



People

Local talent

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In taking on the position of executive vice-president of Service, Dagmar Swientek has reached a further pinnacle in her career that to date has been consistently associated with KHS – and largely with its Service Division.

PHOTOGRAPHY / ILLUSTRATION

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COVER PHOTO

New to KHS in 1998 as a dual work-study student and made head of the Service Division at the beginning of 2024, Dagmar Swientek is now one of the top women in the company.

Dagmar Swientek has been with KHS for over 25 years. Joining the company just five years after the merger of Holstein & Kappert with Seitz Enzinger Noll to form KHS, she's long been a real insider. "Back then I joined at an economically difficult time," she remembers. During her many years of service to the company, she's logically amassed a vast amount of knowledge and experience. Continuity is generally a defining feature of her life: she has close ties to Dortmund, for instance, where KHS is headquartered, the city she's called home since her earliest childhood. "I'm a true local patriot," Swientek laughs. "I love the dedicated people here in the region and think it's great how the former coal and steel metropolis has gradually become a modern city with an attractive arts scene – plus it's one of the greenest cities in the world."

Good head start

After completing her high school diploma, she decided against doing a classic degree and instead opted for a dual work-study course at KHS, then as now one of the biggest employers in town. "I liked the idea of getting a good head start in the world of work. Studying and working in parallel was still a very new concept back then but it seemed an exciting prospect to me." Working her way through KHS' various stations and departments gave her a deep understanding of how processes at an engineering company run from A to Z and at the same time enabled her to build up an extensive network. She found her niche in Service early on, where after only two years at KHS she was able to establish her own field of responsibility within Order Management and work together with customers independently.

Parallel to "real life", as she calls her work in practice, her studies in business administration continued. One formative experience for Swientek was the fact that her parents were self-employed. Ethnic German re-settlers, in 1981 they emigrated to Dortmund from Upper Silesia with their two little daughters. At the end of the 1990s while Swientek was finishing her schooling, her father, originally a metalworker, and her mother, formerly a clerk at a haulage firm, set up a logistics company together more or less from scratch that supplied local and regional hotels and restaurants with fresh food. "At the time, I

consciously experienced my parents' rather late venture into the unknown," says Swientek, now 44. "I thus appreciate how important it is to take the initiative. I know how precious time is and what it means to set yourself goals in order to change. And I've learned what it means to master challenging tasks with lots of commitment and to be successful in your business while not forgetting that you're also a private person and need to combine your job with a functioning family life."



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Dagmar Swientek, Executive vice-
president of the Service Division, KHS
Group

Entrusted with managerial responsibility

In 2006 Swientek assumed her first managerial tasks for the region of Central Europe in the course of a company reshuffle. "Here, I was able to put my first structural topics into practice by adapting the team and the organization to suit my ideas." Just four years later she was entrusted with global order management. Working closely together with KHS' international subsidiaries, in this capacity she was responsible for all spare part and conversion offers, orders and invoices. After a year's parental leave, she returned to KHS in 2015 and took on her first

strategic posts, initially in Service and later in Sales and Service. Her tasks included optimizing global processes and systems, for example, standardization and the establishment of benchmarks within the KHS Group.

At the start of 2023 she was then made managing director of KHS Austria, a subsidiary responsible not just for Austria but also the entire Adriatic – from Italy, Hungary and the Balkans through Greece to Cyprus and Malta. “It was my job to establish and structure this vast region in the sense of our OneKHS strategy program together with the executive managers from the market zones and to further strengthen our presence there,” explains Swientek. Her commitment to this undertaking ended twelve months later with the next move in her career. She nevertheless really enjoyed working with her colleagues in Southeast Europe and encouraging customer development there, she stresses.

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Dagmar Swientek

Executive vice-president of the Service Division, KHS Group

No prescribed route

In her case, this meant taking on the role of executive vice-president of the Service Division for the entire KHS Group at the beginning of 2024 which makes her one of the top women in

the company. In preparation for such a step up the career ladder, it's particularly important to show a sense of initiative and be prepared to contribute, she believes, as is nurturing a great interest in interdisciplinary topics and projects and becoming actively involved. You also need to seek support for yourself in the form of supplementary training and mentoring programs to encourage your own further development. "The route to senior management is by no means prescribed just because you've completed a dual work-study program. You need a huge amount of energy, perseverance and resilience – and ultimately above all the trust of your superiors and executive management who are convinced that you're the right person for the job," she emphasizes. Her aim in her new position is to continue to build up the service business on a global scale. To this end, she wants to strengthen her colleagues in the various regions and help them form an international network, with herself acting as a kind of catalyst. It's important to provide suitable qualifications in the area, for instance, and to coordinate closely with the supply chain team in order to constantly optimize delivery times, she claims. The overriding aim is to continue to be a reliable partner to customers worldwide, however, and to ensure that KHS lines and machines have a long service life.

Swientek primarily sees herself and the company confronted with two major challenges. The first is the constant lack of specialist workers that calls for global solutions; the other is digitalization. One aspect she considers very important in this context is that of OT security. Another concerns artificial intelligence that in the future will undoubtedly provide plenty of opportunities for automation – an exciting journey, she thinks, from which KHS and its clients can only benefit.

Free time for the children

One challenge Swientek faces outside work is the reconciling of her job with her family life – although she doesn't want this to be treated as a problem specific to women alone. "My husband is also an executive manager; he's in IT. Our work commitments demand flexibility from us both, that we actively coordinate with one another to synchronize business trips, for example, or that

we also occasionally move phone conferences to late in the evening. We're a team on an equal footing and this is very important to us. Spending as much time together with our children as possible is an absolute priority." It thus goes without saying that all free time is devoted to their ten-year-old twins, with whom the couple spends lots of time in the great outdoors, at the soccer stadium or baking. Or discovering new places together on vacation – maybe on a safari in the near future, Swientek hopes.