation – Sløk demonstrated that US and German car traffic levels have returned to those of the January and February 2020 weeks preceding lockdown

■ Lower levels of business travel and increased use of video conferencing

■ Staggered work schedules and more



"In the US, over-55s account for 40% of consumer expenditure."

**Torsten Sløk,
Chief Economist,
Deutsche Bank
Securities**

employees working from home as offices have to accommodate social distancing rules

Inflation or deflation?

Will we now see the return of

Weimar-style hyperinflation? One would be forgiven for thinking so, with around US\$10trn having been ploughed into the global economy in the form of massive bailouts/ interventions, covering both govern-

ment and central bank moves. The bill for the Global Finance Crisis was a mere US\$10bn by comparison.

The flow article “Covid-19 and inflation concludes that while the pandemic has unleashed an economic shock the like of which the world has never seen before; overall, countries are better equipped to deal with its impact and governments (along with their central banks) are not about to be any more tolerant of inflation than they have been for the past 40 years.

When asked about this issue at question time during the GACC webinar, Sløk pointed out that the overall drop in aggregate demand does indicate, as he put it, that “we will not see inflation anytime soon”.

Outlook

Governments around the world have taken extraordinary steps to protect human life and support their economies,” reflects Deutsche Bank Analyst Henry Allen in his konzept article ‘What prior pandemics can teach us today’ (13 May). This unprecedented level of support has, he added, made it possible for the subsequent recovery to be significantly stronger than it could otherwise have been. ■

Clarissa Dann

Editorial Director of Marketing,
Deutsche Bank Corporate Bank

Deutsche Bank



Figure 1: Deep V

Source: BEA, CBO, Blue Chip, Haver Analytics, DB Global Research

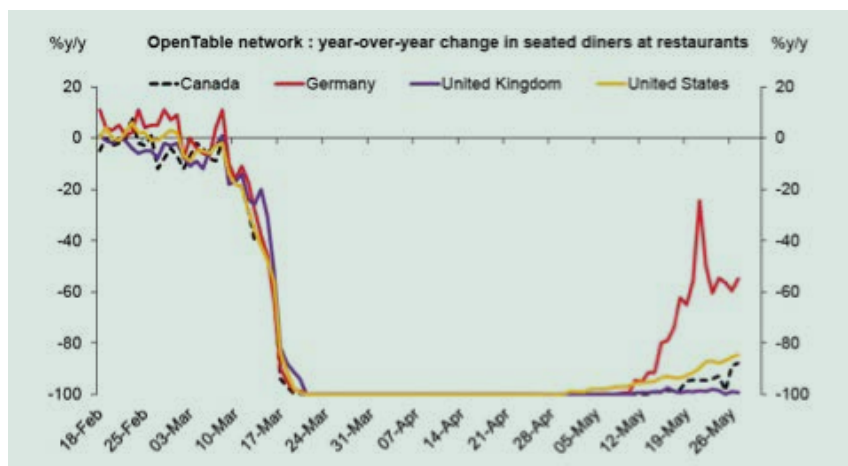


Figure 2: Restaurant bookings up in Germany

Source: OpenTable, DB Global Research

Note: This data shows year-over-year seated diners at restaurants on the OpenTable network across all channels: online reservations, phone reservations, and walk-ins. For year-over-year comparisons by day, we compare to the same day of the week from the same week in the previous year

Offshore Wind Exchange

GACC organizes first virtual knowledge exchange on offshore wind deployment in the US and Germany

By Larissa Seifferer, GACC

With the goal to better understand and navigate a constantly evolving landscape of offshore wind farm needs, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (BMWi) invited US stakeholders involved in the offshore wind industry to participate in a three-day virtual transatlantic knowledge exchange.

The trip, which took place this past June 8 -10, was part of a broader effort to strengthen the energy cooperation between both countries, encourage the exchange of ideas and promote energy transition policy expertise.

This first virtual format was implemented as a replacement for an originally planned in-person study trip from June 8-12, 2020 with several stops in Germany, including Berlin, Cuxhaven, Helgoland and Hamburg. Of course, due to the global

COVID-19 pandemic the event could not take place on site. The existing program planned in detail for the on site study tour was systematically adapted to a virtual format.

The exclusive knowledge exchange between American and German stakeholders was attended by decision-makers and experts from the US offshore sector, including the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM), the Maryland Energy Administration and various authorities from New York City and New York State. There were also participants from the grid

The exchange focused on the regulatory and political framework for offshore wind energy.

sector (ISO New England, New York Transco, PJM Interconnection), from non-governmental organizations (NERC, VMA, MAREC) and from the private sector (RWE, The Business Network for OSW) as well as a senator from the New Hampshire State Senate.

Experts from the BMWi, German authorities, associations, TSOs and

companies gave informative presentations, answered questions from participants and used the coffee breaks for networking. The exchange focused on the regulatory and political framework for offshore wind energy in Germany, grid and spatial planning for offshore wind energy, the local economic effects of offshore wind energy and the outlook for 2030 and 2040.

The virtual event was organized by adelphi, the Renewables Academy (RENAC) and the German American Chambers of Commerce (GACC) as part of the “Energy Dialog” on behalf of the German Federal Ministry of Economics and Energy (BMWi). The German American Chambers of Commerce were responsible for enlisting the 27 program participants from the US. ■

Virtual Delegation trip Bilateral Knowledge Exchange Offshore Wind Deployment in the US & Germany

From 08 to 10 June 2020



www.renac.de

The significance of logistics in global trade

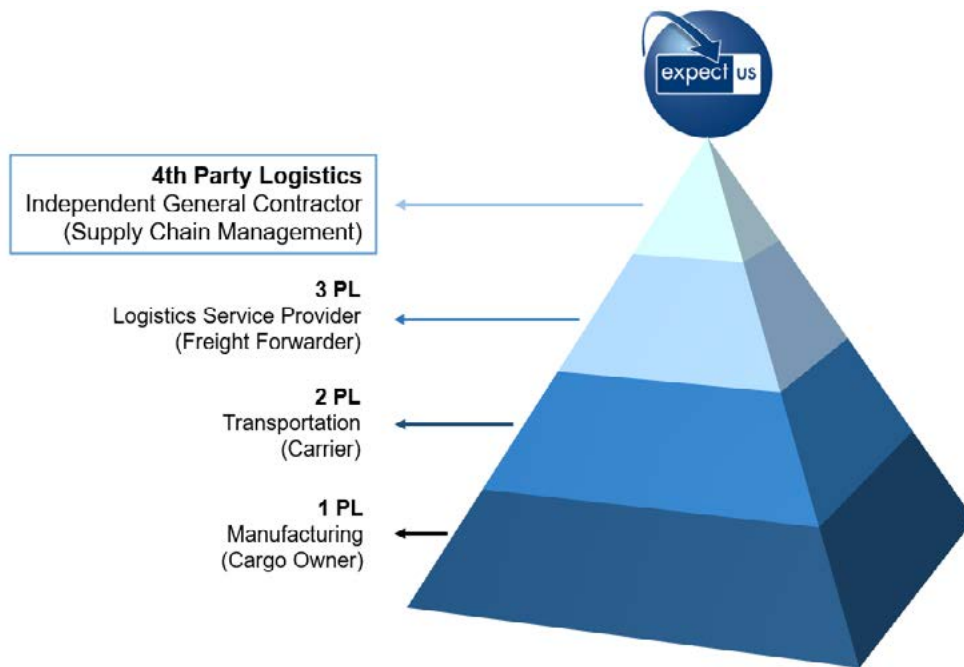
...and how to use it for your competitive advantage

During recent months, the importance of a strong logistic infrastructure became increasingly obvious. Businesses across various industries were either directly or indirectly impacted by supply chain disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Most of us as private consumers witnessed this firsthand, when suddenly grocery store shelves remained empty for weeks. The formerly invisible influence of logistics grew to be very apparent.

Organizations are adapting to these challenges and considering alternatives to be prepared for future interruptions. "Can we stock up on inventory to compensate longer lead times? Should we explore avenues of reshoring, which includes bringing back parts of the production and manufacturing closer to the company? And what effect does this have on our cost calculations?" Especially for businesses that heavily depend on international trade, logistics is a factor that must not be neglected.

