
Topic: Drinktec 2021: KHS in conversation with Messe München

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Title

Drinktec 2021: “Personal exchange is crucial”

Subtitle

CSO Dr. Grobe of KHS talks to Messe München about the major future issues facing the beverage industry

Teaser

In the fall of 2021 the world’s beverage industry will again look to Munich when drinktec 2021 will be providing some answers to the big future issues addressed by the sector. We talk to Petra Westphal and Markus Kosak, both from Messe München, and with member of the KHS Executive Management Board Dr. Johannes T. Grobe about what visitors to the trade show can expect – also in the wake of corona.

Main Text

At a time when major exhibitions have been canceled, postponed or downscaled in the throes of the corona pandemic, many eyes are turned towards drinktec, the world’s leading trade show for the beverage and liquid food industry. This too has been moved forward – albeit by just a few weeks. For the first time ever drinktec is to take place after Munich’s Oktoberfest beer festival, namely from October 4 to 8, 2021. The reason is that Messe München’s events calendar is packed full as it now has to integrate a new extra format: the IAA or International Motor Show. The allocation of the halls will also change.

One word that could be used to describe next year’s drinktec is ‘unusual’ – on several counts. “Corona has made us all more digital, more virtual and more collaborative,” observes Petra Westphal, the product group manager responsible for this particular exhibition and all international sister events at Messe München.

“During the crisis we’ve come to recognize what’s possible physically and what virtually. The result is a global rethink: travel is being scrutinized more closely with regard to its added value and cost efficiency. At the same time the exchange between individuals is becoming more intense: on the one hand because physical meetings are becoming more valued and are thus taking place more frequently and on the other through the advent of new additional digital services.”

Personal encounters crucial

For exhibitors, this poses the question of what their trade show public will be like in the future. “To date the show concept entailed exhibiting as many machines as possible – ones you can literally get to grips with on site, so to speak,” states Dr. Johannes T. Grobe, member of the KHS Executive Management Board. “We thus welcomed an extremely broad public to our booth – everyone from managing director to engineer.” More and more technical innovations will now be presented virtually, with greater emphasis on personal interaction – even if fewer visitors are to turn up. Dr. Grobe expects many changes.

In the past it was said of trade show meetings that the smaller the room, the better the talks. However, the current rules on social distancing call for groups with fewer participants and meeting rooms of a different design, for example. Even if it will be difficult to rebuild personal relations interrupted by corona, Dr. Grobe is confident. “It’s a bit like meeting with old friends: everyone looks forward to seeing one another, to the technical discussions – and especially to talking one to one. After all, a lot of decisions aren’t purely rational but largely made on instinct.”

Petra Westphal follows this up. “In the past few months people have learned just how important physical contact is – despite all the digital options. They’re positively longing for it. They also want to touch and feel the products. This is the only way you can really assess the quality of the materials used or of the workmanship.”

Virtual solutions are in demand

This is why the many new digital services on offer before, during and after the actual event are no substitute for a visit to Munich. In view of the expected continuing restrictions on travel, however, they will at least enable a wide audience to virtually experience the highlights of drinktec 2021 and in doing so extend their reach. “To this end, we’re working with the industry on a number of tailored solutions to enable engineers for a beverage producer in South Korea, for instance, to digitally link up to the physical trade show,” explains Westphal. Not too much is to be disclosed at this point in time, however.

Another aspect of the digital transformation of the trade show itself is explained by Markus Kosak, one of Westphal’s colleagues and the project manager responsible for drinktec for the first time in 2021. “We’re adding a broad spectrum of valuable hybrid and digital formats to our analog platform and enabling our exhibitors to present themselves in a very different way,” he states. This is of course something of a challenge with respect to company storytelling and requires everyone to give things a bit more thought, Kosak believes. He cites what’s known as Working Hero as one example of the new services on offer. These are emotional, captivating videos produced by drinktec that tell the stories of exhibitor employees and incorporate these into a digital marketing concept.

Intelligent production and automation

With manufacturers, too, the digital revolution has long gathered pace and taken on extremely concrete forms. Digital solutions and digital transformation is thus one of the four main topics drinktec will be concentrating on. One example of this, according to Kosak, is the increased networking of the beverage production process. Here, the producer has detailed insights into the machine layout before it’s even installed. Further variables calculated on the basis of AI, such as weather data and the effects of weather on beverage consumption, then also flow into the highly automated production process. “In the future digital solutions will connect all those involved in the supply chain,” emphasizes Kosak, “the machine manufacturer with the beverage producer, the bottler with his or her suppliers, logistics providers, the retail trade and

– last but not least – the consumer. The exhibitors at drinktec show how this will come about.”

KHS also believes that our digital future is one of the chief concerns of the industry. The Dortmund systems supplier is thus tackling a number of technological challenges that result from the different directions taken and topics addressed by this megatrend – but not as an end in itself, as Dr. Grobe is keen to stress. “We adopt the strategy of ‘I’m doing it for you’. This means that we specifically approach issues together with our customers and develop global digital systems and solutions that meet their specific challenges and requirements.” He sees automation as being at the forefront of the increasingly relevant digital factory, both in relation to production control and with an eye to maintenance. In view of the fact that the required data of course always belongs to customers, it’s clear that they primarily value flexible systems that help them to retain their own independence. “This is why with our key accounts especially we’re using open systems so that variable modules can be applied on the MES¹ as required.”

