



# Striking a balance between **stability** and **change**



In January, a new generation took the helm at Dachser. The Executive Board team and Dachser's new CEO Burkhard Eling exemplify the balance between stability and change in the family-owned company. Dr. Andreas Froschmayer, Corporate Director Corporate Strategy & PR, on taking a long-planned and well-prepared step that connects the company's heritage with its future.

It seems paradoxical that as coronavirus lockdowns around the world repeatedly bring public life to a standstill, shuttering many businesses in retail, tourism, and catering, the pace of life still appears to be getting faster. Digitalization, globalization, climate change, and innovative new mobility technologies advance unabated, radically changing the markets and interactions in business, politics, and society. "Transition" is fast becoming the watchword of future viability, and this is also—or especially—true in logistics.

At Dachser, transition finds expression in our long-planned and well-prepared change in leadership. Bernhard Simon and Michael Schilling will move from the Executive Board to the Supervisory Board. Now, a new Executive Board with Burkhard Eling as CEO and Spokesperson will manage the operational business of the family-owned company. →

In a fast-changing world,  
the answer is more agility

“My Executive Board colleagues and I are taking over an extremely robust and fast-growing company that even the challenges of the coronavirus crisis haven’t managed to throw off course. With their tremendous know-how and commitment, the people at Dachser have succeeded in maintaining the supply chains of our global customers even under adverse conditions,” says Burkhard Eling in a press release on the change in leadership. “With the trust and support of the founding family, the Executive Board team will preserve the unique, people-oriented culture of Dachser as a family-owned company. At the same time, we will continue to develop the company with sound judgment and agility on its way to becoming the world’s most integrated logistics provider.”

## Evolution, not revolution

Transitioning from one generation to the next is a real challenge, especially for family-owned companies. Not all have an established line of succession, and even if they do there is often uncertainty as to how to reconcile the company’s heritage with its new beginning and continuous development. In other words, an orderly transition is more of an evolution than a revolution.

Professor Peter May, a leading family business consultant and pioneer in owner mindset strategy, once set the course for this in a discussion with DACHSER magazine: “Family business champions have strategies designed on a long-term basis, clever and sound financing concepts, and a healthy approach to risk that first and foremost seeks



The Dachser Executive Board (l-r): Robert Erni, Alexander Tonn, Burkhard Eling, Edoardo Podestà, and Stefan Hohm

## DACHSER’S NEW GENERATION OF LEADERSHIP

### Burkhard Eling, CEO

Dachser’s long-serving former Chief Financial Officer (CFO) now heads the Corporate Strategy, Human Resources, Marketing executive unit, which also includes Corporate Key Account Management and the Corporate Governance & Compliance division.

### Alexander Tonn, COO Road Logistics

Already with the company for 20 years, the 47-year-old is responsible for the European overland transport networks for industrial goods and food. In addition, he will continue to lead the European Logistics Germany business unit.

### Edoardo Podestà, COO Air & Sea Logistics

There are no changes to Dachser’s air and sea freight business, which has been led by Edoardo Podestà as COO Air & Sea Logistics since October 2019. Based in Hong Kong, the 58-year-old Italian is Managing Director of the Asia Pacific business unit, and has been in charge of Dachser’s air and sea freight business in this region since 2014.

### Stefan Hohm, CDO

Stefan Hohm, 48, heads the newly created IT & Development executive unit as Chief Development Officer (CDO). Hohm has been at Dachser for 28 years, most recently as Corporate Director for the logistics provider’s research and development work as well as its Corporate Solutions business. Besides the further development of IT, he is now also responsible for worldwide contract logistics.

### Robert Erni, CFO

The 54-year-old Swiss national has taken over the Finance, Legal and Tax executive unit as Chief Financial Officer. Before joining Dachser, he served for almost seven years as Group CFO at logistics provider Panalpina, making him a seasoned global logistics financial manager.



