



Directors Jens Mohr, Karl-Peter Johann with Continuous Improvement representatives Stefan Schmidt, Sebastian Zimmermann, Rolf Schmidt (works council), and Manfred Becker (from left to right)

“Better is best”

## Continuous Improvement programme launched

Buderus Edelstahl initiated the establishment of a systematic continuous improvement process (KVP) with the help of external advisers in late 2007, which will benefit employees and customers throughout the world. The aims are to further intensify customer orientation, process optimisation and cross-departmental communication on the use of resources and synergies.

The new Continuous Improvement programme replaces the previous company suggestion scheme system, providing a uniform structure for the whole company. By systematically and continuously working on improvements, whilst constantly reducing defects, the Continuous Improvement programme ensures high process orientation and process reliability. The programme provides the right tools to establish appropriate measures and implement the results effectively. This creates greater flexibility and enables rapid response to changed conditions in the marketplace, with customers and with competitors – a

factor that will secure Buderus Edelstahl's continued position as a market leader in the field of high-grade special steels.

### **Kai-Zen: change for the better**

Continuous Improvement was in principle developed from the Japanese Kai-Zen, a management concept that involves all levels of a company to achieve gradual improvement by increased involvement of employees, strengthening the company's competitive position. Process quality, product quality and service quality are the main focus of continuous teamwork.

Buderus Edelstahl is using its Continu-

ous Improvement programme to pursue a corporate culture that expressly welcomes the involvement of each employee, in which ideas are contributed and rewarded. “We developed the programme jointly with the works council”, says Jens Mohr, Commercial Director of Buderus Edelstahl, “and we are convinced that every employee can contribute good ideas to promote the company's prosperity.

All employees will be able to engage in the Continuous Improvement programme, and to make a truly personal contribution to the company's ongoing development.”

The Technical Director Karl-Peter Johann comments, “We are sure all our employees will be fully committed to this as well – after all this enables them to make a long term contribution to our competitiveness and thus also to secure their own jobs.”

The company's Continuous Improvement Officer Manfred Becker believes that the programme will harness much positive energy. “Playing an active role in shaping the future of Buderus Edelstahl, being able to contribute suggestions, seeing your ideas become reality, that is a great feeling – and you get paid for it.” Manfred Becker

and his team are working together with many other people on systematic implementation of the programme. Six Continuous Improvement teams will be formed in the pilot phase.

Coordination for the steel mill is being handled by Karl-Heinz Spengler, Ralf Rech is responsible for the forge, and Sebastian Zimmermann is coordinating the administrative sector."

The Continuous Improvement teams report through the coordinators to the Continuous Improvement officer, receiving direct technical support through contacts in the Human Resource, Controlling, Quality Assurance, Process Engineering, Technology and IT departments. The Continuous Improvement programme is managed by a control group made up of senior management, divisional management, departmental management, divisional management,

departmental management, the works council, and the Continuous Improvement representatives team. Their task is to monitor the progress of the Continuous Improvement programme, and to ensure favourable conditions for close cooperation by removing barriers.

