



GMUND'S SPECIAL PLACE IN THE HEART OF EUROPE

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SPECIALTY MILL PRODUCES UNIQUE PAPERS

IT IS A FAMILY BUSINESS THAT HAS LASTED THROUGH FOUR generations. With a mill that still uses a paper machine nearly 120-years old, Büttenpapierfabrik Gmund has lately expanded beyond its home in Bavaria to markets around the world, progressively adding to its distinctive line of specialty papers.

"About 10 years ago, we changed our strategy from simply producing fine papers and selling them to developing real brands or collections as we call them," explained Maxi Christina Gohlke, the company's public relations representative. Gmund currently has 20 brands and, much like a fashion design house, it launches about two new collections each year.

Florian and Korbinian Kohler, the two brothers who manage Büttenpapierfabrik Gmund, provide the initial ideas for new grades. The brothers then discuss their concepts with teams of independent experts which may include graphic designers, an interior designer, a paper specialist, a printer, a marketing specialist, and others.



Florian (left) and Korbinian Kohler together manage Büttenpapierfabrik Gmund

With their team of experts, the brothers will discuss the ideas and inspirations for the new papers and factors such as fashion trends that might contribute to the success or failure of a new grade. Ideas that make it through this screening process are then subjected to extensive market research. Those that pass that stage go on to testing on the paper machine.

"When the development of a new paper is finished, the brand is 'wrapped' in a story, creating a whole world around the paper," Gohlke said. The "Havanna" and "Bier Papier" brands are good examples of ideas that became papers for which Gmund created a distinctive image.

The idea for Havanna was to create a real "Latin American" paper. It draws from the structure of tobacco leaves and the world of Cuban plantation life for inspiration. The paper is composed of 10% post-consumer recycled fiber, 25% pre-consumer recycled fiber, and 65% totally chlorine-free pulp.

The idea for Bier Papier actually came from a trip to Japan. Korbinian Kohler had traveled there to meet with Gmund's local distributors and was frequently taken to karaoke bars to have a beer. After several beers, the distributors would often start joking about "Bier" and "papier." On the flight home, Kohler kept thinking about the bier-papier connection and decided to try developing it into a paper. At home, he contacted the nearby brewery for a supply of "trebern," the waste material from the beer-making process, to use as one of the ingredients in a new line of paper.

The trebern accounts for about 10% of the mix used to make Bier Papier. About 50% is recycled beer labels and about 40% is totally chlorine-free pulp. The beer fibers and labels come from the Herzogliches Brauhaus Tegernsee brewery, said to be the second oldest brewery in the world. By tradition, the papermakers pour a bottle of beer from the brewery into the stock for each batch of Bier Papier.



Gmund's newer paper machine, built in 1978

Bier Papier is available in five colors—weizen, lager, pils, ale and bock—mimicking the progressively darker colors in that group of beers. It is produced in weight of 100, 135, 170 and 250 g/m².

Gmund has developed collections from other uncommon sources for pulp, also. Its “Money” line incorporates small bits of recycled bank notes. Within the line, its white calendered “Security” paper is also produced with a watermark.

The company’s “Cannabis” line is produced from up to 100% hemp fiber. The long-fiber paper is made without chemical colors or additives, and it is also “drug free.” Within the line, Gmund offers three color variations, derived by using 100%, 60% or 30% hemp in the pulp mix.

Büttenpapierfabrik Gmund went a step further with its “Naturals” line. The papers in this collection are made using raw materials from the surrounding areas. Those materials include straw, bark, cotton, feathers and peat.

The company’s mill is located in the village of Gmund, south of Munich, in the foothills of the Alps. The picturesque setting, a short walk from Lake Tegernsee, inspires an appreciation for nature which carries over to mill operations and the design of Gmund’s papers.

Environmental protection gets high priority at Gmund. The mill draws its production water from a local spring. The effluent is processed at the mill and then treated at regional purification facilities.

About 60% of the energy used by the mill comes from hydropower via the Mangfall River, along which the mill is located.

The paper company was founded in 1829 by Johann Nepomuk Haas. The original mill burned in 1880. It is the paper machine installed in the rebuilt mill that is still in use at Gmund. The Kohler family took ownership of the company in 1904.

That the company has flourished while others in the area have gone out of business is largely due to father Ludwig Maximilian Kohler’s decision in 1952 to stay small, independent, and focused on specialty paper. Ludwig’s sons maintain a similar philosophy, though they have put more effort into expanding the market for the company’s growing selection of papers. They think as designers as well as papermakers and have put high priority on the quality of their papers.