## “Family business champions have strategies designed on a long-term basis, clever and sound financing concepts, and a healthy approach to risk.”

Prof. Peter May, founder of Peter May Family Business Consulting, a leader in the field

lasting security for the company’s assets. In addition, the degree of professionalism as well as the capacity to introduce new perspectives and innovative approaches within the company plays a decisive role in all corporate divisions.”

This is precisely what Dachser’s change in leadership aims to achieve. The new CEO—who joined Dachser in 2012 and started working with Bernhard Simon in 2016 to plan the transition—sets the tone in the continuation of a success story that has already spanned over 90 years: “To ensure the company strikes a balance between stability and change, Dachser’s new Executive Board is continuing to follow its own strategic guiding principles. These help orient our company, pave the way for agility in dynamic markets, and facilitate sustainable business success by ensuring further scalability,” Eling says.

The new team has worked long and hard to prepare. “Over the past few months, we’ve come to grips with our new roles and have gelled as a team in many ways. We’re well equipped to master the challenges that lie ahead,” Eling says. “We will continue to make sound judgments and maintain the appropriate speed that has made Dachser a successful and essential company.” Eling also says this enables the company to hold its own, especially in times of crisis. “We’ve demonstrated that we know our processes and our business inside out, and that we manage them with great success. We’ve provided our customers and service partners with stability and really lived by our corporate values.”

The Dachser mission sets the course for all strategic planning and decisions that shape the company’s day-to-day work. To a certain degree, it is the thread that connects everything the logistics provider does: “We create the world’s most intelligent combination and integration of logistical network services. We optimize the logistics balance sheet of our customers.”

### The network is everything

A clear mission serves as a compass that points the way to the future while helping to maintain the desired course on the way to becoming the most integrated logistics provider. The guiding principles make it clear that “The network is everything.” “We will continue to develop and consolidate the Dachser network geographically in order to be able to offer services to customers both in Europe and worldwide and perform these services in line with our mission as ‘the most integrated logistics provider,’” Eling says.

In this way, Dachser’s new leadership dovetails seamlessly with the company’s heritage, as a look back shows: When we began to develop our strategy, the network we

inherited, which initially concentrated on Germany and its closest neighbors, was still far removed from the European-network mindset—plus all its standards and quality trademarks—that today we take as a matter of course. To remain viable for the long term in expanding markets, Dachser began in the 1990s to put in place the physical as well as the IT conditions.

The company went to great lengths to establish integrated processes in the two business lines, European Logistics and Food Logistics. Thorough change management then convinced all our employees in Europe to collaborate within an unparalleled network and work to tap its full potential each and every day. The success among our European customers is proof of this. It was the driving force behind an international Dachser culture that also resonates for our global Air & Sea Logistics network. This helps us closely interconnect our global networks and continuously enhance our agility.

### Able to withstand crises

Keeping the Dachser network ready and manageable remains a top priority for the new Executive Board as well. The robustness this creates is also a basic requirement for being able to respond to unforeseen developments whenever they happen—most recently those of the coronavirus crisis. Maintaining the supply chains that are essential for industry and society, even under difficult conditions, is possible only within living, breathing networks with smoothly functioning systems and people who know what they’re doing, where they want to go, and what they want to achieve together.

“We possess a firm belief in customer benefits and the drive to optimize them,” Eling says, adding that this view clearly serves Dachser’s interests, too: “When we turn customers into ambassadors for our services, then this translates into success and benefits for all involved.”