Potentials for improvement within supply chain processes and related costs are still frequently underestimated. However, a strong network of partners, a keen eye for the bigger picture, and the proper integration of crossfunctional logistic processes can create a true competitive advantage. The latter requires profound knowledge in this field within the organization. A fresh set of eyes will help to gain better clarity. Consider teaming up with a neutral party that specializes in logistics!





expectus is a worldwide, independent operating consulting company, focusing on logistic process optimization and the realization of cost saving potentials. July 4th, 2020 marked the 20th anniversary of the company with its headquarters in Cologne, Germany. The US subsidiary incorporated in San Francisco, CA in 2007. Recently, expectus also opened a branch in the Charlotte, NC metropolitan area. Together with the German American Chamber of Commerce, expectus has established valuable connections with the international community.

*"It is possible to fly
without motors,
but not without
knowledge and skill."*

Wilbur Wright

The core concept of expectus is based on their mission statement "No Savings - No Fees!" They only participate in proven and realized savings. Accordingly, the incentive to achieve cost savings at same or

better service standards is substantial. The result is a win-win situation with no additional costs or risks on the customer's end. The initial audit is free of charge and requires very limited investment of time. After the presentation of the findings, sub-projects are defined and agreed upon to keep the customer in control.

Supply chain processes are being analyzed and streamlined to help the customer operate efficiently. Especially in the international environment, it is crucial to have proper shipping documentation and to comply with export and import rules as well as customs and other regulations. Moreover, expectus with a team of experienced logistics professionals, does the legwork to make sure logistic costs are at a competitive market level. After the realization of actual savings, these will be reviewed for approval by the customer. The goal is a mid/long-term collaboration not only during the conceptual phase but also during and after the implementation. The ongoing consulting and support ensure continuous costs control in all related areas. ■



*From left: Stefan Schaefer (President and CEO)
and Denis Rinas (VP of Operations)*

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Can artificial intelligence solve language barriers for global businesses?

How teaching machines to learn languages is helping businesses to scale new markets

According to research from the University of Oxford, by 2053 artificial intelligence will overtake humans in performing surgery, working in retail and translating languages. These are intimidating predictions, depending on which industry you work in of course. The earliest milestone of the three will be AI overtaking humans in translating languages, by 2024.

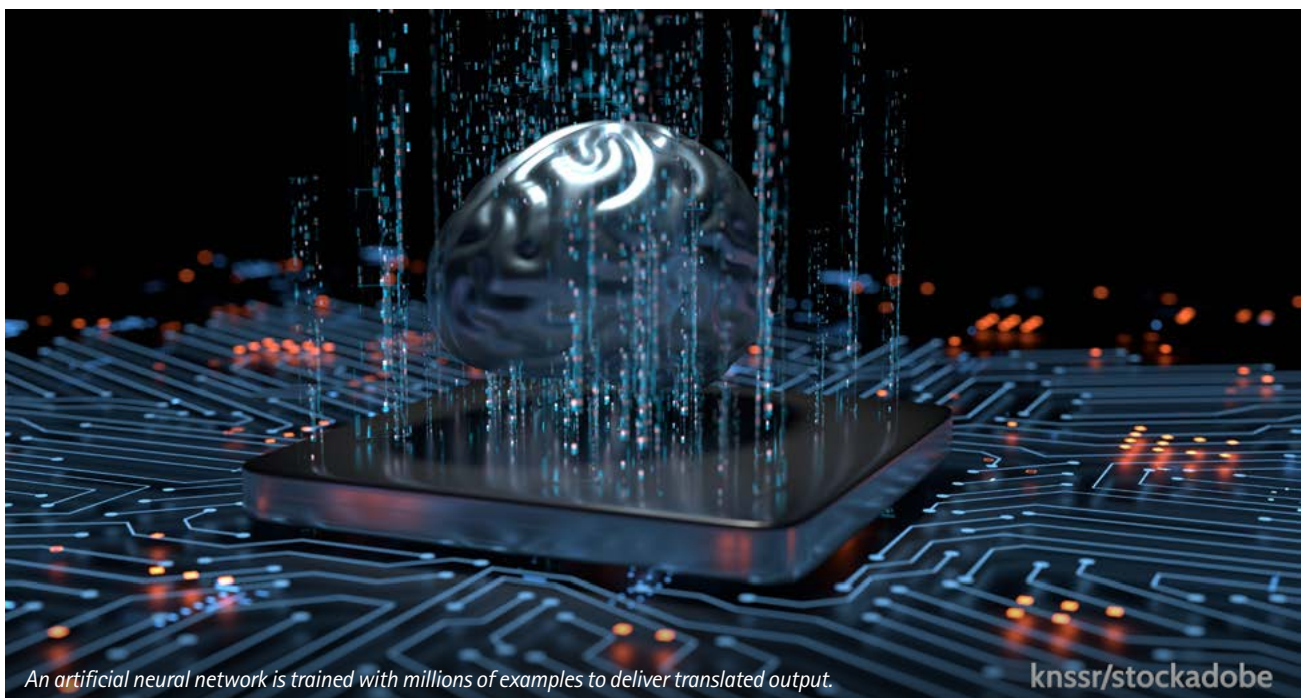
We could wax lyrical about the breadth of language diversity on our planet, but the reality is this: for many businesses, the ability to eliminate language barriers at the

click of a button marked 'translate' is highly desirable. Millions of dollars are spent each year by multinational companies to translate corporate, creative and product or customer services content for overseas markets. Think about it: from print and digital documents such as annual reports, multi-jurisdictional legal agreements and product user guides to digital platforms such as e-commerce sites and their chatbots, the demand for content is insatiable.

This is one reason why the US tech giants Google, Amazon, Microsoft and Facebook (and their Chinese com-

petitors, which include Alibaba) continue to invest in artificial intelligence and, more specifically, in natural language processing. Most of us have used Google Translate at some point and many appreciate the 'see translation' button on social media platforms. It is largely from the advancements of these firms that the world has followed suit.

As businesses scale new overseas markets, they power the language services sector – a US\$50 billion global industry which services companies with interpreting, translation and localization solu-



An artificial neural network is trained with millions of examples to deliver translated output.

knssr/stockadobe

Neural machine translation has become part of the language services landscape.



tions. But the pressure is fierce. Clients demand more cost-effective solutions which can be scaled up across diverse sets of languages to cope with increasing volumes and to improve time-to-market. Unsurprisingly, we look to artificial intelligence for answers. The language technology that was once almost exclusive to the tech giants is quickly becoming more mainstream throughout the sector. Neural machine translation (NMT) – an artificial neural network which can, after training with millions of examples, deliver translated output – has become part of this sector's landscape, though development and implementation varies widely between providers. Millions of words can be rapidly translated but, more significantly, the capability to customize these NMT engines and keep data secure is better than ever.

So, will the University of Oxford's prediction be accurate?

The current solution lies in collaboration

Machine Learning Developer at EVS Translations, Mohamed Boudan, explains: *"Machine translation is not good with content that requires human reasoning. But collaboration between humans and machines must be embraced. I use the best data we can gather and train machine engines*

for our clients who want a custom-built engine. In some ways, the machine is like a child. You have to teach it to correct its mistakes. To reach the point where they don't need us anymore won't be within the next ten to twenty years."

The broad sentiment of most global language services providers, including EVS Translations, as to whether AI can solve language barriers for business is this: artificial intelligence and neural machine translation is important, at least as a support mechanism to enhance existing translation production workflows. We are far from a future in which human translators are obsolete from the process, but hybrid workflows are already very much in play. What's more, translators who work frequently as post-editors on pure MT output are growing in number.

But machine translation is not a one-size-fits-all solution. Depending on the content type or business sector (perhaps the creative industries, a highly regulated industry or very technical industry), MT may or may not be suitable. Other factors also impact results or the rationale for deployment. There is no question, however, that it does play an important role in a business' overall strategy to scale content destined for multiple overseas markets. ■



Mohamed Boudan works in the translation technology department at EVS Translations to train machines and build custom engines for clients.

Company summary:

Founded in Germany in 1991, the privately owned language services provider EVS Translations supports multinational businesses to deliver corporate and creative digital content across a wide range of languages. The company's in-house team of 150+ linguistic and technical experts are based across its network of offices spanning Europe and the USA.