Sustainable packaging

Another big issue drinktec will be centering on is sustainable production and packaging. “A lot has happened in the past few years in production as regards saving on resources and energy efficiency,” claims Westphal. “The focus is now on the packaging itself. On the one hand the strategy of reduce, reuse and recycle is being applied; on the other we have upcycling where new, high-quality materials are produced from used objects.” The drinktec manager and her colleagues are particularly taken by two specific up-to-the-minute innovations: Petra Westphal is especially enthusiastic about the Coca-Cola bottle made of 25% plastic waste collected from Mediterranean beaches in Spain and Portugal; Markus Kosak is fascinated most of all by the development of sustainable labels. Besides using recycled and FSC-certified paper, materials such as grass and stone paper are

¹ MES = Manufacturing Execution System, the process-related execution level of a multilevel production management system.

starting to appear. Labels made of real wood are also already available on the market. It will be exciting to see how things progress here.

One innovation already suitable for the mass market is the Nature MultiPack™ system that holds PET bottles and cans together with the help of a few dots of adhesive only. This disruptive packaging concept from KHS was first introduced at drinktec 2013; the packs are now on sale throughout Europe. “This is a good example of the special things exhibited here at our trade show,” says Westphal, who can well remember how excited show visitors were about the new format back then. “This is exactly what we mean when we say this is where the future is made.” Dr. Grobe is also pleased with the pack format’s success. “Carlsberg is using the Nature MultiPack™ for six-packs of beer in cans, for example, and consumers are buying what’s known as the Snap Pack 30 times more frequently than a pack wrapped in film – even though it’s more expensive.” He wants to build on this and other stories of success. “It’s important that we continue to develop this sustainable pack by applying it to other formats and increasing capacity ranges.”

Trade show with a future

For Petra Westphal, Nature MultiPack™ shows how strongly the beverage industry is driven by innovation. “Time and again I’m fascinated by the incredible foresight shown by our exhibitors. Take aseptic filling, for example, which was first presented at drinktec in 2001. Twenty years later this is still a very topical issue.” She wishes that there was greater awareness of how long it sometimes takes for new concepts to be successful on the market, also beyond the beverage and liquid food industry. However, this also requires that a saturated society has the courage to accept things that have maybe not yet been engineered right down to the last detail.

Kosak believes that drinktec has a rosy future ahead of it. “Our industry is also always about projects that demand a lot of explanation, that have to be discussed and felt. Personal exchange is especially crucial when it comes to the big innovations and developments that straddle several disciplines. Which form this will take,

whether in an entirely analog manner or by adopting a hybrid approach, remains to be seen.” Dr. Grobe is also convinced that drinktec will continue to have its place in the digital world. “I think that, on the whole, the trade show landscape will change through digitalization and regionalization. Even if Europe always has been and still is a driver of innovation, we’re seeing many new developments in Asia, for example, that will encourage the adoption of local and regional trade show formats.” However, as an international summit for the beverage industry drinktec will continue to be vital on a strategic level and as a mirror of the current trends – and, above all, for its ‘human factor’.

KHS digital

1. Automation

- ERP² systems allow orders to be processed automatically and data to be transferred to controlling departments in real time.
- What KHS is doing:
 - ❖ Innoline Flex Control: Global order handling
 - ❖ Smart Line Flex: Framework project for the development of the required machine functions

2. Maintenance

- Maintenance is condition based. Machine learning algorithms help to predict when parts will fail.
- What KHS is doing:
 - ❖ Various pilot projects are investigating the options of cloud computing in conjunction with machine learning. The aim is to develop systems and solutions suitable for practical use.

² ERP= Enterprise Resource Planning: the corporate task of planning and controlling resources, such as capital, personnel, operating and auxiliary materials, information and communication technology and IT systems, in the interests of and for the purpose of the company – on time and as required.

3. IT security

- The shop floor must be connected to the Internet in a secure way to be able to use cloud platforms.
- What KHS is doing:
 - ❖ Technical measures: standardization in machine automation.
 - ❖ Organizational measures: appointment of a person responsible for OT security at KHS, for example.

4. Operation

- Users expect their machines to be intuitive in their operation – similar to their private mobile devices.
- What KHS is doing:
 - ❖ In the development of new or reworking of existing products web-based GUIs are being introduced (Basic Line Monitoring runs on smartphones and tablets, for instance).

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Picture captions

(Source: KHS Group)

Petra Westphal

Corona has made us all more digital, more virtual and more collaborative, observes Petra Westphal, product group manager at Messe München.

Markus Kosak

The digital support program presents new challenges for exhibitor storytelling, explains Markus Kosak, drinktec project manager at Messe München.

Dr. Johannes T. Grobe

Dr. Grobe, member of the KHS Executive Management Board, is convinced that as the world's leading trade show drinktec also has its place in an increasingly digital world.

About the KHS Group

The KHS Group is one of the leading manufacturers of filling and packaging systems for the beverage and liquid food industries. The KHS Group includes the following companies: parent company KHS GmbH, KHS Corpoplast GmbH and numerous subsidiaries outside Germany, located in Ahmedabad (India), Sarasota and Waukesha (USA), Zinacantepec (Mexico), São Paulo (Brazil) and Suzhou (China).

KHS manufactures modern filling and packaging systems for the high-capacity range at its headquarters in Dortmund, Germany, and at its factories in Bad Kreuznach, Kleve, Worms and Hamburg, where the group's PET expertise is pooled. The KHS Group is a wholly owned subsidiary of the SDAX-listed Salzgitter AG corporation. In 2019 the KHS Group and its 5,149 employees achieved a turnover of around €1.260 billion.

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