

“How can we do things better, more successfully and more sustainably?”

Interview with the members of the Management Board
of Linde Material Handling

Andreas Krinninger has been a Member of the Management Board and Chief Financial Officer (CFO) since 2014. The graduate engineer held management positions in Germany, the USA and the UK for many years and in 2011 he moved from Kohlberg, Kravis & Roberts (KKR) to the KION Group. On 1 January 2016, Andreas Krinninger will become the Chief Executive Officer of Linde Material Handling GmbH.

Sabine Neuß has been Chief Operating Officer (COO) at Linde Material Handling since 2013. The industrial engineer has a long track record of leadership experience from Germany and abroad, with her last position being in the TRW Automotive Group.

Christophe Lautray has been Chief Sales Officer (CSO) on the Management Board of Linde Material Handling since 2009. The business economist from Paris was previously Managing Director at Fenwick-Linde in France.



What does sustainability mean for you from a business perspective?

Andreas Krinninger: Many of our activities as a company exert an influence directly or indirectly on the living conditions of people in the areas around our locations whether they are customers, business partners, employees or the community at large. We have to act sustainably here and this means that we have to be aware of our responsibilities – for example by developing reliable, efficient and safe products, services and solutions, by being assiduous in applying ethical principles in our routine daily business or expecting sustainable standards from our suppliers throughout the branches of the supply chain.

Sabine Neuß: Our products help customers to become more sustainable by using our energy-efficient products and guaranteeing safety within their operations. This is one side of the issue. But today we also need to meet expectations which relate to the rationale of our business. What impact does the production of our vehicles exert on the environment? What working conditions do we offer our employees? Much of this may appear to be self-evident but we need to demonstrate how we address these issues.

What opportunities do you perceive in sustainable corporate governance?

Christophe Lautray: Our sustainability strategy allows us to demonstrate to existing customers that we are a responsible partner and to impress new customers with integrity and cost efficiency. We are convinced that we are able to expand existing competitive advantages further with enhanced commitment to sustainability. Products from Linde enjoy a first-class reputation for efficiency and reliability. It is not always a well-known fact that they rank among the most cost-efficient in the marketplace, when the entire package, including service, operating costs and personnel expenses, is taken into account.

Neuß: I anticipate that the investments in environmental management and in energy supply will also deliver operational advantages for our own operations if we succeed in identifying and eliminating unnecessary cost factors. We require information and controlling instruments in order to achieve this potential and we achieve this through our management approach to sustainability.

However, the fact is that sustainability is not just a fairweather topic where you can demonstrate your prowess with efficient products and successful savings. Where do challenges have to be overcome?

Lautray: Our customers are increasingly asking for concrete information in areas where in the past we never really thought about everything down to the last detail. For example, the total energy balance of a forklift might be a case in point. Some years ago, we therefore made an early start by joining forces with leading research partners to draw up life-cycle assessments for our major product series. They demonstrate that an environmental impact is primarily created during the service life. Our intention is not therefore to pass the buck to customers but to take this finding as the motivation to develop more and more efficient products.

Krinninger: We are continuously working on further improving the efficiency of our vehicles. Alternative drives such as hydrogen-powered fuel cells or new battery concepts are gaining increased importance also with a focus on productivity. Some very dynamic research is being carried out in this area and Linde itself is proactively driving this research forward, often in direct collaboration with major industry partners and customers. Disposal or sale of preowned forklifts is also on the agenda. Here we will offer more service.

And how do you regard your position in your own organisation?

Krinninger: Efficiency is naturally not just important in our products. We also need to develop our internal workflows and infrastructure. Ultimately, we want to be state-of-the-art and remain at the cutting edge.

Neuß: We are currently carrying out work globally on obtaining certifications for our management systems relating to the environment, energy and safety. Undoubtedly, there is still a need for a catch-up exercise in some areas and it is necessary to harmonise standards. However, we are making good progress here and I am therefore already looking forward to the next sustainability report in which we will be able to report on our progress.

Mr Krinninger, do you have a statement to conclude our discussion?

Krinninger: The motto of the founder of our Company, Carl von Linde, was “How can we get better?” I believe we need to keep asking ourselves this question every day. Then we will not only become better and better but inevitably also increasingly successful and more sustainable.

Many thanks!