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Winning the Talent Race:

How manufacturing companies recruit and retain people they need

How do Skill Trade and Manufacturers attract and keep the talent they need for success during an economic downturn, and how can they succeed with limited resources?

There are more than 30 million small and medium size businesses (SMBs) in the U.S. representing 99.9% of the total businesses. These companies employ nearly 59 million employees or 47.5% of the total U.S. workforce. Many SMBs are local or regional organizations that are still owner-operated, high-touch and very personalized in their service delivery. These companies thrive on repeat business from a select

set of customers—relationships built upon the continued delivery of quality goods and services. This is simply not possible without dedicated people.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, the U.S. economy has grown steadily at a consistent rate of 2% to 3% since 2016. Whereas overall economic performance is the composite of many different industries, of note are those sectors that are typically referred to as the “blue- or gray-collar market.” For example, in manufacturing, the country is experiencing even stronger performance. U.S. manufacturing GDP increased to \$2,355 billion in the second quarter of 2019 from \$2,178 billion in the first quarter of 2019.

The Impact of the Labor Shortage on Small Business

Unfilled labor positions at small and medium size firms have a real impact leading to longer project timelines, inability to respond to opportunities, reduced quality of service or product and, ultimately, lost revenue.

The challenges are not limited to small and medium size businesses. For Lowes Home Improvement, the





Incredible starts here.

problem affects their ability to serve their retail customer base. Lowes is projecting that by 2028 the shortage in the skilled trades will exceed 3 million to fill open positions. Large franchises like Dunkin Donuts are facing the same challenges with the former CEO saying the labor shortage is the biggest problem facing the restaurant industry. While this is an industry-wide problem, it is the smaller businesses that are hardest hit as they have limited funding to devote to recruiting and retention tactics compared to larger firms. Indeed, these shortages will cross all trades including electricians, carpenters and plumbers.

In short, virtually every study or report by governmental and private entities clearly indicates that the stress and pressure we are seeing today is only going to increase. Increasingly, manufacturing, skilled trades and construction organizations are developing programs that build a culture of professional development as a retention strategy.

Moving Forward

The macro economic conditions of labor demands and the corresponding labor supply are hardly favorable to talent acquisition. Even more concerning is the out-year

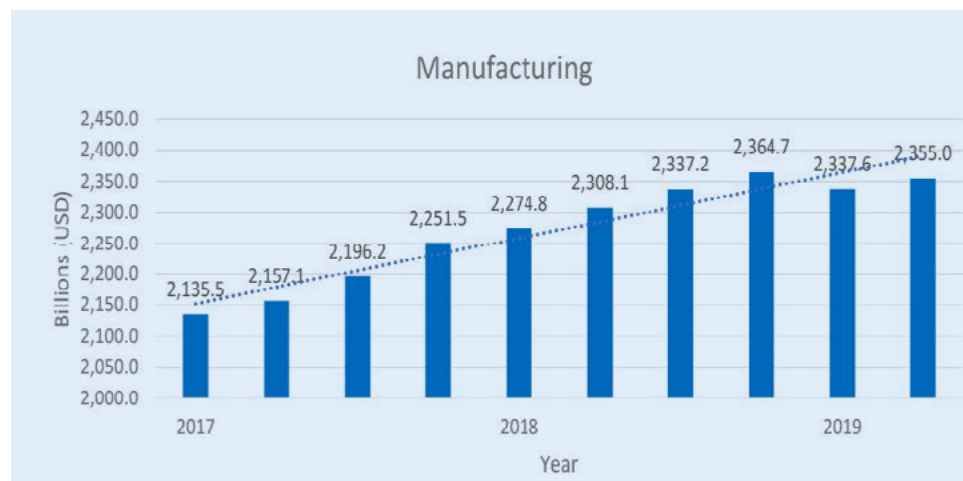


trends indicate an escalating problem. Businesses today that demand skilled trades to operate need to orient their perspective to a new mindset and develop attraction/retention strategies as a core competency.

Every company is unique and so is every employee.

■ Think about what matters to your business and how it has become what it is today with the resources available.

■ Consider the makeup of your workforce and understand what they are looking for, particularly as they may vary by background and experience.



There are more than 30 million small and medium size businesses (SMBs) in the U.S. representing 99.9% of the total businesses.

Thinking about the pipeline as a recruiting tool ultimately relies on people who embrace the workplace culture and are willing to refer others in their network. Employees are attracted to strong HR programs that include a comprehensive benefits offering—but they end up staying because they see a path for growth. Both recruiting and retention need to be part of the business cycle and should be thought of as a single entity.

The customers we spoke with found success even in a very challenging labor environment. This is because they had a long-term vision that allowed for adaptation to a changing workforce. They are intentional and strategic in the way they approach recruiting and retention and they understand the needs of a new generation of workers. In a high-growth, limited-supply labor

market, businesses need to design more relevant recruitment and retention programs geared toward a limited labor pool. ■



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TriNet HR solutions empower businesses to focus on what matters with access to human capital expertise, benefits, risk mitigation, compliance, payroll and real-time technology. With help from local Consultants like Darren and Taylor, who combined have over 10 years of PEO experience, our mission is to bring value to the SMB's looking to scale, maximize productivity and attract the top industry talent in order for businesses to accomplish their goals.

For more information:

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- ✓ Federal, state, and local employment tax filing and remittance
- ✓ W 2 administration
- ✓ Wage garnishment
- ✓ Payroll reporting
- ✓ Direct deposit

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- ✓ Dental
- ✓ Vision
- ✓ Flexible Spending Account (FSA) and Health Savings Account (HSA) administration
- ✓ Life/AD&D
- ✓ Short-term and long-term disability
- ✓ COBRA administration
- ✓ 401(k) setup and administration
- ✓ Payroll contributions
- ✓ Benefits enrollment and administrative access
- ✓ Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
- ✓ Employee discounts and perks
- ✓ Commuter benefits
- ✓ Pet insurance

RISK MITIGATION



- ✓ Workers' compensation
- ✓ Employment Practices Liability Insurance (EPLI)
- ✓ Compliance expertise for applicable federal/state employment laws
- ✓ Sexual harassment awareness training
- ✓ Unemployment insurance claim administration
- ✓ Workplace safety best practices
- ✓ Claims management
- ✓ Affordable Care Act compliance
- ✓ Employee handbook
- ✓ EEO-1 reporting
- ✓ Termination guidance
- ✓ Workplace employment posters
- ✓ Wage and hour guidance

TECHNOLOGY PLATFORM



- ✓ Employee and manager self-service platform
- ✓ Online on-boarding and benefits enrollment
- ✓ PTO tracking
- ✓ Database management and custom reporting
- ✓ Online training
- ✓ Performance management
- ✓ Expense management
- ✓ Applicant tracking
- ✓ Background screening
- ✓ Compensation benchmarks
- ✓ Total compensation statements
- ✓ HR reports (census, payroll, deductions, benefits, etc.)
- ✓ Visa tracking

HR EXPERTISE



- ✓ ACA compliance guidance
- ✓ Employee onboarding and orientation
- ✓ Benefits funding guidance and strategy
- ✓ Employee resource center
- ✓ HR compliance best practices review
- ✓ Human Capital Assessment
- ✓ Retention tracking
- ✓ Support hiring / terminating
- ✓ Assists with reporting and analytics
- ✓ Immigration services
- ✓ PTO policies and guidance
- ✓ Recruitment and interview training





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The US Braces for Recession:

Additional financial stimulus package expected

Article by Ullrich Umann, Germany Trade and Invest (GTAI)
Translation from German by Sandy Jones, GACC

Production is ramping up across the country

The US economy has been preparing to restart production since mid-May. This includes unbundling workplaces in workshops and warehouses as well as the mandatory wearing of protective equipment. The local authorities determine which sanitary requirements are to be carried out in addition and in what periods. For this reason, a uniform picture across the country cannot be drawn.

How difficult it is to resume normal operations in industry can be seen from the example of vehicle construction. The roughly 40 assembly plants in the USA initially experienced difficulties because important components from home and abroad were missing. What has caused the brand manufacturers even greater concerns now is the slump in sales. Tense public and private coffers and loss of income across the board are having an impact here. Instead of the usual sales volume (over 17 million vehicles per year), it [will probably only be 12.5 to 13 million in 2020](#).

