



SALES

Labyrinthine paths

What is a legal department needed for? Jörg Glocker and his legal team see to it that contracts Wörwag signs are legally correct and that there are no unpleasant surprises at the end.

By Jürgen Löhle Photos by Oliver Roggenbuck

The small print is easy to overlook. We all know that, but not many of us always live by the rule. Who actually reads through all the pages of terms and conditions for an insurance policy meticulously before signing it? The risks are manageable for a private person, but a different approach is needed in the world of business. Since 2015, Jörg Glocker and his crew ensure that the contracts are watertight and ideally never need to actually be consulted. Namely, when the business deal has been concluded without any problems.

Even if that represents the norm, the legal department is important to any company. Jörg Glocker explains why that is, using figures to illustrate his point. In 30 years of company history up to 2012, only 400 contracts were documented as having had individual pages that needed to undergo legal scrutiny and classification. This figure has increased sharply. In the past

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five years alone, the 49-year-old department head has counted 1,500 documents that have had to be checked rigorously for legal issues prior to being signed. “You used to be able to conclude contracts with a handshake,” says Glocker, “but those days are definitely gone.”

The reason for the growing legal complexity is also due to Wörwag’s business development. While the company once had a large number of – often small – customers from industry, the profile has clearly shifted towards the automotive sector. Many of these customers are large, international companies that frequently order several thousand tons of coatings every year. Two companies alone place orders with Wörwag amounting to 30 million euros annually. When the work assignments are that large, the contracts governing them are also complex. “Even the tiniest details have to be regulated for these customers,” says Glocker, who sometimes sees major contracts encompassing 300 pages land on his desk.

Three-hundred pages – and there are pitfalls that are important to avoid in each one of them. In addition to the general code of business conduct, the collaboration is specified down to the last detail. At the same time, the conditions also have to be examined for feasibility. “If a customer has a problem that we have to react to within an hour, but the drive to get there alone takes four hours, that isn’t possible, of course,” Glocker

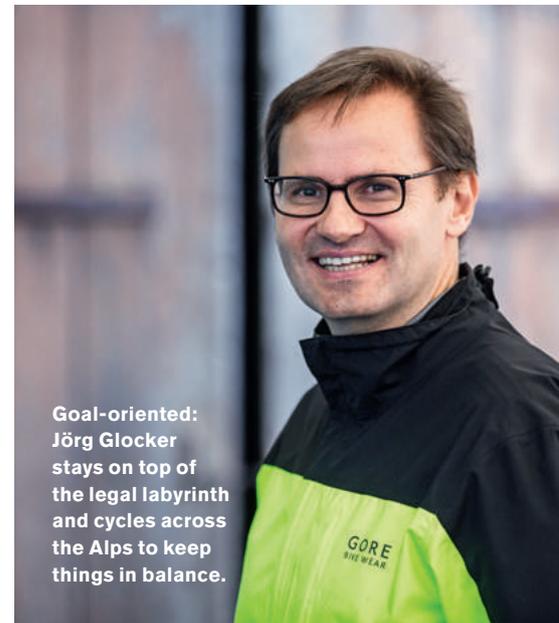
er cites as an example. In another case, the partner wanted 64 months warranty coverage on the coatings, which is significantly longer than usual.

Eighty percent of the Director of Sales Administration’s job is spent reviewing contracts. Some of them sport more commentary than paragraphs by the end of the checking process, while others pass muster without any comments at all. Wörwag has had a legal department since November 1, 2015. Glocker is the department head, and support is supplied by the fully qualified lawyer and corporate attorney Dr. Isabel Otterbach and by Charlotte Coy, who has a degree in business administration. Ever since then, all contracts go through the Legal Department to be scrutinized. Glocker: “We have to ensure that Wörwag only signs documents with stipulations that we can fulfil.”

Glocker earned his qualification for this complex responsibility through a time-consuming process. The economics major (Diplom-Ökonom) took a distance-learning course for two-and-a-half years starting in 2012, and attained an LL.M. degree, Master of Laws, in commercial law for company applications. Those were tough years which required around 15 hours of study time per week – in addition to his job. “The company and I shared the time,” says Glocker, who had one day a week off during his course of study.

Glocker draws his strength and energy for such endeavors through cycling, for example. It adds up to around 7,000 kilometers a year. Time to clear his head and recharge his batteries for work, which demands a great deal of concentration and stamina. And teamwork. The team also has the boss covered at times when he’s off cycling. For example, in summer, when Glocker crosses the Alps on his mountain bike.

He also has to be ready to shoulder task force responsibilities at short notice. Quick responses are a requirement when legal questions come up. “There are solutions for everything,” says Glocker. It necessitates finding compromises that ultimately lead to the business deal coming to fruition. Stress? “Hunting down a solution can be really fun,” says Glocker. It’s very similar to sports cycling. The challenges can also become enjoyable. Searching for the best solution can as well. “At any rate, nothing can faze me anymore.” Says Jörg Glocker, the expert in small print, but also a whole lot more. ■



Goal-oriented:
Jörg Glocker
stays on top of
the legal labyrinth
and cycles across
the Alps to keep
things in balance.

