

A portrait of Dr. Niels Lorenz, a man with short blonde hair and glasses, wearing a dark suit, light blue shirt, and maroon tie. He is smiling slightly and looking directly at the camera. His hands are clasped in front of him, resting on a dark chair. The background is a blurred office setting with light-colored walls and a door handle.

“ We must
think ahead ”

Radeberger Group takes a proactive approach to shaping change in the German beer market. That means that they positively think outside the box – and in doing so also discard the sector’s outdated traditions and beliefs. In this interview, Dr. Niels Lorenz, Spokesperson for the Executive Board, reports on how the largest German brewery group is also taking a very targeted approach to leveraging the opportunities offered by digitization.

FALLING BEER CONSUMPTION, SURPLUS CAPACITY, MASSIVE INVESTMENT PRESSURE AND TOO MANY SPECIAL OFFERS: HOW DO YOU WORK STRATEGICALLY IN AN ENVIRONMENT LIKE THIS?

LORENZ / By not only focusing on upcoming operational challenges, but also pursuing a clear target structure from a strategic perspective. We reformulated our strategy back in 2015, and since then have consistently stayed on the path that it requires. Essentially, it's about taking a proactive approach to shaping the beer market as a market leader, and at the same time self-confidently positioning our group of companies within newly created markets and ecosystems.

HAS RADEBERGER GROUP CHANGED SO MUCH OVER RECENT YEARS?

LORENZ / It has – and that's a good thing. It was essential for us to move even further away from the traditional supplier mindset, and to develop a new understanding of ourselves as a provider of solutions. The market no longer demands individual services, but integrated solution concepts from a single source. That's why we are already working on new and comprehensive service offerings for our partners in the commercial and catering sectors, for instance by way of drinks platforms and cross-sector collaboration. We continue to build on our established values, with high-quality beer still the focus of our brand core – effectively our DNA. However, our beers and our fantastic brands now need to be integrated into holistic solutions.

DRINKING BEER IS RATHER AN ANALOGUE INDULGENCE. IN LIGHT OF THAT, DOES DIGITIZATION PLAY ANY ROLE FOR RADEBERGER GROUP?

LORENZ / Of course, and a more fundamental one than you might initially think. Transferring analogue processes and business models to the digital world radically changes our company's structure. To cite just two examples, our joint venture with Transgourmet Germany offers caterers a comprehensive digital service package associated with foodstuff and drink. And with Durstexpress in Berlin, we have established a lightning-fast delivery service based on artificial intelligence and digital forecasting models, from picking to delivery.

A SOLUTIONS PROVIDER, ECOSYSTEMS AND DIGITIZATION: DOES RADEBERGER GROUP HAVE THE RIGHT SKILLS ON BOARD TO MEET THE CHALLENGES AHEAD?

LORENZ / There's no question that we have had to and still need to build new knowledge in various areas. On the other hand though, we don't need to do everything ourselves – rather, we need to bring together the right partners and concepts. That said, we will continue to rely on the abilities of our proven market experts and market players; after all, that's the only way to create concepts that perfectly fit for the needs of our customers and consumers. Relevance is a hot topic right now. In this changing market environment, the winning supplier is the one that delivers the most relevant and most comprehensive solution.

SO RADEBERGER GROUP IS BEING DISTINCT. IS IT ALSO BEING BETTER?

LORENZ / That's for others to decide – and perhaps the long-term situation won't be clear for a few years yet. For that reason, I'll just say that I'm convinced that we are on the right track, have done our homework, and have created the necessary momentum. To ensure that we don't lose our way on the path that our group of companies has taken, we follow a strategic map that very clearly defines our goals. And yes, there are still a few objectives that we have not yet quite achieved – and even topics that we have pushed ahead with but have not yet sufficiently operationalized. But I trust in our ability to make plans reality. We have the right team, with everyone pulling together and pursuing the same goal: Making Radeberger Group fit for a market that is in a state of change. And I have no doubt that with this team in place, we'll continue to take the market by storm. ■