Michael Dobrath on sustainability efforts at Porsche Switzerland

20/11/2024 Michael Dobrath, Business Development Manager at Porsche Schweiz AG, is dedicated to sustainability. In this interview, he shares how the ecological footprint can be reduced through innovative energy concepts and why social projects, like creating accessible hiking trails, are close to his heart.

Michael, as the Business Development Manager at Porsche in Switzerland, you deal with sustainability every day—what does sustainability mean to you, and what exactly does your role entail?

Michael Dobrath: Sustainability is a topic that has been close to me for a long time, both personally and professionally. I spend a lot of time hiking in nature and want future generations to be able to enjoy this as well. This interest has been a constant throughout my career – from my academic focus to my current role in Business Development at Porsche Switzerland. For me, sustainability means acting consciously and responsibly as well as continually questioning my actions in all areas: ecological, social, and economic. This holistic understanding is also very important at Porsche, as sustainability goes beyond environmental protection to include long-term economic orientation. In my role, I work to adapt

Porsche's corporate strategy to the Swiss market, developing business models and implementing local projects – all with a strong focus on sustainability.

How can the Swiss market for Porsche be described, and what sustainability topics are you focusing on?

Dobrath: As Porsche Switzerland, we are a fully-owned subsidiary of Porsche AG, managing a network of 14 Porsche Centers, a Porsche Studio, and five Porsche Service Centers. Approximately 60 employees work at our headquarters in Rotkreuz. With a record 4,397 vehicles delivered to customers in Switzerland in 2023, we represent a key market for Porsche in Europe and are actively engaged in various sustainability initiatives. These efforts span vehicle logistics, our headquarters operations, and our Porsche Centers, with a focus on both strategic direction and local action. We closely align with Porsche's sustainability strategy while also leveraging local market management to make targeted impacts and take advantage of synergies from close collaboration with the company's headquarters in Stuttgart-Zuffenhausen. Through this approach, we have implemented measures that contribute to Porsche's sustainability goals and promote sustainable growth in our market. Examples include the ecological optimization of our sites and enhancing our social engagement within Switzerland.

Let's take a closer look at the dealership network and locations of Porsche Schweiz AG – what initiatives are you currently working on to make them more environmentally friendly?

Dobrath: To gradually reduce our ecological footprint, we have reviewed our energy supply with the goal of lowering consumption and transitioning to renewable sources. As part of this, we implemented an energy management system that monitors our consumption and identifies energy-intensive areas, allowing us to implement targeted reduction measures. These efforts are already visible at our headquarters in Rotkreuz, where we fully supply and operate the site with renewable energy since 2022, with an increasing portion coming from on-site power generation. Currently, we are equipping our buildings in Rotkreuz with photovoltaic systems. When fully operational in 2025, they are expected to cover up to 30 percent of our electricity needs. Additionally, we have reduced our energy consumption by approximately 20 percent compared to 2021 through improvements in heating and cooling systems. Another initiative is underway at one of our Porsche Centers, where we plan to use an infrared curing booth for painting, enabling operations with reduced CO_2 emissions compared to traditional curing booths.

What sustainability projects are you pursuing in the area of logistics?

Dobrath: Since the end of 2023, we have been transporting our vehicles both within Switzerland and internationally using fully electric trucks. In collaboration with a Swiss transport company, we now conduct the transport of new cars from the production plant in Stuttgart-Zuffenhausen with lower emissions. All models produced for the Swiss market, including the 911, 718, and Taycan, are now transported electrically to our 14 Porsche dealerships. As a result, last year we were able to save around 267 tons of CO_2 compared to truck journeys with internal combustion engines, which is equivalent to approximately 100 round-trip flights from Frankfurt to New York.

You already mentioned the 14 Porsche Centers in Switzerland. How do you actively involve them in your sustainability initiatives?

Dobrath: Our dealership network in Switzerland has expanded its sustainability efforts over the past few years: 12 out of the 14 Porsche Centers are powered by renewable energy, and more than a third have installed energy management systems. Additionally, nearly two-thirds of them use innovative heating systems with renewable energy. Within a year, we were able to increase the share of Porsche Centers with installed photovoltaic systems from 40% to about 73%. We aim to build on this success. To do so, we conduct an annual status-quo analysis in our Swiss Porsche Centers to identify potential areas for improvement, allowing us to develop concrete actions. These actions then become an integral part of the business development plan for each Porsche Center.

Besides environmental issues, you also focus on the social aspect: How do you get involved in the community?

Dobrath: It is very important to us to act as a partner to society in Switzerland – fitting with Porsche's corporate philosophy of fulfilling dreams. Since 2022, we have been working with "Procap," the largest Swiss self-help organization for and by people with disabilities. Our shared goal is inclusion through mobility and strengthening social togetherness. We have made it our mission to make the popular Swiss hobby of hiking accessible to people with walking or vision impairments. As part of the "Join the Porsche Ride" initiative, we have created barrier-free hiking trails and also optimized a trekking wheelchair in collaboration with our training center in Stuttgart-Zuffenhausen. Our employees also support the initiative, for example, by accompanying hiking tours. In May 2024, I was on-site when we conducted the first audio-guide hike in Switzerland at Zurich's local mountain, Uetliberg. It was a special experience for me, as it helped me perceive my environment in a new way—something I will definitely keep in mind on my future hikes.

Let's take a look at the future: What would you generally wish for the future?

I wish for a stronger societal awareness for more sustainability, as it represents an opportunity for positive change in all areas. At Porsche, it's important for me to maintain the pioneering spirit and continue to find innovative solutions to sustainably improve our company and meet our responsibilities. As Porsche Switzerland, we are already involved in selected Porsche projects from the outset, which allows us to contribute valuable market insights during the conceptual phase. This proactive exchange is very important to us. I am convinced that every challenge holds an opportunity, which we should leverage together as a company. Close collaboration across departments and national borders is key to developing effective solutions and shaping a sustainable future.

Info

In the interview series "Perspectives on Sustainability", Porsche employees talk about their specialist subject areas. The interview with Michael Dobrath is part 14 of the series.

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