New corona lockdowns in California

Sports, culture, and leisure facilities, lido, restaurants, and hospitality, as well as the first retailers, are allowed to resume operations in certain states, subject to time constraints. However, the number of infections in some US states – especially in Arizona, Florida, California and Texas – rose significantly again in mid-July. California Governor Gavin Newsom has once again ordered the closure of bars, cinemas, zoos and museums in all counties.

Many companies have not economically survived the officially ordered,



Sports, culture, and leisure facilities, lido, restaurants, and hospitality, as well as the first retailers, are allowed to resume operations in certain states, subject to time constraints.



GERMANY TRADE & INVEST

week-long closure of their business. Since the number of bankruptcy applications in the United States usually peaks several months after unemployment has risen sharply, many fear a whole wave of Covid 19 corporate bankruptcies despite government aid programs.

There are small bright spots among the airlines: on the domestic routes, passenger numbers increased slightly from June to early July. Since then, they have stagnated again. Most foreign routes, on the other hand, remain largely closed, which will not change in the short term.

GDP will be in deep red in 2020

The gross domestic product (GDP) is presumably seasonally adjusted in the second quarter of 2020 and has decreased by around a third on the previous year. The fact that private consumption, which accounts for around two thirds of the US economy, is currently not good is demonstrated by rising unemployment and a decline in retail sales. Sales in the US retail sector may have increased slightly in June, but a decline of 8 to 10 percent is expected for the full year.

Reliable statements are currently difficult, as the growth forecasts for GDP in the third quarter show: They mostly ranged between 8 and 30 percent in mid-July, so in an enormous corridor. For the full year 2020, -5.5 to -6.5 percent are expected. Even if many companies will hire people again after the crisis, this process as a whole should drag on for a while, so that increased unemployment in the US should remain more than just a short-term phenomenon.

Mass unemployment is becoming an ongoing issue

From the pandemic to about mid-July, around 50 million Americans have applied for unemployment benefits (initial applications). Some will be hired again as part of the easing measures, so that the unemployment rate has at least decreased somewhat since April.

Further information on the topic "Effects of the corona crisis on the US business of German companies" can be found in the recording of [our webinar](#) as well as our [joint webinar](#) with the AHK USA – San Francisco (after registering free of charge, go to the bottom right "To registra-

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tion"). We also posted a [video clip](#) on the economic developments in the USA and their consequences for German companies.

A "[Listening Session](#)" by the Representative of German Industry and Trade (RGIT) also offers interesting [insights](#) into economic experiences from the first few weeks of the pandemic lockdown. ■

WASHINGTON
★ UPDATE ★

NEWS FROM INSIDE THE BELTWAY

Farewell to NAFTA: USMCA takes center stage

by Caitlin Hickey, RGIT

USMCA has now replaced NAFTA after officially entering into force on July 1, 2020. The trade agreement retains much of its predecessor's character while modernizing certain areas and adding new parts. Understanding USMCA is key for German companies active in North America.

German companies strongly represented in North America

North America serves as a vital location for German companies that not only buy or sell goods and

services there, but also invest and build relationships.

Looking at the three USMCA countries, German companies have developed North American

supply chains and have raised production levels. Many use North America as a base for exporting abroad, including to Latin America and China. German companies are also job creators. There are around 5,406 German companies across all US states, 1,900 in Mexico, and 688 in Canada. In the US alone, German companies have created 773,800 jobs, thereby making Germany the 3rd largest foreign employer and 2nd largest in manufacturing. The numbers are similarly positive in Mexico and Canada, where German companies employ 200,000 and 55,000 people. These deep links mean that North American policy ultimately affects German companies.

Transition from NAFTA to USMCA

Since NAFTA reigned for a quarter of a century, German companies became accustomed to it and adapted business practices accordingly. They must now adapt to new rules, regulations, and procedures. This certainly presents a compliance

There are around 5,406 German companies across all US states, 1,900 in Mexico, and 688 in Canada.

RGIT REPRESENTATIVE of German Industry + Trade

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challenge, especially for small- and medium-sized companies.

Perhaps heeding calls from business, the rest of this year serves as a transition phase for USMCA. To be clear: NAFTA is no longer in force. However, US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) will focus on supporting compliance and education efforts. Most importantly, CBP will exercise restraint in enforcement.

The transition goes further for the automotive sector, which must adhere to stringent rules of origin. USMCA raises the necessary regional value content (RVC) levels for vehicles and parts while also introducing labor value content (LVC) and steel and aluminum requirements. There's even an alternative staging regime so certain models can temporarily qualify for duty free access without immediately meeting rules of origin requirements. Taken together, the new changes are highly complex. CBP will allow both a transition period until the end of this year and a further six months of "informed compliance" in 2021.

The future under USMCA

USMCA has delivered added certainty to business by ending political calls to tear up NAFTA, which some connected to job loss, stagnant wages, and decreased production. Yet companies should remain cautious. Unlike other trade agreements with

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no expiration date, USMCA expressly includes a sunset clause terminating it after sixteen years unless an extension is approved. In addition, USMCA will undergo periodic reviews that could lead to changes. Companies relying on USMCA should therefore think carefully about investments and create contingency plans.

Furthermore, the celebratory feeling of the three countries coming together for a new trade agreement does not necessarily mean calmer waters lie ahead. There is bipartisan political support in the US for using all enforcement tools, including the rapid response labor mechanism. Meanwhile, tariff threats remain as the US reinstates tariffs on Canadian aluminum following an alleged surge in imports. Canada and Mexico were previously exempted from Section 232 steel and aluminum tariffs, which remain in place against the EU.

Overall, USMCA might bring more prosperity to the region. The US International Trade Commission (USITC) estimated that USMCA would create 176,000 jobs in the US and would positively impact all broad industry sectors. Time will tell what benefits ultimately come to fruition, especially as companies grapple with the coronavirus. Yet one thing is certainly clear: a new era of North American trade has started. ■

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This material is distributed by the Representative of German Industry and Trade (RGIT) on behalf of the Federation of German Industries (BDI) and The Association of German Chambers of Commerce and Industry (DIHK). Additional information is available at the Department of Justice, Washington, DC.

Finding common ground when developing workplace processes

By John Otto Magee

If processes and procedures make up the manual governing the inner workings of a company, whoever writes that manual determines how the work is done.

This is especially the case in industrial sectors where processes are essential to the development, manufacturing and installation of complex products. Because Germans are product oriented, they instinctively strive to have the say about internal processes.

Because Americans are less inclined to view processes and procedures as making up the manual governing the inner workings of a company, the writing of those rules is seldom the forum where battles over power and influence take place.

Americans believe that all activities should be oriented on the conditions of the market and on the needs of customers. Those driven by power and influence strive to have the say about access to and analysis of the market and customers.



German View

The more that success is based on the product itself, the less important are the disciplines sales and marketing. Germans, therefore, are less concerned about Americans having the say in that area.

American View

The more that success is based on the relationship with the customer, the less important are the disciplines development and manufacturing. Americans, therefore, are less concerned about Germans having the say about the processes in those areas.

Advice to Germans

Get out of the power and influence game. If processes are crucial to success, convince your American colleagues to remain involved. Don't make the mistake of creating processes without total transparency and involvement of your U.S. colleagues. Otherwise you'll produce German processes which don't work in the U.S. Your American colleagues will not implement them and make convincing arguments to upper management why. You'll lose that battle. It'll be painful.

Advice to Americans

Whether you think it important or not, get engaged in the internal debate about processes. To prevent it from devolving into a power struggle, demand full representation, full transparency and full accountability.

About the Author:



John Otto Magee is an American who has lived in Germany for 25+ years. He was a senior-level staff member of the CDU/CSU Parliamentary Group in the Bundestag from 1995 until 1999, advising its leadership on the relations between the United States and Germany. He was a consultant for Siemens AG from 1999 until 2002 supporting the post-acquisition integration of Westinghouse Power Corporation. Since 2002, John has been an independent consultant, advising global companies on cross-border collaboration.

>> www.cultureinfluences.com

While involved, avoid being drawn into skirmishes. Focus, and keep your German colleagues focused, exclusively on those processes which improve performance and the bottom-line.

