

Kobra Formen GmbH, 08485 Lengenfeld, Germany

Definition and Development of Service Concepts for Steel Moulds for the Concrete Block Industry

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How is the term **Service** defined for steel molds for the concrete products industry? What services does the customer expect? Which measures must be taken by manufacturers to offer a comprehensive service? The answer from the customers' point of view is relatively simple: **A functioning tool with fast solutions in case of breakdowns. To define the term service in this context, the saying "to cut a long story short" must be defined the other way around. The objective, to be able to use a problem-free tool, is clear. On the other hand, developing a concept with customer and mold-specific mechanisms, is very time-consuming.**

In the following, an example is explained in which service and customer-focused services are defined and implemented actively at Kobra Formen GmbH - and this is done early in the development phase of new block systems, long before producing the concrete block mold.

The US-American company Cambridge Pavers Inc. is a long-standing business partner of Kobra. The development and design departments of both companies work closely together to create new products. After the block is developed, a sample mold is usually produced, with which test runs are performed in one of the Cambridge plants. If these are



After the block is developed, a sample mold is usually produced



Concrete block wall system by Cambridge Paver Inc.

successful, a defined number of concrete block molds with the same design is ordered for the other plants.

In this context, in mid-June Cambridge Pavers called a meeting in its head office, to work on new wall systems, to clarify delivery dates and to discuss the entire production process. Among other things, these products are to be produced in a new plant being built with three split lines for masonry blocks. Before the trip - the preparation time was 5 working days - the Kobra product designers drew up designs and laying drawings. As it was still unclear which or how many products were involved, a large number of variations were taken to the meeting as the basis for discussion. In addition to the managing directors of both companies, the engineering director and a Cambridge research and development designer and a Kobra product designer were in attendance.

Firstly, the implementation of new developments was discussed under time aspects. New products, which are placed on the market at the start of the season in the spring of each year, are developed and tested roughly a year in advance. The prototypes of the new concrete block products are required to draw up the marketing materials, for example, for catalogues or for websites. As the timeframe was somewhat shorter in this case, functions, forms, and the required look of the respective concrete products and technical practicalities were discussed. From the originally planned masonry block systems, more than twice as many different new products were derived during the meeting, which are technically refined and clarified by both sides, and thus extend the Cambridge product portfolio within a short period.

The establishment of coordination procedures with defined timescale and content between Kobra and its customers is a decisive element of the Kobra service concept, which pursues an approach that covers every aspect of the customer product. Service does not begin after the concrete block mold has been delivered to the plant, but with the services to be considered for the technical feasibility of an idea. Can the design of a new block system be produced? Do details have to be adjusted to ensure the stability of the product when laid, without disrupting the required visual effect? Can the product be packaged and stacked? Which mold technology is best for the required block? What repair and maintenance intervals should be taken into consideration with the selected technology?

With fixed scheduled development steps, both the concrete products manufacturers and Kobra benefit from each other. The customer has sufficient leeway to include new develop-



SERVICE IS NOT A DEPARTMENT



IT IS AN ATTITUDE.

The KOBRA service concept:

We develop concrete products from your ideas. Our designers convert your designs into producible concrete block systems and provide you with advice during the development phase

Kobra - road opening with open day

KOBRA Formen GmbH is expanding and at the same time remains true to its strategy, to produce concrete molds centrally in the company's headquarters in Lengenfeld/Vogtland. Commencing in 2019, four new production (use the word plants or facilities) are to be built to extend the company's long-term production capacity. The new site and the existing buildings are still separated by a road. To create a single site, Kobra has built a section of road as an entrance for the other occupants of the industrial park, which was officially opened on June 29, 2018.

The new road was named after the founder of the company, Rudolf Braungardt, to honor him and to acknowledge his commitment to the region and the almost 400 employees in the location.

In addition to the official opening, a celebration was held giving numerous visitors the opportunity to take part in

guided tours of the Kobra production buildings. All children were able to take part in a "road of the future" painting competition.

In addition to the construction of the new (use the word plant or facility), Kobra is currently also extending the existing factory buildings, which are due for completion in November this year.

With the planned extensions, Kobra is laying the foundation for the continued healthy growth of the company. The creation of the new buildings will not automatically lead to a sudden increase in production capacities, as their continuous and planned increase was a guarantor of success in recent years. The concrete product mold production takes place in individual production, which requires numerous sub-steps and well-trained employees. The objective is to align investments with market development in the coming years, to continue to optimise internal processes and to provide the customer with a high-quality product.



Rudolf Braungardt, Holger Stichel, Mayor of the Town of Lengenfeld, Volker Bachmann (from l to r)



Official opening of Rudolf-Braungardt-Straße

ments in their production and sales planning, to plan their marketing measures and if necessary to produce in advance. Kobra can schedule the production of the required concrete product molds, in consultation with the customer, in its own processes spread over the year, assign long-term delivery dates and thus ensure planning certainty for the customer.

Summing up

- Service block I: Product development
- Measures: Agreeing all product properties relevant during the development phase
- Kobra Team: Product designers, technical designers, sales, management



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