



The Company

By
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Ahoy There!

Porsche's wholly owned subsidiary Porsche Consulting, an established purveyor of lean-management principles in many lines of business, is now heading out to sea. As a management and technology partner, it aims to help United Internet Team Germany win honor and glory at the 33rd America's Cup.

Port America's Cup in Valencia has been bustling with activity since October. By early summer of 2009, syndicates from all over the world will have determined in challenging regattas and hard-fought direct duels who is to challenge Swiss title holder *Alinghi* for the 33rd America's Cup. Before that happens, the new high-tech boats must be developed and tested. In addition, a crew will have to be found, one that will need to develop team spirit and learn to handle the boat if it is to have a chance to win and to remain in the competition as long as possible.

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Teamwork from the start (left to right): Eberhard Weiblen of Porsche Consulting, first mate Karol Jablonski, sailing legend Willi Kuhweide, and team manager Jochen Schümann

How long does that take? Jochen Schümann, the new manager of United Internet Team Germany, has a pretty clear idea: “We want to be among the top four. That’s realistic. I’m no dreamer—besides, we don’t have any time for dreaming.” And indeed, time is becoming the most important asset in the high-seas competition. “In the America’s Cup, you can buy practically anything you want, except one thing: time,” says the new first mate Karol Jablonski. And time is the one thing you need most to put a winning boat into the water.

There’s no shortage of optimism at the German base, though. Its first appearance at the world’s oldest international trophy competition in the summer of 2007 was marked by disappointments and defeats. United Internet Team Germany chalked the debacle up to experience. Today, the team’s boss and main sponsor, Ralph Dommermuth, wants to see how good his operation really is. First, there was a major build-up of both money and manpower. Schümann was brought on board to apply his experience as team manager on the *Alinghi*, which won two America’s Cups. The new first mate, Jablonski, was most recently at the helm of the Spanish boat that pulled a complete surprise by making it into the semifinals of the Cup. “We’re starting over, and we are very hopeful,” says German syndicate boss Michael Scheeren.

The German syndicate is placing its hopes primarily in the methodological know-how of the experts at Porsche Consulting. On behalf of Porsche, the subsidiary consultancy has assumed the role of management and technology partner for United Internet Team Germany. Porsche Consulting will be responsible for the entire ▶



development process of the two German boats, in close cooperation with Schümann. Eberhard Weiblen, managing director of Porsche Consulting, describes the task this way: “We’re taking over the project management for building the boats and making sure they’re seaworthy. That means we coordinate and optimize all individual disciplines required for the construction and the preparation of the boats. In particular, that includes boat design, supplier management, the organization of the logistics, and the continuous improvement process.”

The Porsche experts in Valencia are providing much more than the usual consulting services. As Weiblen puts it, “We’re very pleased and proud to be able to take up this challenge. We’re convinced that the processes involved in the development and improvement of a racing yacht are in principle comparable to the extremely complex processes of product development in the auto industry. That’s why we’ll be able to use our know-how appropriately in this area.”

Porsche Consulting’s track record gives good grounds for optimism. At the beginning of the 1990s, Porsche successfully restructured itself, using the example of the lean, process-oriented Toyota production system. All the experience and knowledge gathered was brought together in the firm Porsche Consulting, founded in 1994. Since then, the advisers not only have been providing these proven methods to customers from the motor industry, but also are continually improving and adapting them to other branches of industry. Some 200 employees are now working worldwide, promoting value-creation, reducing waste, and implementing lean production processes. One project at the University of Freiburg Hospital recently won nationwide attention in Germany. There, consultants successfully optimized work processes in the cardiovascular surgery ward, including in-patient residence time, following examples from the auto industry.

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Second wind: Like its predecessor in 2007, the 33rd America’s Cup is to be held off Valencia

Now, the consultants have turned their attention to optimizing high-tech yachts. In addition to technology boss Oliver Kayser, three additional Porsche Consulting experts are working from the German base in Valencia—on site, or, when necessary, on visits to suppliers. Dommermuth has full faith in the helpers from Porsche. “I have said to Porsche: Stand behind this, give us your name, your experience, and your full support. I really think this is a terrific thing,” the main sponsor declares. For Weiblen, one thing is certain: “This is a great challenge. I’m sure we’re going to end up with more work than we can imagine right now.” ◀



“What was missing was knowledge about processes.”

Jochen Schümann, 53, three-time Olympic champion and twice victorious in the America’s Cup with the Swiss boat Alinghi, is Germany’s most successful yachtsman. As the new team manager of United Internet Team Germany, he is now working closely with Porsche Consulting.

What were your reasons for switching from the winning team to the German boat?

Jochen Schümann: “Ultimately, the commitment of the people in charge convinced me. The concept and the new partners are proof that they are learning from the mistakes of the past. We are now set to really move things along.”

What makes you so optimistic for the second try?

“The fact that it isn’t a second try; it’s a new beginning. And we can do it only because we can build on a good platform, and we have partners who are helping us move ahead.”

Like Porsche Consulting?

“What that company has already accomplished is truly impressive, as is how they’ve gone about it. I’m really very excited about this cooperative effort.”

The closeness of sailing to auto racing is on the whole very striking.

“In motorsports, you can’t win with a technically inferior car. In sailing, the same holds true for boats. Moreover, as a team, we’re no different from a small company producing prototypes. Porsche, for example, does that too, and has a very sporty orientation in its model production. The Porsche Consulting people can contribute all their knowledge of technical contexts and processes. And that’s exactly what the German team was somewhat lacking until recently.”

How much difference does technology make, and how much does the human factor contribute to success?

“You can’t separate them that way. Technology is also made and used by people. In the America’s Cup, managing people is basically what it’s all about. You have to motivate people; they have to enjoy themselves and always be fully committed. That’s true for the yachtsmen and the developers alike. You have to keep this creative tension alive all the time.” ◀

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