

Portrait: Morten Brunvoll Commuter between Switzerland and Taiwan

The Norwegian residing in the Rhine Valley seeks stock market success for the third time with the dental implant manufacturer Biodenta.

The Norwegian-Swiss med-tech entrepreneur Morten Brunvoll knows the itineraries between Switzerland and Asia by heart. Since the mid-eighties, the 60-years old has made this journey over 200 times - in either direction. During the same period, Mr. Brunvoll brought three med-tech firms with development and sales base in Switzerland to the stock market in Taiwan: a track record second to none!

The youngest "child" of the native Norwegian, who has lived in the Rhine Valley since 1991 and who now speaks the local dialect with almost no accent, is the dental implant manufacturer Biodenta. Founded in 2007 and led to the stock market of Taipei last December the company already has 220 employees, 10% of them in Berneck. The turnover in 2012, however, was still limited to 92.3 million NT\$ (2.9 million Swiss francs) because the sale of the first products had only started the previous year. Now, the intention is to climb gradually to the top.

The 140 million Swiss francs valued company, which – similar to the two largest producers of dental implants Straumann and Nobel Biocare – not only manufactures dental implants, but also crowns and bridges, operates nine regional prosthetics production sites (service centers) worldwide; three to four more are to be added in 2013. Apart from Switzerland, Russia, Taiwan, China, Turkey, Ukraine and the United States Mr. Brunvoll wants to establish new service centers under the Biodenta sub-brand DentaSwiss in Warsaw (for EU countries) and in India.

The full-blooded entrepreneur, who only two years after graduating had taken over his father-in-law's trading company for household electrical appliances, wants to expand primarily in emerging markets. Of Western Europe, he does not think highly. Whoever hopes for a renaissance of Europe as the Swiss manufacturer Straumann and Nobel Biocare do is naive. He had predicted the demise of European economies already thirty years ago, Mr. Brunvoll stressed, adding: "Even then, the Europeans complained most of the time."

Mr. Brunvoll is full of praise for Asia and especially for Taiwan. "Do you know that the Taiwanese government has reduced the maximum working hours per week recently?" he asks with a wink and adds: "From 84 to 80 hours." Morten Brunvoll likes the island nation not only because of the high level of performance, but also for its shareholder culture. He points out that 70% of Taiwanese households possess shares. Within Biodenta, nearly two-thirds of its employees are shareholders of the company.

Beside the dental implant specialist Biodenta, which he manages as Executive Chairman with advisory support from former Ypsomed CEO Richard Fritschi, Mr. Brunvoll else is involved with a minor shareholder position in the Taiwanese blood glucose meters manufacturer Bionime. Fritschi had chosen Bionime as an Ypsomed supplier and in 2008, he prompted the purchase of a 10% share, which the Burgdorf based Ypsomed still holds today. Bionime has been listed since the end of 2010 and was expected to have a market capitalization of about 83 million Swiss francs.

Over 230 million Swiss francs is the value of Microlife, the third of Morten Brunvoll's med-tech companies listed in Taiwan. Mr. Brunvoll, who is already four-time grandfather, points with pride to the fact that the thermometer manufacturer increased sales from 11 to 150 Mio US\$ under his management from 1997 to 2006. In the fiscal year 2011 – more recent figures are not yet available – the turnover amounted to 144 million US\$. None of the companies under Mr. Brunvoll's management has risen to a global corporation so far. And Morten Brunvoll is realistic and modest enough and even in the case of Biodenta he does not want to set the bar too high. "If we are able to achieve 80 to 100 million US\$ in sales within five years, we can be more than satisfied," he says.