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INTERVIEW

Hidden Champion in the Field of Specialized Grinding Machines

Interview with Beat Schweizer, Area Sales Manager at *Mägerle AG Maschinenfabrik*

[Mägerle AG Maschinenfabrik](#) is a renowned Swiss company with a rich history of over 90 years in the manufacturing industry. Specializing in high-precision grinding machines, *Mägerle* is known for its innovative and technologically advanced solutions that cater to a wide range of industries, including turbine (aerospace and energy), automotive, and tool manufacturing. Over the years, *Mägerle Maschinenfabrik AG* has also forged strong business ties with Japan, a key market known for its high standards of precision engineering and manufacturing. In this month's issue, we are excited to share with you an interview with Mr. **Beat Schweizer**, Area Sales Manager at *Mägerle* since 2014.

Mr Schweizer, can you tell us more about your work at Mägerle Maschinenbau AG?

As a hidden champion in the industry of specialized grinding machines, we pride ourselves on producing and distributing these machines globally. With a team of around 160 individuals, our headquarters near Zurich are the hub of our operations as part of the [UNITED GRINDING Group](#), the largest grinding

machine manufacturer world-wide. My journey with *Mägerle* began a decade ago when the company made a strategic decision to expand geographically, leading to a focus on business development. One of our goals was to introduce the latest Swiss technology into the Japanese tooling and grinding market, which ranks third globally in size. Leveraging our unique selling proposition, we aimed to make a significant impact in a market where Japan's strength lies within the manufacturing sector. Our commitment to innovation and quality has been instrumental in shaping our success story in this competitive landscape.

How did your company start its business operations in Japan and with Japanese partners?

Our journey into the Japanese market began many years ago with a rather reactive approach: Initially, companies who had come to know about our specialized machines through various channels reached out to us, expressing interest in our products. This initial interest led to some successful sales, laying the foun-

ation for our presence in Japan. Even in those early days, we recognized the importance of having a local partner to facilitate our operations in Japan. This partnership was crucial in bridging any gaps that arose, particularly in terms of financial aspects such as payment terms. Additionally, having a local partner ensured that we could provide quick and excellent service to our Japanese clients, further solidifying our reputation and presence in the market.

What sets Mägerle apart from other Swiss companies operating in the same field in Japan?

We pride ourselves on being virtually the sole player in our niche worldwide, offering unparalleled expertise and innovation as well as showcasing our strength and capabilities within the industry. Our primary distinctive feature lies in our utilization of [creep feed grinding](#), which serves as our key unique selling proposition. And while we may not have direct competitors in this specific area, I would say that we share similarities with other hidden champions being active in Japan.

(continue on page 2)

Hidden Champion in the Field of Specialized Grinding Machines

Interview with Beat Schweizer, Area Sales Manager at Mägerle AG Maschinenfabrik

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INTERVIEW

How do you navigate the cultural differences between Switzerland and Japan in your business operations?

Navigating the cultural differences in our business operations is a crucial aspect of my role, especially since we specialize in selling machines tailored to our customers' needs, resulting in a limited number of projects. To effectively serve both countries and bridge the gap, drawing on my experience of spending 5 years in Japan around 20 years ago and having traveled to Japan over 100 times, as well as having a Japanese wife and family, proves invaluable. This unique background allows me to understand and appreciate the nuances of both Swiss and Japanese cultures, enabling me to navigate potential challenges with cultural sensitivity and insight.

What steps do you take to ensure compliance with local regulations and standards in Japan?

We are lucky to have an excellent and well-established partner like [YKT](#) in Japan. To ensure compliance with local regulations and standards, we trust them to handle this aspect for us. They have a strong reputation and expertise in navigating the intricacies of Japanese regulations. By relying on their knowledge and capabilities, we can rest assured that our operations align with the necessary legal requirements and industry standards in Japan. That way, we can focus on our core activities



The MFP-51 (5-axis grinding center) is particularly suitable for applications in the turbine sector (aviation and energy). © Mägerle AG Maschinenfabrik

while ensuring that we meet all compliance obligations effectively.

Where do you see the main challenges and opportunities for your company in the current Japanese business environment?

One of the present main challenges for our company is the fluctuating exchange rate, which can impact our costs and profits when dealing with international transactions. However, a significant opportunity lies in the fact that our potential Japanese customers are primarily focused on exporting, which can lead to higher profits that can potentially compensate for any exchange rate price increases we may face. Moreover, an exciting opportunity for our company in Japan is that our solutions require less manpower and less skilled labor. This is particularly advantageous in a country facing a population decline issue.

Any insights into Mägerle's future expansion plans and investment strategies in Japan that you can share?

For our business operations in Japan, we will definitely focus on expanding our market share through strategic investments to capitalize on the growing demand for precision grinding solutions in the region. We look at a specific initiative in the near future to further enhance our customer service, improve our product offerings, and strengthen our overall position in the Japanese market. Needless to say that we are very much looking forward to future collaboration opportunities with our Japanese partners.

Thank you for the interview!

Key Findings of the 2024 Swiss Venture Capital Report

The 2024 edition of the *Swiss Venture Capital Report*, which is annually published by startupticker.ch, the industry association *SECA*, and startup.ch, sheds light on the Swiss start-up scene in 2023.