At the same time, get your German colleagues involved in your strategic thinking about how you go to market. Give up some of that power. ■

Toposens has received European Union Horizon 2020 funding for 3D ultrasonic technology

Our STEP alumnus Toposens, the first company worldwide to bring 3D ultrasonic technology to the market, has received €2.5M from the European Union's Horizon 2020 Program. The funding, awarded this past June as part of an EU grant, will help the startup to develop 3D ultrasonic technology specifically for the autonomous driving market.

Horizon 2020 is the financial platform for implementing Innovation Union, a Europe 2020 flagship initiative aimed at securing Europe's global competitiveness. It promises more breakthroughs, discoveries, and world-firsts by taking great ideas from the lab to the market. The fund supports different categories such as industrial, societal and scientific challenges.

"We are very proud that we have received the Horizon 2020 funding," said Tobias Bahnemann, CEO of Toposens. "Together with our recent investment round, we are now in a very good position



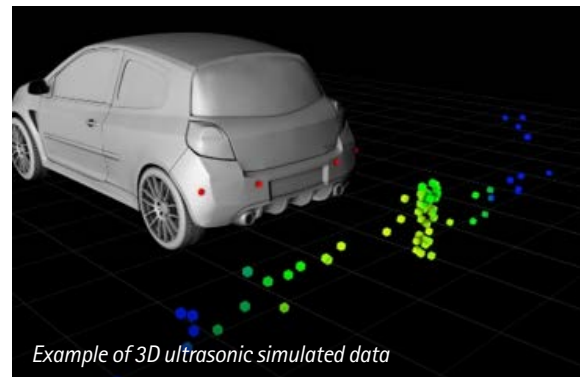
Ultrasonic 3D Echolocation Sensor

to successfully introduce our technology to the mass market in the foreseeable future."

Toposens will use the additional funding to enhance their current 3D ultrasonic technology for the automotive market. Receiving the funding is linked to several company milestones achieved in the two years. These include obtaining various sensor certifications such as an IP rating for waterproofness, proven sensor functionality in two pilot test cases and completing the B-sample phase for automotive standards. In the future, the sensor is intended to complement existing sensor solutions and play a key role in the automotive sector. The main goal is to improve the close-range detection of the vehicle and support autonomous driving functions such as ADAS.



Tobias Bahnemann



Example of 3D ultrasonic simulated data

"The European Research Council grant will allow us to support safer vehicles in the future and promote the EU's Vision-Zero - no more deaths on public roads," said Bahnemann. "Again, we are thankful for this great support and will make the best out of it!" The GACC NY is proud to include Toposens among the growing list of exceptional companies that have participated in our Startup & Entrepreneur Program - STEP. ■



*Beacon-based
3D Tracking System*

Rödl & Partner

Five Questions for Christian Rödl

GAT: How to communicate in an intercultural workplace and what has changed since the covid-19 pandemic took wave?

Christian Rödl (CR): The entire interaction among our colleagues – spanning 49 countries and 109 own offices worldwide – has become noticeably more digital than before. Regardless of setting, language or location, our communication is based on empathy, trust and team spirit. We are ONE firm and all part of the same family, sharing identical DNA while building bridges between people, cultures and economies.

Accordingly, our internal channels and structures are geared towards enabling frequent, fast and transparent dialogue. This was especially evident during the last months,

where we set up a global task force to support and advise our colleagues through the pandemic. Alongside regular online (video) calls, everyone was kept up-to-date on the latest developments, in multiple languages and formats, from the traditional email and FAQ to video statements in our digital employee magazine.

GAT: Do you have any positive community driven stories to share related to the pandemic?

CR: I was inspired by many conversations during the lockdown phase, with colleagues and clients alike. All of the them showed the will to persevere, to continue managing the business as smoothly as possible and a high degree of flexibility and motivation. We communicated very openly to our colleagues that we also

do not know what the future holds for us, that we are thinking through various scenarios that are backed up by specific measures, but that we are also very optimistic because of our strong client base. The openness was very well received; many colleagues shared our optimism.

GAT: Any advice for company leaders during the current time regarding reopening status and the rest of the fiscal year?

CR: In these challenging times – whereby uncertainty is a permanent feature of our business environment – family values, guidance and resilience are more important than ever. Especially in crisis situations, our worldwide clients appreciate qualified advisory, which is embodied by our “Caring Partner” principle. A designated contact person is always close at hand, ensuring our complete range of “Made in Germany” services is optimally employed to the benefit of our clients. It is imperative to not rush into things, to carefully evaluate all options and take heed of lessons learned, so as to ensure a robust foundation to build and expand upon, particularly in the current atmosphere.

GAT: What distinguishes you from your competitors?

CR: Rödl & Partner is not a collection of accountants, auditors,



Rödl & Partner

attorneys, management and tax consultants acting in parallel. We work together, closely interlinked across all service lines. We think from a market perspective, from a client's perspective, where a project team possesses all the capabilities to be successful and to realize the client's goals. Our interdisciplinary approach alone is not unique, nor is our global reach or our particularly strong presence among German family businesses. It is the combination that cannot be found anywhere else – a firm that is devoted to comprehensively supporting German businesses, wherever in the world they might be.

GAT: What advice would you give German subsidiaries abroad currently facing pandemic-related difficulties?

CR: The upcoming months will certainly be different in the United States. The economy will be driven by reduced national demand caused by a high unemployment rate. Especially US medium-sized businesses will see financial challenges due to their smaller capital reserves. This will provide German SMEs with solid financial backbones opportunities to strengthen their position in the US market through acquisitions and expansion of market shares.

For German companies doing business in the US, travel restrictions as well as slow processing times for visa applications might pose major obstacles.

The pandemic will change the supply chain not only in the US; efficiency and cost will still be in the focus, but additionally the supply chain needs to be resilient also in the future. Production in the US is becoming even more important in almost all industries. German SMEs that can embrace this trend will be positioned at the forefront.

Moreover, companies will be confronted with new work models that include support for working from home days, especially in metropolitan areas. The quick reaction to the provision of a local supply chain together with an adapted work environment can be the success factor for German companies that are coping with the pandemic. ■

For further information:

>> www.roedl.us

>> www.roedl.us/trending



Christian Rödl

Managing Partner and
Chairman of the Management
Board at Rödl & Partner



Prof. Dr. Christian Rödl advises family businesses and their owners primarily on cross-border structures of business groups and private assets as well as on company succession and estate planning.

He is an honorary professor of the law and business school of the University in Erlangen-Nuremberg and gives lectures on company succession and international tax planning. In this field, he is an author and publisher of numerous books and professional papers.

Prof. Dr. Rödl completed his law degree and practical training in Würzburg, Caen (Normandy), Nuremberg, Paris and New York (LL.M. Columbia University).

Beauty meets tech:

SQIN positions itself as much more than just a cosmetics industry e-commerce platform

By Lisa Krause, SQIN

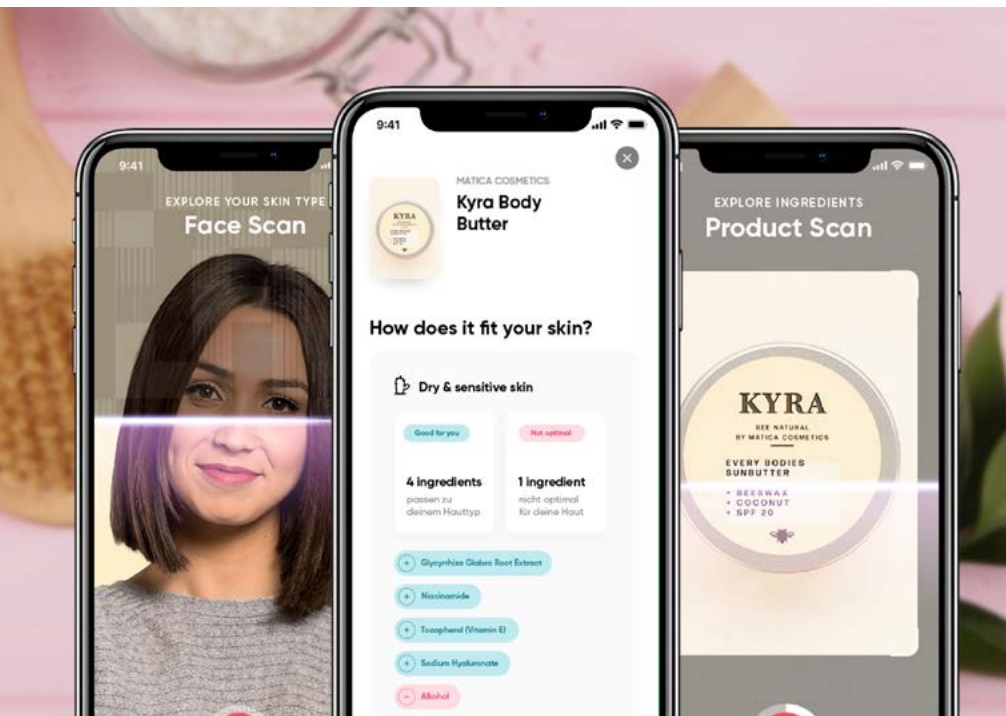
What do you imagine when you think of the “future of beauty”? Maybe robots applying make-up to someone’s face? Maybe holographic make-up looks? According to Martin Pentenrieder, Maria Bruckert and Björn Bak, the future of beauty will look drastically different.

