

KUTNAK AUTOMOTIVE CONTINUES TO EXPAND IN SURROUNDING EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

When we said goodbye to each other last year, you mentioned that you'd be taking the year 2020 like a new "big bang." So how would you evaluate last year within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic?

Yes, you're right. We had big plans for 2020, but life had bigger plans in store for us. Basically, I would break down 2020 into projects that worked out well for us and projects that didn't.

Try evaluating the failed projects for a moment.

We had big plans for our entry into the Russian market, but unfortunately the inconsistent lockdown measures both in the Czech Republic and in the Russian Federation made it virtually impossible for us to travel out of the country. That's why we directed all of our efforts into certifying our products for the Russian market, which is a key factor for importing any goods. After about 3 months of sending samples to the Moscow accreditation office, we received a positive judgement and we can now export to the entire federation, to Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan and so on. We're now just waiting for the situation to calm down so we can travel and meet companies or distributors who are interested in our goods in person. And I can confirm that we definitely saw interest in our goods not only in Russia, but also in Ukraine, where our first orders came from.

That doesn't sound so dramatic. So what would you rate positively about 2020?

Definitely the new markets we managed to open up. Without even trying to compromise on price, we managed to open up new customer accounts in France, Spain, and Finland. These are all major companies that have their own branch networks in their respective countries.

That sounds interesting given how far those countries are from the Czech Republic. How do you explain that?

It's based on a set of several factors. One of them was our entry into the TecDoc database last year. This allows everyone to monitor our ever-growing offer of products on-line 365 days a year from anywhere in the world. In light of the fact that the largest spare parts manufacturers enter TecDoc, this data is used by the largest parts distributors in the world.

Entering TecDoc seems to be a difficult move. Can you advise other companies that are only just now planning to enter this database?

From my point of view, it's definitely worth it. But it's necessary to consider entry and the annual maintenance fees. It's also necessary to have high-quality images for every product and especially a team of people who send data to TecDoc. This will cost every company millions of Crowns per year.

The data in TecDoc is a chapter in itself. How does it work at your company?

We try to write about every item in detail and provide at least 2–3 pictures so distributors can minimize the need to collect further information as much as possible. We also don't blindly copy and paste cross prices, whether they be from vehicle manufacturers or from OEM spare parts manufacturers. But if you go down this route, everything becomes several times more expensive as well – and time-consuming. That's why our company is more than half a year late in publishing our complete range of products in the TecDoc catalogue. On the other hand, I can say with confidence that our data corresponds to the actual status and we've already got some feedback.

What do you mean by that?

TecAlliance, the owner of the TecDoc catalogue, announces its winners every year and evaluates them. So far, we are about halfway through with our submitted data and have already received the highest award of "A". This is very valuable and encouraging for further work.

What are your plans going forward in 2021?

We'll definitely continue to develop communications with our fan base using social media such as Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn. It's really surprising how many large European companies underestimate these communication channels. We publish posts pretty much on a weekly basis but the reactions are entirely positive from all over the world. We'll also continue hiring new colleagues, both for development and exports, where we are seeing huge year-on-year growth. We also want to strengthen our logistics and subsequent automated processes. Our goal is not only to hire more people but also implement smart solutions.