Like in many other countries, Swiss start-ups faced a challenging investment climate in 2023, marked by a significant reduction in venture capital funding. Nevertheless, the number of financing rounds remained relatively stable (slight upturn from 383 to 397), and some investors predict a better situation for this year. However, medtech start-ups saw a new investment record.

Investment in young Swiss start-ups fell by 35% in 2023 compared to 2022, totaling CHF 2.6 billion.



The annually published Swiss Venture Capital Report sheds light on Switzerland's start-up scene.

This reduction was particularly severe among more mature start-ups, which typically require higher capital. A major factor that contributed to this decline was the challenging situation in the global venture capital market, which also affected the US, the UK, Germany, and the Scandinavian countries. In addition, venture capitalists, who opted to keep their funds for already existing investments, were more cautious due to rising interest rates and general

economic uncertainty.

Sector-wise, investments dropped over 60% to CHF 786 million for information and communications technology (ICT) and fintech start-ups, while biotech and medtech start-ups saw an increase in investment, with biotech up by 22% to CHF 492 million and medtech recording a record increase of 41% to CHF 379 million.

Despite these challenges, investors remain optimistic, with about 50 Swiss venture capital firms currently raising funds for new investment vehicles, suggesting a potential uptick in investment inflows for 2024.

Source: startupticker.ch

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TREND

Wagyu and Hokkaido Scallop Tastings to Celebrate 160 Years of Cooperation between Japan and Switzerland

To commemorate the 160th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Japan and Switzerland, [JETRO Geneva](https://www.jetro.ch) and the [Embassy of Japan in Switzerland](https://www.embassy-japan.ch) co-organized Wagyu and Hokkaido scallop tastings in major [GLOBUS](https://www.globus.ch) stores across Switzerland.

During the month of February, JETRO Geneva and the Embassy of Japan in Switzerland organized a collaborative event with GLOBUS stores in Switzerland to celebrate the 160th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Switzerland and Japan. As part of this celebration, GLOBUS stores in Bern, Zurich,



Lausanne, and Geneva offered tastings of Wagyu beef and Hokkaido scallops on various dates and times, providing an opportunity for people to enjoy these Japanese delicacies and learn more about their unique

flavors. Additionally, a variety of other Japanese snacks, drinks, and cooking ingredients were displayed. This joint event aimed to commemorate the long-standing diplomatic ties between Japan and Switzerland and promote cultural exchange through the appreciation of food.



活動

ACTIVITY

JETRO Geneva and Greater Geneva Bern Area-Webinar about the Battery Ecosystem in Western Switzerland

革新

INNOVATION

On 8 February 2024, JETRO Geneva and the Greater Geneva Bern Area (GGBa) co-organized a webinar discussing potential collaboration opportunities with the battery ecosystem in Western Switzerland.

The webinar was mainly targeted at Japanese companies and academic institutions interested in starting collaborations with Swiss researchers and start-ups working in the field of battery technology.

The first speaker was Mr. Christian Ochsenein from the [Swiss Battery Technology Center](#) at Switzerland Innovation Park Biel/Bienne (SIPBB), a non-profit research center dedicated to advancing the sustainability of electrification. In his talk, he emphasized the research and projects carried out at the country's biggest battery testing facility, which investigates the effectiveness and safety of battery technologies. The

main emphasis is on increasing recycling rates.

The second presentation was given by Mr. Andrea Ingenito, Co-director of the [CSEM](#) Battery Innovation Hub in Neuchâtel. With over 500 employees, 200 registered patents and six locations across Switzerland, CSEM is an internationally recognized innovation center and non-profit organization that develops technologies in different areas such as digitalization, sustainable energy or ultra-low-power electronics. As Mr. Ingenito explained in his talk, CSEM transfers these technologies to industry players in a variety of sectors, thus enabling competitiveness.

The first presentation on the start-up side was by Mr. Stefan

Brönnimann from [Batterylog](#), a spin-off from the Bern University of Applied Science established in 2022 and which has become a Swiss market leader in cloud-based battery management. Batterylog and its team of experts provide customized software solutions from embedded to web applications in the energy storage domain.

Finally, Mr. Claudio Panizza, Co-founder and CTO of [LOXO](#) talked about the start-up's autonomous driving technology and its delivery vehicle LOXO Alpha, the first autonomous vehicle driving on public roads in Europe. According to him, LOXO increases the efficiency, flexibility and safety of the last- and middle mile delivery and reduces the environmental footprint.

Agenda

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AGENDA

- ✓ The Key Success Factors of Doing Business in Japan
Event organized by Switzerland Global Enterprise (S-GE)
Registration available following [this link](#)
23 April 2024 - 10:15 AM -12:10 PM
Switzerland Global Enterprise, Stampfenbachstrasse 85, 8006 Zurich

JETRO is a government-related organization that works to promote mutual trade and investment between Japan and the rest of the world. Originally established in 1958 to promote Japanese exports abroad, JETRO's core focus in the 21st century has shifted toward promoting foreign direct investment into Japan and helping small to medium size Japanese firms maximize their global export potential.

The JETRO Switzerland Newsletter can also be viewed and/or downloaded online:
<http://www.jetro.go.jp/switzerland/newsletter>

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