

"German production makes us strong"

In times of the Corona pandemic, supply bottlenecks are the order of the day in the automotive aftermarket. Brake manufacturer Otto Zimmermann has taken precautions: with its production site and warehouse in Germany, the company is well positioned. In an interview, Managing Director Holger Keller reports on the current supply situation.

Editorial team: Mr. Keller, how did 2021 go for Zimmermann with regard to the pandemic-related supply problems?

H. Keller: 2021 was a turbulent year for everyone. Nevertheless: As a manufacturer of brake components, we were fortunately spared the major problems. We produce exclusively in Germany and are therefore not dependent on Asian production facilities.

Editorial team: Last year, the entire supply chain for the aftermarket "stuttered". Spare parts could not be delivered for weeks. How did Zimmermann fare?

H. Keller: In most cases, we were able to supply our customers with the necessary components as usual or with only a slight delay. We are investing massively in expanding warehouse capacities and optimizing our manufacturing processes. As a result, our warehouses were well stocked in 2021 and we were able to ensure availability as far as possible. That will remain the case this year.

Editorial team: To what extent are you increasing the storage areas?

H. Keller: In November, we completed a new 6,000-square-meter warehouse - directly on the A6 highway very close to our production site in Sinsheim. Brake discs and other brake components are stored there. We already opened an 8,000-square-meter logistics center there in 2016. With the new hall, we have doubled our storage capacity. Thanks to the central storage of goods, we can offer our customers even better service.

Editorial team: What is the situation with raw materials? There is currently a major shortage in this area in particular.

H. Keller: We source our raw material for brake discs from Germany and other European countries. This makes us independent of suppliers from the Far East. In addition, we are not dependent on container availability and container costs for raw materials.

We made this decision for quality reasons, as we are convinced that European foundries offer better quality and better working conditions than those in the Far East. Now we benefit not only from the better quality of the raw parts but also from the faster availability within Europe.

Editorial team: You also supply automotive components to international customers. Are there any restrictions?

H. Keller: Of course, there may be delays in overseas deliveries at present. Our independence only applies to procurement. In supplying our international customers, we also have to use overseas containers for transport and are feeling the effects of the bottlenecks in the delivery capacities of container ships, shortages of containers and higher freight costs. Nevertheless, we try to achieve the best possible delivery result for our customers through agreements with the customers and timely planning.

Editorial team: How do you assess the situation for 2022?

H. Keller: The tensions in the supply chains will remain and the high freight costs will also have an impact. Unfortunately, we cannot completely cushion the increased energy costs on our own. Nevertheless, we continue to rely on Germany as a production location - as we have done in recent decades. The pandemic shows that this was exactly the right approach: our German production makes us independent. We are consistently expanding our production and warehouse capacities so that we can continue to supply our customers with our brake parts on time - even in times of crisis. Zimmermann is well equipped to meet the challenges of the future.

Otto Zimmermann GmbH

For more than six decades, Otto Zimmermann GmbH has been developing, producing and selling automotive brake components for car manufacturers and the independent aftermarket. In addition to standard spare parts, the company also develops sports and premium brake discs for the requirements of motorsports and tuning. Today, the production program comprises far more than 4,500 different brake components, which are distributed via wholesalers and specialist dealers in more than 60 countries worldwide.