How? Well, let us start at the beginning. After Björn successfully sold Europe’s largest dating app, Martin founded a globally relevant

fuel cell company and Maria helped Siemens to develop their digital strategy, the three entrepreneurs were ready for a new challenge. Their ambition was to develop something that will change the entire beauty industry for good and affect the purchase of beauty products in the future.

They brainstormed for an entire year on what the beauty industry could look like. They tested several so-called MVPs, and they finally came up with their new idea – creating an AI beauty tech Company. The team thought of using cutting-edge technology, such as augmented reality and artificial intelligence, to solve the two major problems of beauty e-commerce: emotional sales and personalized cosmetics. The result has been the creation of a mobile app with a personal beauty advisor. It’s a novel attempt at disrupting the \$35 billion US and EU beauty e-commerce market.

The app consists of an interactive beauty magazine, including several e-commerce functions. But if you look closer, it is much more than that: by connecting surveyed user data with the results of a skin scan, product scan and product data base,




 The SQIN logo is displayed in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters on a solid pink rectangular background.

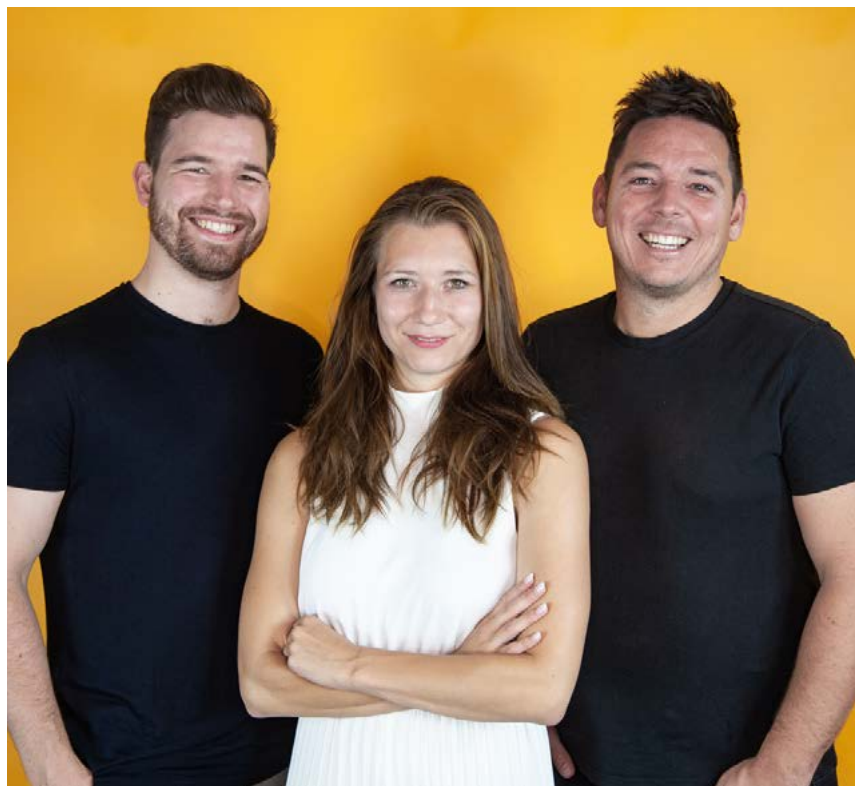
SQIN works as a recommendation engine. This engine brings out the best value for everyone. Users find their individually matched beauty products customized to their skin type, while brands that are listed in the data base will be discovered by a growing number and variety of users.

“We are able to match the right products to the right people, because we know our user base very well – their desires, their personality, their individual needs and their favorite products,” says Martin Pentenrieder. This means that SQIN is much more than just another e-commerce platform. Instead, it is a whole new interactive shopping experience, including the respective marketing channel.

“Above everything else, we are an independent platform. No matter what size our brand partners are or if they want to launch new markets or products, we want to offer everyone a chance to be part of our ‘future of beauty retail,’” exclaims Pentenrieder.

In comparison to classic influencer marketing, social media advertising or broadcast campaigns, SQIN’s users will be perfectly matched with

“We are able to match the right products to the right people, because we know our user base very well – their desires, their personality, their individual needs and their favorite products.”



From left: Martin Pentenrieder, Maria Bruckert, Björn Bak

brands they connect with on the app. This is because they’ll purchase products based on their personal needs, not just because of influencer testimonials or ads. This way, user brand connections will become much more in-depth.

So with SQIN “Beauty meets Tech” for an innovative, sustainable new beauty world that features an

entirely new beauty retail experience.

The “future of beauty” is more than a better version of the current market. The “future of beauty” is also more than just combining cosmetics with high-tech features. The future of beauty is, of course, about convenience, but it is also about creating customized experiences that satisfy and delight each customer. ■

Hänel Storage Systems

This family-owned business continues to thrive after establishing its US facility more than 30 years ago

In the early 1980s, a group of executives representing the Pittsburgh Technology Council visited Hannover Messe in Germany in hopes of enticing German companies to do business in their city. At this time, Pittsburgh, PA was in the midst of an economic and urban renaissance, having seen collapse of the steel industry and exodus of major corporations, followed by a revitalization of its downtown and directive to attract new types of industry.

While in Hannover, these executives met Joachim Hänel, the chief executive and second-generation owner of Hänel Büro- und Lagersysteme of Bad Friedrichshall, Germany, a manufacturer of automated storage and retrieval systems (ASRS) founded in 1953. At their behest, Mr. Hänel visited Pittsburgh and was given a grand tour of the city. Upon seeing the view from atop scenic Mt. Washington, he was struck by the similarities between the Western

Pennsylvania landscape and the area where he grew up in Southern Germany. He decided then and there that his company would branch out into the United States, and its office would be in Pittsburgh. The US headquarters was established in 1984 as Hänel Storage Systems, and the organization never looked back.

Hänel's two primary products are the Rotomat® vertical carousel and Lean-Lift® vertical lift module – Machines that allow customers to store more inventory in less space, and accomplish more in less time. By investing in Hänel automated vertical storage systems, customers solve many inventory management problems while saving a significant amount of money in the process, often with a near-instant return on investment.

Vast amounts of floor space can be recovered, up to 80%, by eliminating rows of conventional static shelving, pallet racks and modular drawer cabinets. Hänel units have a very small footprint, but utilize the full ceiling height of any facility, automatically delivering items from storage upon request. Customers utilize every inch of their unused overhead space, allowing them to increase production or otherwise transform storage space into a profit center.



Customers can improve the accuracy of their inventory to over 99%, and eliminate overstocks, shortages and expired items.

Employee productivity can be increased dramatically by adding automation to the part-picking process, with no more tedious searches for items to pick or restock. Employees can do a significant amount of extra activity in less time, or tasks can be completed with fewer people.

Standardized onboard inventory management systems Improve inventory control by tracking items according to SKU, description, quantity, description, first in/first out, minimum levels or even by using a photo of each product. Customers can improve the accuracy of their inventory to over 99%, and eliminate overstocks, shortages and expired items. Hänel's industry-leading microprocessor control systems and proprietary software easily interfaces with customers' host ERP, MRP or WMS systems.

