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Something good is bound to come of it

It has been ten months since Muller Martini and Kolbus set their joint course for the future. The cultures of the two companies have quickly merged – after all, we have the same DNA.

To be honest, I was also completely surprised when I found out at the end of January that Muller Martini was taking over the perfect binder and bookline business from Kolbus. But following the initial brief shock, it quickly became clear to me: When two renowned companies at the same level and with a similar corporate culture merge, then something good is bound to come of it. And that is apparently how my colleagues here in Rahden view things as well. Of the 250 Kolbus employees that were to join Muller Martini as part of the takeover, every single one of them, without exception, signed a new employment contract back in January. (And since then, only a few, in the course of normal headcount fluctuations, have given notice).

Of course, friends and sometimes even customers ask me how long we'll be able to continue building perfect binders and booklines here. I can understand why there are concerns about the future in Rahden, where one in four people work at Kolbus. But my reassuring answers are always the same: First, Muller Martini's senior management has always said that it intends to continue producing machines in Rahden. Second, since the acquisition, Muller Martini Bookbinding Systems GmbH, as our new company is officially known, has increased its headcount from 250 to 265 and created new departments. Third, we are currently renovating and modernizing our offices. And fourth, as Kolbus has its own IT systems, we are currently



in the process of implementing SAP. We would hardly be making all of these investments if we were not convinced that there is a successful future for the Rahden location.

»Something good is bound to come of it.«

Lukas Budde, Marketing and Sales Assistant, Muller Martini Bookbinding Systems GmbH

In fact, we have a few strong trump cards here in Rahden.

- ▶ We have decades of valuable experience in the softcover and hardcover area thanks to our highly skilled employees, whose fathers and grandfathers also worked here and who have substantial knowledge of machine construction.
- ▶ We have significant in-house production depth, including development, assembly and a foundry operated by Kolbus.
- ▶ We place great value on the promotion of young talent. Kolbus employs no fewer than 150 apprentices who, as part of their training, naturally also come into contact with Muller Martini Bookbinding Systems GmbH.



The Blue Salon contains 30 Kolbus machines – spread across seven different systems.

And we have our modern demonstration center, the so-called Blue Salon, where a lot has been going on since the merger of Kolbus and Muller Martini. In the Blue Salon, we provide demonstrations, training and tests.

- ▶ The demonstrations are based entirely on our customers' needs. Demonstrations are held for them involving the machines they are interested in – some with materials from their daily business that they bring themselves. The focus here is on individual machines as well as optimized production processes, such as quick changeovers between two different orders.
- ▶ The training is geared toward customers' machine operators and technicians and – increasingly over the past few months – also for Muller Martini's (service) technicians and sales staff who want to familiarize themselves with the Kolbus systems.



► With the tests, customers send their materials to Rahden and then receive a video in addition to the often specialized and complex end products. Or the customers can watch the tests live on-site.

The Blue Salon contains 30 Kolbus machines – spread across seven different systems: three softcover lines (KM 610A/8,000 cycles/hour, KM 412E/18,000 cycles/hour, KM 200/digital print finishing, three hardcover lines (BF 513/30 cycles/minute, BF 530/70 cycles/minutes, EMP 513/30 cycles/minute/only casing-in with straight spines) and one backgluing line (RF 700). This allows us to cover 75% of the Kolbus brand equipment range.

We recently added a Muller Martini Ventura MC 160 to our program, which means thread sewing demonstrations are now also possible in the Blue Salon. Our customers appreciate not only the enormous diversity of machines but also the cross-type, full softcover and hardcover lines.



Customers from around the world watch demonstrations of the latest machines in the Blue Salon.

In addition to customers, our four longtime instructors also welcomed a lot of employees from Muller Martini to the Blue Salon this year. There have been no fewer than 27 courses for technicians in recent months. The Blue Salon has made a substantial contribution toward helping the Muller Martini technicians increase and deepen their knowledge of Kolbus machines. This know-how is crucial so we can continue to provide Kolbus customers with optimal support in the future.

And this seems to me to be a central point. This is because the surprise about the joint strategic direction for the future taken by Muller Martini and Kolbus last January was enormous not only for us Kolbus employees but also for many Kolbus customers as well. For example, Kirk Galloway, CEO of Buxton Press in the English city of Buxton, openly admitted in an article that appeared in Panorama, the Muller Martini customer magazine, “that we initially had some questions about how service, spare parts and repairs were going to be handled in the future.”





Kirk Galloway, CEO of Buxton Press: His initial skepticism turned into confidence.

But many of our other longtime customers responded just like Kirk Galloway, whose company put a new KM 610 perfect binder into service this summer: “The print market has contracted considerably over the last few years and manufacturers inevitably need to adapt so they can carry on delivering the right machines for their customers. That’s why it makes sense to my mind for two strong manufacturers to integrate, so they can continue to afford the high ongoing costs of R&D for new systems. In the long term, I believe Muller Martini will be more than capable of dealing with the day-to-day needs of their new Kolbus customers, just as they deal with those of their Muller Martini customers.”

Speaking of customers, Muller Martini’s sales and service organizations around the world have been responsible for all Kolbus customers since May 1. The transition process has gone smoothly. The fact that that we guarantee the same availability of spare parts and service for Kolbus machines as for Muller Martini machines proves that we will certainly not let any of our customers down around the world.

So customers can continue to rely on us in the future.

Yours sincerely
Lukas Budde
Marketing and Sales Assistant
Muller Martini Bookbinding Systems GmbH

