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Press release

Ulrich Alber honoured as a top innovator

Lothar Späth awards the "Top 100" seal of approval to rehabilitation equipment company for its outstanding innovations management

Albstadt – It's official: Ulrich Alber GmbH is one of the 100 most innovative small and medium-sized companies in Germany. So say the results of this year's "Top 100" corporate benchmarking competition - a cross-sectoral business initiative covering the entire country. One key element of the firm's success in this, the 17th year of the renowned contest, was its finely-tuned innovations management. Lothar Späth, former state premier of Baden-Württemberg, will present the prestigious "Top 100" seal of approval to Ulrich Alber at an official ceremony in Königswinter's "Gästehaus Petersberg" this Friday evening.

As patron of the SME initiative, he will be recognising the company's achievements in the five key categories of "Innovation-friendly Senior Management", "Climate of Innovation", "Innovative Processes and Organisation", "Innovations Marketing" and "Successful Innovations".

Ulrich Alber specialises in mobility aids for wheelchair users. It employs 190 people and generated revenue of around €50 million last year. The world market leader in add-on drive systems, it impressed the "Top 100" judges with its large number of innovative new developments and the way it markets them. Ulrich Alber's marketing team spends 60 per cent of its working hours on innovation, which means that they are involved at all stages of the product creation process and play a key role in decisions. Initial sales forecasts are made early on, by collecting detailed information, including the results of customer surveys and statistics about the type of people likely to use the company's products and services. The team also has regular meetings with key trade customers from this specialist sector and involves them in the development process. During prototype trials, lead users are selected to scrutinise the products and carry out critical reviews.

To qualify for the award, Ulrich Alber had to undergo a stringent, two-stage process devised by the Vienna University of Economics and Business Administration. "Our results show that the 100 top innovators generally tackle challenges head on and are thus well-equipped to deal with the current economic situation, for example. Innovation is a matter of priority at management level for most of these companies," commented Professor Nikolaus Franke, head of the research team, on the analysis. In the past three years, these award-winners generated two thirds of their revenue from innovations and innovative improvements, compared with 30 per cent in a sample of similarly-structured German SMEs. In addition, Top 100 firms were able to shave some 12 per cent off their costs through process innovations, compared with a paltry 4 per cent on the part of "average SMEs". As a result, this year's "Top 100" contains 54 German market leaders, 22 of which are global leaders in their field. Managing director Ralf Ledda is jubilant about his firm's success: "Managing innovation systematically over the long term has given us a signifi-



cant competitive edge which is a great boost to our credibility and inspires our employees, partners and, of course, our customers with confidence." Overall, 319 companies entered the "Top 100" competition this year.

All of the 100 top innovators are featured in the book "Top 100 - the 100 most innovative companies in Germany's SME sector" edited by Lothar Späth, and featured on the website www.top100.de. The project is organised by compamedia GmbH, Überlingen, Germany.



Lothar Späth gave the TOP 100 award to Ralf Ledda, Managing Director at Alber

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