Hänel units can limit access to stored inventory using electronic or mechanical systems that provide an automatic audit trail of activity, for a fingerprint of each transaction. Access can be limited to specific inventory or by specific personnel, using unique log-in credentials, barcode or keycards. Customers know who signed out items and when, which reduces picking/stocking errors and protects inventory from possible contamination.

All items stored in Hänel systems are delivered to a safe, waist height level in accordance with OSHA recommendations, no matter the size or weight. Employees no longer need to bend down to pick up heavy items from bottom shelves, reach up to access bulky items stored above, or awkwardly climb a ladder to retrieve a package. This significantly reduces workplace injuries caused by repetitive muscular motions, which in turn reduces employer insurance payouts, because all items are delivered to the same ergonomically-correct location every time.

Hänel products are used for all types of applications, including manufacturing, warehousing, healthcare,



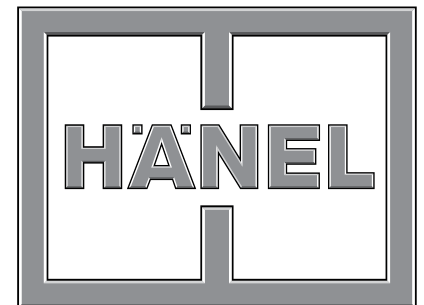
medical devices, pharmaceuticals and car dealerships. They store raw materials, work-in-process items and finished goods inventory – Wherever there are parts to be stored, Hänel is there. As supply chains have been interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, companies

needing to stockpile supplies can do so with Hänel machines, and know that they will always have access to critical inventory without interruption.

Aside from Hänel Storage Systems in the US, Hänel also has affiliate

offices in France, Switzerland and the Netherlands, with three manufacturing plants in Bad Friedrichshall and Wiesentheid in Germany and Altstätten, Switzerland. Hänel Storage Systems is responsible for all sales, service and support of customers in the Americas, with the exception of a few countries in South America. Hänel sells through a network of 90 authorized distribution partners in the US, Canada, Mexico and Colombia.

As a privately held family business, the Hänel family has a commitment to future generations with employees as its number one asset, and the corporate philosophy calls for self-sustained, incremental growth. Hänel has been in business since 1953 and in the US since 1984, and has a bright future because its products and solutions can be adapted to any market. ■



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Bäumer of America welcomes new apprentice

By Alexandra Hoffmann, GACC

The GACC NY Apprenticeship team recently welcomed a new apprentice to their program. Devin McClellan (pictured) signed on to become an apprentice at GACC NY host company, Bäumer of America. Devin will be pursuing both his 3-year DOL Registered Apprenticeship in mechatronics as well as his related Associate's degree at County College of Morris. We are happy to virtually celebrate his accomplishment!

Devin toured Bäumer of America earlier in the year and made a stellar impression with the host company. The GACC NY Apprenticeship team and Bäumer are proud to join him on this journey and watch him grow as he reaches new training milestones within the company.

In February, GACC representatives Matthew Allen, Alexandra Hoffmann, and Theresia Fischer, visited Devin's vocational high school, Sussex Tech, to catch a glimpse of some of the unique projects he and his classmates created. Among the projects, is an opportunity for students to compete by building and racing submarines. The event (sponsored by the Foundation for Underwater Research and Education and the International Submarine Race Organization) draws in students from all over.

Chris Land, who is the engineering teacher at Sussex Tech, has been spearheading the project with his students for over 19 years. The school named a submarine "Umpty Squatch" and the name stuck.

"Umpty Squatch" is now known throughout the school as they compete with this moniker. The GACC NY Apprenticeship team got a look at the most recent submarines firsthand. Devin and his fellow classmates toured the GACC team around the classrooms at Sussex Tech and shared the students' experiences while building the "Umpty Squatch". The knowledge that Devin learned at Sussex Tech will take him far in his apprenticeship program.

Congratulations, Devin. We look forward to seeing you in September! ■



Devin McClellan and his Sussex Tech classmates with the submarine they built.



Devin signs on for his Bäumer apprenticeship.

Community College of Allegheny County (CCAC) adapts GACC mechatronics apprentice instruction during COVID-19 crisis

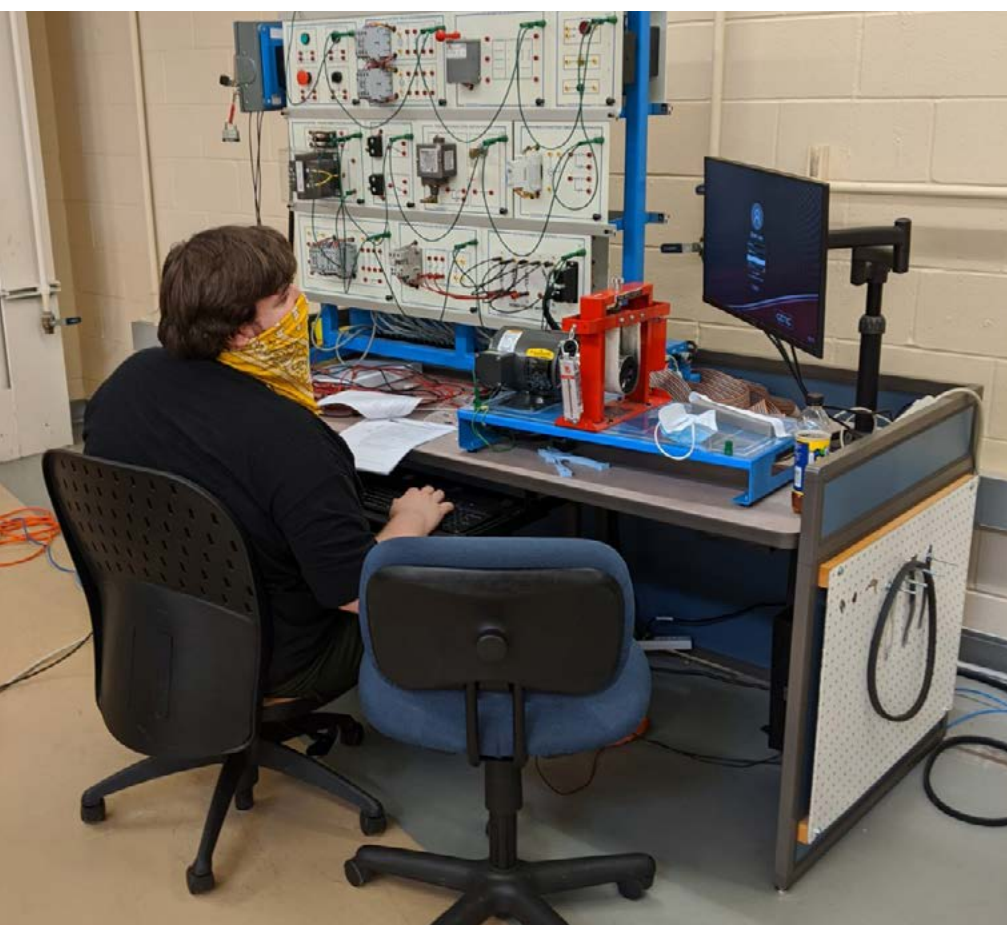
The Community College of Allegheny County (CCAC) is currently providing related technical instruction for 21 Mechatronics apprentices for the Pittsburgh Chapter of the GACC. Fifteen second-year and six first-year apprentices have traveled to the CCAC West Hills Center bi-weekly for hands-on learning in the Mechatronics

lab. The apprentices are taught and guided by instructors as they work through labs in mechanical systems, electrical wiring, digital electronics and robotics. The program contains a significant amount of hands-on application, and the largest portion of student grades is based on the demonstration of skills. Hands-on

learning is supplemented with the Amatrol e-learning modules and with interactive presentations and teaching customized by the instructor.

The COVID-19 situation dropped a roadblock in this demonstrated successful way to deliver instruction; however, Mechatronics instructors as well as the apprentices viewed the pandemic as just another problem to overcome. With hard work and creative problem-solving, a program was developed to keep the students on schedule. Initially, classes were paused to allow everyone a chance to adjust to changes in the environment (work, family and society). Various obstacles had to be dealt with: company layoffs or adjusted schedules, additional home responsibilities, lack of technology (internet/computer access), and transitioning to entirely virtual/online learning—not the most ideal mode for a group of hands-on learners.