Making sure operations move with the times is one side of a successful transition; the other is communicating the reasons why it makes sense. At Dachser, the triad of strategy, structure, and culture is essential for maintaining the commitment and loyalty that our managers and employees have to the company. Each change is anchored in the Dachser values: entrepreneurship and the courage to innovate; inclusive responsibility; sustainability; loyalty and commitment; integrity and honesty; openness and respect—commitment to these values always provides the clarity and orientation required for the daily conduct of managers and employees at all levels. It is the new Executive Board’s job to safeguard and further develop the trust placed in Dachser. →

**Every manager is called upon not only to make their own operational decisions, but also to have a hand in company-wide topics and communicate them—in keeping with our corporate value of “inclusive responsibility.” Dachser’s fundamental concern is always to recognize challenges early on and produce innovations—not only to react.**

## Global values

By not only professing its values, but also consciously and strictly adhering to them and proactively communicating them within and outside the company, Dachser creates the conditions necessary for maintaining healthy growth in the future as well. That includes compliance, which involves continually raising awareness of our code of conduct, a code based on the Dachser culture and on basic ethical and legal standards that apply the world over. Under the heading of “Integrity in logistics,” these values and standards have become an issue of key importance and one that must be firmly embedded in our global corporate governance.

Another key factor in Dachser’s further development as a global player and corporate citizen is having the support of its shareholders, even now that the company will no longer be headed by a family member once Bernhard Simon moves from managing the operational business to take his place on the Supervisory Board. The shareholders are committed to the family-owned company, they maintain close ties, and are prepared to give fundamental priority to the legitimate interests of the company even if these conflict with their own individual interests. This is a massive vote of confidence and source of motivation for the new leadership and all employees, particularly during a transition.

“In challenging times, we have a particularly great responsibility toward our employees, especially our younger

ones,” Eling says. “Training the next generation as valuable employees, developing and then retaining them for the long term is part of our culture. And always being able to rely on one another is mutually beneficial.” Eling says that loyalty also characterizes Dachser’s relationship with long-standing transport partners, to whom the company wants to give the best possible security; for example, through continuous orders and fair and rapid payment.

The message from the new management team is clear: “We will preserve all the good things that make Dachser unique. At the same time, we will harness the trust and support of the founding family to become more agile. Rapid advances in digitalization in all industries and all areas make this agility absolutely crucial. It will allow us to progress further on our path to becoming the world’s most integrated logistics provider.” Eling says it is with this in mind that Dachser will actively address the key challenges of the coming decade: digitalization with customer proximity, sustainability, and the lack of qualified personnel. He adds that Dachser has set itself the ambitious goal of maintaining all supply chains for and with its customers, while delivering the customary high quality. “You can rely on Dachser—we want to live up to this sentence with honesty,” Eling says. Not least because so much of the future is about transition.

Dr. Andreas Froschmayer

Dachser is in a strong position to meet the challenges of the future



# “Family-owned companies live longer”



Family-owned companies often experience better growth than the market and prove to be fit for the future—especially in times of crisis. Professor Hans-Liudger Diemel, technology historian and futurologist at Technische Universität Berlin, explains why this is the case.

**Professor Diemel, what inherent advantages do family-owned companies have in a rapidly changing world?**

**Prof. Diemel:** For a long time, it looked like family-owned companies were on the way out. Compared to international corporations and public limited-liability companies, many economists regarded them as the dinosaurs of economic history, headed for extinction. But exactly the opposite happened. Family-owned companies are eager to grow and innovate and have proven to be fit for the future—especially in times of crisis.

**Why is that?**

Unlike public limited-liability companies, for instance, which tend to focus on short-term profit taking, family-owned companies and foundations are more concerned with tradition, identity, heritage, and sustainability, and

with maintaining greater independence from capital markets. This allows them to make bold decisions and set a sustainable course, which are hallmarks of internationalization and globalization.

**What are the risks?**

Transitioning from one generation to the next is often where things can go wrong. Unless this is well planned according to clearly defined rules and executed in mutual agreement with the family, even extremely successful companies can quickly find themselves on their knees. History shows us this time and again, but Dachser is proving that problems can be avoided. Back when the corporate governance debate had barely begun in Germany, Dachser had already completed the modernization of its corporate governance structures.

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Prof. Dr. Hans-Liudger Diemel