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Germany's best ideas hubs: BPW Innovation Lab in the top ten

- Performance beyond table football and colourful sticky notes: *Capital* and Infront Consulting have examined innovation labs all over Germany
- BPW InnovationLab is outstripping the ideas hubs of major leading companies with its concepts for networked transport
- Michael Pfeiffer: 'The InnovationLab is not only inspiring digitisation, but is also informing the innovation culture for the entire BPW Group'

Wiehl/Siegburg 18.07.2018 --- Innovation labs are a major trend among large corporations: with playful methods, an unconventional working culture and freedom from corporate structures, they are designed to develop new digital business ideas. But an element of scepticism has grown alongside these: which ideas hubs actually work? The InnovationLab of the transport specialist and 'hidden champion' BPW from the Bergisches Land region made it into the top ten right from the start in the critical comparison by the magazine *Capital*.

There is no table football in sight at the BPW Group's 'InnovationLab', but the other clichés of a creative ideas hub ring true: an industrial loft with historic brick architecture, a rainbow of sticky notes covering the walls and windows and a fancy Weber barbecue ready and waiting on the roof terrace with a panoramic view over the town of Siegburg for chilling out after the brainstorming session. Things don't get much cooler or smarter than this – but BPW offers more than just the perfect atmosphere. It also delivers results, which is what the Hamburg-based management consultancy Infront picked up on when it put 60 German ideas labs under the microscope for the business magazine *Capital*. The evaluations were more than just a paper exercise – they also involved extensive discussions with employees and visits to sites.

Background: two-thirds of German DAX companies and many leading medium-sized enterprises invest in creative ideas hubs. But after the initial euphoria, business leaders and controllers are taking a closer look at whether the experimental innovation culture is actually bearing fruit. 'The nice years are over,' says the magazine in the headline for its July edition. 'The labs have got to deliver.' The specialist digitisation consultancy Infront constructed a grid with eight evaluation factors for the study: ambition, achievement of objectives, management, topics, integration into the company as a whole, methods, scaling and network. The BPW InnovationLab, which develops concepts for digitally networked transport, came out better than many heavily staffed and funded labs of major German companies right from the start, securing tenth place.

BPW is a medium-sized family-owned company based in the town of Wiehl in the Bergisches Land region and specialises in transport technologies. The company has shifted its perspective with the InnovationLab: vehicle manufacturers and hauliers have traditionally been the core target groups for BPW, but the InnovationLab is exploring the digital networking possibilities for the entire logistics chain.

BPW has also brought the software giant SAP on board as a partner and invited the senders of transported goods to be involved in generating ideas. As a result, BPW not only provides networking for trucks and trailers with digital logistics processes, but will in future also link in the freight itself for the first time. A convenient sensor attached to the goods carrier will transmit the position and the status of the goods to the ERP and inventory management systems via the cloud using ultra-narrow-band technology. This is bringing the first gains in transparency to the transport route, which has so far been the 'black hole' in digital goods control. The system will be presented to the public for the first time in September at the IAA Commercial Vehicles fair and is already being used successfully by pilot customers – including the BPW parent company itself.

'We have succeeded in transferring ideas and methodological approaches from the InnovationLab to the entire company very quickly,' explains Michael Pfeiffer, personally liable managing partner of BPW. 'Agile methods such as design thinking and business model canvas have now become established in many departments. They are also blending in increasingly with the start-up culture. For example, there is an ideas workshop that an entire trailer can be parked inside, so that we are not just discussing innovations in theory.'

Michael Pfeiffer sees a great deal of overlap between start-up and traditional industrial culture in the customer relationship: 'We have been maintaining close relationships with our customers and partners for 120 years and we involve them in the process of developing ideas at a very early stage. This can be seen, for instance, in our company slogan: "we think transport". Every day, we put ourselves in our customers' positions, try to understand their transport tasks and look for new solutions.'

In doing so, we see transport and logistics as a system. This makes the transport industry perfect for digital innovation. This understanding of an economic system has also been long established at BPW and the Innovation Lab is supplying a great deal of new momentum.'

Note: The BPW InnovationLab will be exhibiting at the IAA Commercial Vehicles fair from 20 to 27 September 2018 in Hanover. You can find the lab with the BPW Group at Stand C31 in Hall 26.

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About BPW Bergische Achsen KG

BPW Bergische Achsen KG is the parent company of the BPW Group. With more than 1,600 employees, including around 120 trainees, the family-run company has been developing and producing complete running gear systems for truck trailers and semi-trailers at its headquarters in Wiehl since 1898. BPW's technologies include axle systems, brake technology, suspension and bearings. BPW's trailer axles and running gear systems are in use in millions of vehicles around the world. An extensive range of services also provides vehicle manufacturers and vehicle operators with the opportunity to increase economic efficiency in their production and transport processes. www.bpw.de/en

About BPW Group

BPW Group, based in Wiehl, Germany, is a dependable international mobility and system partner for the transport industry, serving as a one-stop shop for innovative solutions. Its portfolio embraces axles, suspension systems and brake technologies (BPW), locking systems and bodywork technology (Hestal), lighting systems (Ermax), composite technologies (HBN-Teknik), and user-friendly telematics applications for trucks and trailers (idem telematics). BPW Group's technologies and services support manufacturers' cost-effective workflows and enable vehicle operators to manage their fleets efficiently by maximising the transparency of loading and transport processes. The owner-managed BPW Group encompasses 70 companies worldwide and employs around 7,000 people. www.wethinktransport.com

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