Competitors who tried for growth and volume following World War II either went broke or were forced to close down, Korbinian Kohler noted.

As the estates of his competitors were put up for sale, Ludwig Kohler had the foresight to acquire equipment from them, especially embossing and calender rolls which are still in use at Gmund.

The distinctive qualities imparted to Gmund papers by those rolls in the company’s “hot steam embossing process” are viewed as a marketing advantage.

The 1883 paper machine is used to produce about 15 metric tons/day of paper and board of 70-500g/m². It is a fourdrinier built by A. Sigel of Germany. It has a working width of 1.6 meters, a length of 40 meters, and maximum working speed of 65 m/min. The slow production speed allows for very gentle dewatering characteristics. Basis weight, moisture control, and continual color measurement have been added to the machine to better monitor and control paper quality.

The old machine is perfect for making the felt-marked, select papers featured as part of Gmund’s product line. The “Kaschmir” collection, felt-marked with special cashmere felts, is produced on this machine alone.

The “new” paper machine dates back to 1978. It’s a 220 cm fourdrinier used for writing, text and cover papers.

In the past few years, Gmund has also integrated a new process control system and online measurement system into its production process. It has also upgraded its newer paper machine to current standards.

Like any mill that produces paper in various colors, Gmund begins production of one of its collections with white or the lightest shade. Production continues through progressively darker shades or colors. A standard run is three weeks on one machine. After the darkest paper is run, the machine gets a thorough cleaning and the other machine is run for three weeks.

Gmund markets its paper through exclusive franchises with 150 distributors in more than 70 countries. The company’s sales team spends a lot of time visiting each distributor. The company also works closely with graphic designers, its main target group, and often organizes workshops and seminars in Gmund.

Over the last few years, Gmund has “evolved from a fine paper maker to a manufacturer of exclusive brand collections.” The change has involved adding a marketing and sales team to the previously small staff and increasing to 70% the amount of paper the company exports. They also have opened a sales office in Winter Park, FL (email gmundusa@hotmail.com). The brothers hope to continue expanding the market for their papers by 20%-30%.

During 2000, Gmund launched two new collections: “Reaction,” a twilight-effect colored paper, and “Valentinoise,” a linen-style fine paper that comes in a range of pastel and translucent colors.

The company’s marketing effort has also involved setting up a web site—www.gmund.com—which in little more than a year has received several design awards and attracted thousands of visitors. The site includes information on all of the company’s paper collections, printing tips, a “store” for swatch books and tools, and a picture tour of the mill.

A further development has been the foundation of Lakepaper (www.lakepaper.com), a subsidiary for business fine papers. Florian Kohler explained the rationale for creating the independent company: “Gmund is only producing about 5000 metric tons of the finest papers per year. Yet production capacity could be increased to

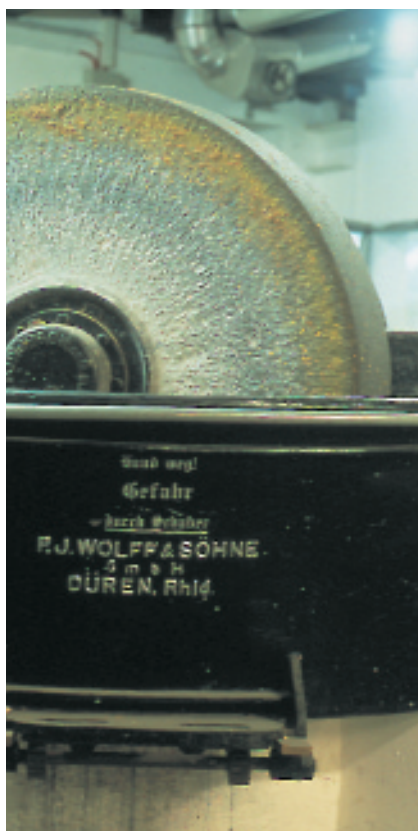


Part of the Bier Papier sample book

20,000 metric tons without any further investments. We want to exploit this fact without doing any harm to the brand of Gmund.”

The first product offered by Lakepaper is called “emotion.” It is made from 100% woodfree, totally chlorine free, pH neutral pulp. It’s available with a super matte finish, in three whites and four soft tones, and also with a structured surface in 240 g/m². The 90 and 120 g/m² weights are promoted for laser and inkjet use. Heavier weights are also available through North American and European offices. **TJ**

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Gmund makes good use of its older equipment, including the “Kollergang,” at left which uses granite stones to grind paper for recycling; the 1883 paper machine, above and top right, the oldest in use in Europe; and the hollander beater, right, in which color, sizing and fillers are gently added to the pulp