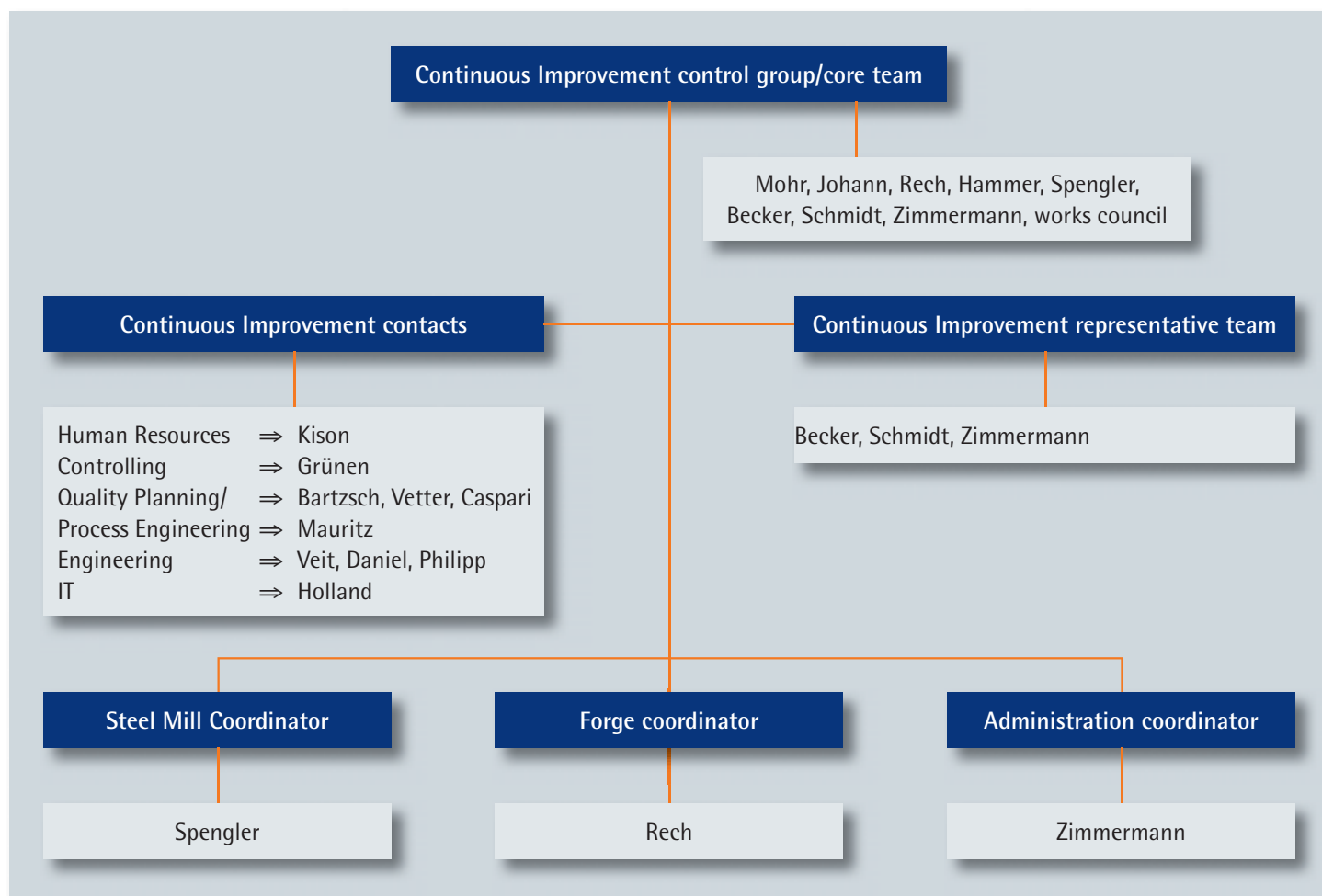
**Good ideas are rewarded**

Ideas contributed are first logged by the Continuous Improvement team concerned according to standardised criteria, then action is formulated, and reviewed by divisional and departmental management. Every measure that is implemented is rewarded. The reward is received by the Continuous Improvement team that contributed and developed the proposal. The amount of the reward relates to the annual net benefit that the improved measure brings. It is paid to all team members in

equal parts. Implemented ideas that cannot be measured in concrete figures are rewarded according to a standardised reward table, and those that cannot meaningfully be implemented in a foreseeable timeframe receive a recognition award.

Uniform, clearly structured checklists for recording improvement ideas are available to employees, for example in a Continuous Improvement box at the main entrance, in the workshops, foreman's offices and secretariats, and on the intranet

"For us Continuous Improvement is now an integral component of the Buderus Edelmetall corporate strategy", says Jens Mohr, "for which we set aside time and resources to support and drive forward this continuous process. The more intensively we do this, the stronger Buderus Edelmetall will become."



The Continuous Improvement organization structure