

WHAT CUSTOMERS WANT

The STIHL Group finds itself confronting a wide range of issues at the moment. Outdoor power equipment markets across the globe are changing rapidly, alternative drive systems are becoming increasingly important, and the evolving needs of diverse customer groups are pushing the business harder than ever. Norbert Pick, STIHL Executive Board member for Marketing and Sales, tells us how STIHL is navigating through these new situations.





We meet Norbert Pick, STIHL AG Executive Board member for Marketing and Sales, at Plant 2 in Waiblingen-Neustadt. More specifically, at the Concept Store - the blueprint for the store layout of a modern STIHL authorized dealer. It's good to keep both off-line and online sides of the business working hard.



»We need to get to know and understand our customers in order to continue to be successful.«

NORBERT PICK
Executive Board member for Marketing and Sales

When we talk about STIHL customers, who exactly are we referring to?

NORBERT PICK There is definitely no such thing as a typical STIHL customer. Customers range from private users and professional landscape gardeners and forest workers to our authorized dealers. For all their differences, these groups also have many things in common: they are people who have needs, and these needs are constantly evolving. When we consider our customers, we see a burgeoning segment with growing expectations. This rise in expectations is partly the result of experiences with other companies, but the technological transformation and the overall characteristics of the world we are living in today also shape the needs of our customers.

What does that mean exactly?

PICK We notice that our customers are not just discerning. They are also more mobile and connected, and are therefore much faster at telling other customers about their experiences with us. In addition, they are more purpose-driven and are often also more environmentally friendly, and expect more transparency and authenticity from us as a company. We're also aware that convenience plays an even bigger role. Technological progress helps make our lives more convenient and easier on a daily basis, as can be seen by the growing number of people using robot vacuum cleaners and robot lawnmowers, such as our iMOW, for example. Buying behavior has also changed. We have become used to ordering online and receiving the products immediately.

And at the same time our buying behavior is changing, our customers' requirements, desires, and expectations are also evolving. This is why we are constantly working to adapt our processes to the needs of our customers, and striving for continuous improvement. Our aim is for our customers to have an exciting, positive experience that is tailored to them, regardless of where and how they shop with us. Alongside ordering online, a trip to one of our authorized dealers also offers the opportunity to experience the products and, with them, the brands up close and in a particularly special way.

Are the changing expectations of our customers the only challenge STIHL is facing today, as a brand and as an organization?

PICK No. The new and growing expectations of our customers are one of many major challenges we are facing. Yet to only focus on the expectations would be clearly missing the point. To start with, it is becoming more and more difficult to distinguish our products from those of our competitors. The basic requirements in the battery segment are fundamentally different from those for gasoline-powered products. To give you an example, new products are being launched on the market in quicker succession and the product portfolios are considerably more extensive.

With this in mind, it's best for us to meet our customers where they are, whether that is at the very start of a project or well into their professional work. We develop campaigns to meet every kind of need, and that stand out, address the customer groups, and are memorable. We also offer a range of products tailored to the various needs and requirements of our users, providing the best solution for each person.

What do you think is the best way for us to tackle these challenges?

PICK We need to get to know and understand our customers in order to continue to be successful. Generally speaking, people are attracted to things that will add value to their lives. And it's important to them to feel acknowledged. The concept of being customer-centric is comprised of thinking beyond products and prices, keeping our focus on the customers, and organizing our actions around them. It's proven that customer-centric companies are very successful. Every action must be targeted to the needs of our customers, in everything that we do. This focus has been, is, and continues to be the key basis for our further growth.

NORBERT PICK

was born in 1957 in Neuerburg in the Eifel region. He is married and has two children. After completing his studies as a graduate engineer (Diplom-Ingenieur), he started out as a project engineer in drive technology at Arthur Henkelhausen, Deutz Dieselmotoren in Krefeld. Before joining STIHL, he was a managing director at Potain Turmdrehkrane in Mörfelden-Walldorf, Germany. From 2002 to 2012, he was General Manager of STIHL Vertriebszentrale in Dieburg. Since July 1, 2012, Norbert Pick has been STIHL AG Executive Board member for Marketing and Sales.



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55,000

AUTHORIZED DEALERS in over 160 countries, 42 STIHL-owned sales and marketing companies, and approximately 120 importers represent STIHL around the world.



What tools does STIHL use to get to know its customers and speak to them as directly as possible?

PICK We work with many tools and touchpoints that are hugely important to us. It all starts by asking a simple question: “What is the best tool for me?” Then we move on to step-by-step instructions where we show how to go about the project – with and without using our products – and at the end we have a full picture of nature and the ecosystem. Throughout this process, we use different channels to present text, videos, and much more about products and projects, or about nature and sustainability.

Another tool we use is data analysis. We study the data we have gathered ourselves or from publicly available sources to find out what topics are relevant to our customers at a particular time of year, for example, and what people are looking for, when, and how often. We can use our findings here to help with our planning and the placement of our content.

What is the aim behind all of this effort?

PICK Our clear aim is for STIHL to be the name customers think of first when they need help with their work in and with nature. This is why we must offer a premium customer experience with our content and services as well as with our products. Ultimately, we intend to become the most important brand in this market segment – something we pursue consistently and that makes us strive for continuous improvement.

What is the significance of STIHL World which is currently being built in Waiblingen, in this context?

PICK STIHL World is a really special project, for me personally. In the 20 years that I have been at STIHL, there have been many developments that I have helmed and been responsible for, such as the expansion of the product portfolio to include battery-powered tools, the development of online retail, the launch of our own brand store with STIHL merchandise, and the development of the first digital products and services. With each step forward, we have bolstered the STIHL brand and raised awareness of it, and have added value and created better benefits for our customers and fans. STIHL World is another mile-

stone in the company’s history, which stretches back over more than 95 years. It is a flagship project to showcase the STIHL brand in a unique manner.

STIHL World is being built on the land that company founder Andreas Stihl bought over 80 years ago for his growing business.

PICK The location has been very carefully selected because there is great importance and history attached to it. STIHL World can only be built where the STIHL brand started its global success story. It is the birthplace of our international reputation for being a world-class chainsaw and power tool manufacturer. In addition, the location is directly on the Rems River, surrounded by nature, and is therefore the perfect representation of our foundation. STIHL World is thus a clear commitment to our roots, which are embedded at Badstraße in Waiblingen.