With concentrated effort, the CCAC team of instructors carefully chose a few courses that could be conducted effectively via remote learning. This was not an easy task, as some courses require in-person instruction—mechanical drives could not be constructed from the apprentices' homes without sacrificing garage door openers and garbage disposals. Other courses, especially those with a



CCAC instructor Justin Starr during an online training session with 2nd year apprentices teaching them PLC's.

“The apprentices did a phenomenal job of learning in new ways and continuing to make progress while work and school were rapidly changing.”

Justin Starr, assistant professor of Robotics

programming component, could be conducted effectively online. The students are currently working through a course on Programmable Logic Controllers (PLCs), where the online simulator has all of the quirks of the physical devices. Even though this does not have the same feel as physically hearing relays actuate, one advantage is that mistakes, like blowing up a light bulb, can easily be reworked after assessing the errors—and without the broken glass or safety hazards.

Throughout this time of online/virtual learning, the CCAC instructors have remained connected to the apprentices via email, Blackboard (CCAC’s course management system), Zoom sessions, and contact through Rachel Mauer, president of the GACC. Additional CCAC staff have assisted, whenever possible, to brainstorm, offer support and tackle tasks to help maintain continuity. This experience has emphasized the need for good communication, thus enhancing the framework for future classes to be better prepared for other unforeseen events, such as



inclement weather, which could cause a disruption of in-person instruction. The second-year students returned to campus for a final hands-on assessment at the end of July to conclude their certificate program.

The GACC apprentices also have their own view of the situation. One apprentice in his second year of training feels that some things get lost in translation when doing online work, particularly with the virtual PLCs that can be a little “buggy.” Another second year apprentice noted that having to work around problems is actually similar to using PLCs in the field, which is good training for when problems arise. And another apprentice observed unexpected personal growth through having to learn about his own work ethic and the need for time management and structure to complete modules and routinely check email, especially as he has been furloughed during the COVID-19 situation.

Mechatronics instructors thrive on problem-solving, although it’s usually a computer virus they battle rather than a biological one. After a year of teaching the GACC apprentices, Chris Quick, adjunct professor of Mechatronics, remarked, “The last 12 months have brought a number of



surprises and challenges, but the GACC students continue to push forward and work hard. I’m looking forward to working with this talented group as they move through the program.”

Another instructor on the team, Justin Starr, assistant professor of Robotics, stated, “While adapting classes to the coronavirus was a challenge, life is all about dealing with the unexpected. The apprentices did a phenomenal job of learning in new ways and continuing to make progress while work and school were rapidly changing.”

As this fluid situation continues, CCAC will continue to strive to give the best learning experience possible to the apprentices, regardless of limitations and adjustments. When in-person instruction resumes, COVID-19 safety guidelines will be followed. The apprentices also get to put into practice the skills they learned virtually these past few months. One benefit may be an ability to master the hands-on techniques more quickly, as they have learned to resolve errors in the virtual setting. Also, these lessons of resiliency and adaptability will serve everyone well in dealing with any further impacts from COVID-19 or other obstacles that arise at work and in everyday life. ■

Anna-Maria Swiridoff

Manager, Innovation Solutions,
GACC West



From: Hamburg, Germany

Interests: International Relations. Enjoying the California outdoors through skiing and backpacking. And during the quarantine, a newfound interest of mine has been balcony gardening!

Professional Background: Background in international relations and public management/administration. Previously worked at a US company in Germany, in the public sector and an NGO.

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What do you like about your job?

Actively promoting the collaboration between the US and Germany is personal to me. I believe there is a lot to be learned from one another, especially in doing business, developing innovation, and leveraging talent. Here is where I come in!

San Francisco is an exciting location - the Silicon Valley captivates with its unique startup ecosystem, tech giants, and world-renowned research facilities. Besides, the West boasts strong industry clusters all over, such as in cleantech, smart manufacturing, artificial intelligence, and cloud computing. Working with this wealth of industries and stakeholders never disappoints. I continuously learn about the newest developments and product innovations while meeting many talented people who are accomplishing fascinating things.

What are you currently working on?

I am currently working with German companies that are developing technologies to decarbonize the transportation sector - which is a

huge topic in California due to its climate policy goals. We are furthermore developing a program that supports women explicitly to leverage Silicon Valley's best practices to excel professionally. As a firm believer in diversity, I am particularly excited about this project. To succeed in our globalized world, you need to have the best players for your team!

How has COVID-19 affected your work?

We have moved to more potent digital formats and are working with a wealth of tools for virtual participation and cooperation. We have found new ways to keep facilitating innovation journeys and making Silicon Valley and the Western US accessible for Germany - all without going on a 13-hour flight!

I believe this also to be an excellent learning opportunity for our network. Advancing digitization and embracing the potential virtual collaboration expands the scope of what is possible. ■

Welcome, New Members!**AccentC3**

www.accentc3.com

Anyblock Analytics GmbH

www.anyblockanalytics.com

ATEQ Corp.

www.atequsa.com

Bridge Commercial**Brown Smith Wallace, Marietta, GA**

www.bswllc.com

Colliers International South Carolina Inc, Spartanburg, SC

www2.colliers.com/en

cross-culture success, Rheurdt, Germany

www.cross-culture-success.de

Deuter USA, Inc.

www.deuterausa.com

Emsland America Inc.

www.emsland-group.de

Ginko, LLC

www.ginko.tech

Herkules Group

www.herkulesgroup.com

Horvath & Partners Management Consulting Corporation, Atlanta, GA

www.horvath-partners.com/en

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www.mjvinnovation.com

NAI Commercial Partners - Fulmer Group

www.naiglobal.com

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www.psm-spz.com

State of Tennessee Germany Office, Nu

www.tnecd.com

Stoecklin Logistics In., Atlanta, GA

www.stoecklin.us

Work Awesome Group LLC

www.workawesome.co/en

German American Business Awards 2020

Applications accepted through August 28

While 2020 has turned out a year very different from what we expected, German companies have delivered outstanding products, services and innovations into the US market. The German American Chambers are excited to announce that applications for the annual, nationwide German American Business Awards are now open. Given the exceptional nature of this year where positive role models and corporate social responsibility matter more than ever, we have established a fourth category honoring outstanding community engagement from our network.

Applications for the GACC Awards, one of the highest accolades in German-American business, are accepted through August 28 in the following categories:

- **"Excellence in Economic Development"** Award presented by PKF Mueller
- **"Excellence in Innovation"** Award presented by Fragomen
- **"Excellence in Services"** Award presented by Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation
- **"Community Engagement"** Award

All GACCs members are eligible to apply or nominate another organization in one of the four categories: Excellence in Services, Excellence in Economic Development, Excellence in Innovation and Community Engagement. The annual German American Business Awards invites our GACCs members to dive into our network, to

remember the historic ties of German-American business, and how those ties manifest themselves today and every day. It honors German-American innovation and progress, providing a meaningful showcase in which we celebrate the excellence of our members – presented with one of the four nationally recognized German American Business Awards.

A Different Celebration this Year

The annual German American Business Awards will take place despite 2020's many ongoing challenges. While the awards ceremony may look different this year, it is as important as ever to celebrate achievements of leaders within our business community.

With this knowledge, the GACC Awards will be presented on Friday, October 16, 2020 in two formats, both virtually and in-person (if possible). Depending on the state of the health & safety regulations, GACC Midwest will host an in-person ceremony, consisting of a small,

non-public gathering at their new office building in downtown Chicago, IL, where the winners and valued partners will be honored and can mingle. Official event details are to be determined. At our first ever virtual awards ceremony, the award winners will be able to present their winning story of innovation, regional development or impactful service. Due to the current situation, this virtual gathering will extend beyond just event day – award winners will be featured in various marketing activities throughout the weeks leading up to the awards and in additional features after the event. Additional details regarding the virtual event and these marketing opportunities are to come. ■

GERMAN AMERICAN BUSINESS AWARDS

More Information

To apply and for more details, please visit:

>> www.gaccmidwest.org/en/awards



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