



# FORGING A BRIGHT FUTURE

Switzerland's construction industry would grind to a standstill were it not for HG Commerciale, which is currently undergoing an exciting customer-focused evolution moving into 2020. Steering the ship is Chief Operating Operator Stephan Urwyler, who is building on the company's 120-year history.

STEPHAN URWYLER / CEO HG COMMERCIALE

**H**G COMMERCIALE – HGC for short – is proud of its heritage as a traditional Swiss company founded in 1899. It may have a distinguished history but the cooperative is very much focused on the future thanks to its progressive outlook. Headquartered in Zurich, HGC trades materials for the construction industry and is jointly owned by no more than 3,800 companies working in the building industry, while employing 850 people throughout Switzerland. It's currently undergoing a transformation and CEO Stephan Urwyler is masterminding its evolution from a building merchants to an innovative solutions provider for the Swiss construction industry.

He took up the position six and a half years ago when he was promoted from COO. Back then he was responsible for information and communications technology (ICT), quality-assurance, real estate, and investments, among other things. Today, Stephan is pushing HGC to deliver services such as "Just in Time" logistics, personal support, digital services, and tutorials together with the suppliers showing how to use products to their full potential. Based on this new service-oriented strategy, HGC has become a truly functional organisation to generate as much value for its customers as possible.

"We want to solidify our position as the number one building supplier in Switzerland," Stephan says. "Therefore, we are looking to increase the number of outlets and acquire other companies in the business. Our goal is to make builders' jobs as easy as possible so we're always analysing the market to see what aspects we can improve through innovation in processes and products."

**Foundations of success**

HGC calls on several important suppliers, all of which play an integral role in the success of the company. However, in line with the

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new strategy it is now starting to focus on its main suppliers with a view to developing the market. "Before we were working in a regional structure so that the sourcing and purchasing processes were different in each of the eight regions we operated in," Stephan explains. "In the new functional and more national-oriented organisational structure, the focus is turning to countrywide common products and suppliers. The whole process is being streamlined."

**Distinguished history**

By delivering materials and services of the highest quality for 120 years, HGC has won the trust and custom of Swiss construction companies and merchants. It's a founding member of EURO-MAT SA, Europe's largest association of building suppliers, meaning that it keeps a close eye on developments across the Continent to make sure it doesn't miss a beat when it comes to harnessing state-of-the-art building technology, not to mention keeping up to date with the new-

*" Trust is the bedrock of success. As an international premium brand producing sophisticated solutions in flooring and walling, we base our relations on true partnership, reliability, and trustworthiness. For this trusting cooperation, we say thank you. "*

Parador CEO Lubert Winnecken

est products, materials, and techniques like building information modelling.

**Going the extra mile**

HGC claims that no street is too narrow and no valley too remote. As a goal-oriented modern company it has a clear target: it can reach every building site and client in Switzerland. Thanks to local salesmen, 42 branches, and 20 expositions showing off products spread across Switzerland, HGC is always close at hand for the building industry.

"We are a cooperative and always very close to our customers," Stephan adds. "Each builder, carpenter, plasterer, or tiler has a personal contact within HGC. We are also investing in the future, so we strongly support schools with apprenticeships and further education in the building sector to develop skills. HGC is the only company in the field doing this so strongly and regularly."

The HGC House – a vocational training school for the construction industry located in Campus Sursee – is putting the con- ➔

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No location is too remote for HGC's drivers

viction Stephan outlines into practise. The company educates its own apprentices in a variety of roles, so the next generation of tradesmen-cum-businessmen is being well nurtured. Investing in people is one thing HGC takes very seriously.

Stephan says: "Given the organisational transformation we're going through, the biggest challenges we face are related to personnel. When people have worked in a certain way for 20 or even 30 years, it can be very difficult for them to adapt to a new process and way to approach customers. If our employees are willing to change and evolve, HGC helps them to fulfil their tasks in the job but

expects high performance in return. We need to make the effort because at the end of the day people are our capital. A good team and good people are vital if you want to move for-

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#### Hi-spec finish

Protecting the environment is also an issue HGC doesn't take lightly and one way it helps is by recycling building waste. The company also uses railway transportation where possible and invests in the newest trucks and forklifts to reduce fuel consumption.

So, as you can see, HGC is working to build a better, more efficient future for Switzerland's construction industry, brick by brick, house by house, city by city. [➔](#)



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