

Gerd Walker – Daring to advance innovation and sustainability in production

Ingolstadt/Neckarsulm, June 21, 2022 – 25 years ago, Gerd Walker, a native of Reutlingen, Germany, began his professional career as a working student in mechanical engineering at the company with the four rings. On February 1, 2022, Walker’s 52nd birthday, the former Head of production at the Volkswagen Group assumed the role of the new Audi Board Member for Production and Logistics.

Energy, foresight, and a clear plan – Gerd Walker entered his new office with great drive: “My goal is to make production at Audi innovative, highly efficient, and smart,” says Walker. “To that end, we are digitalizing and electrifying Audi’s global production network.” Walker has worked in various positions in the Volkswagen Group since 2016, most recently as Head of Group Production in Wolfsburg. In his first few weeks, the 52-year-old made numerous personal appointments and site visits to get a clear picture of Audi’s employees and locations. “It’s nice to come back home to the Audi family,” Walker says.

“The Audi spirit remains”

Walker knows his way around the brand with the four rings. He first worked at AUDI AG in 1997 as a working student in mechanical engineering, writing his thesis on concept design for small-series production. “Coming back to Ingolstadt now and doing so in this position is a dream come true for a mechanical engineer,” Walker says. “When I started at Audi, there were four models and just a few production sites. Today, we have 17 model lines and a global production network. We build more than three times as many cars. We’ve grown greatly, but the Audi spirit remains the same.” The new Audi Board Member benefits from more than just his in-depth knowledge of Audi’s production and logistics processes. From July 2018 to January 2022, Walker was also responsible for managing all of the Group’s production operations. With a wealth of experience like this, few people know the world of Volkswagen manufacturing as well as he does – Walker sees this balance between Audi’s specific DNA and Group synergies as a major advantage. “The network that I was able to build up over the past 25 years, both at Audi and within the Group, has helped me settle into my new role quickly,” says the 52-year-old. The passionate sportsman was also shaped by his time in Hungary: In Győr, Walker played a decisive role as Managing Director in the expansion of the site from a plant exclusively for engine production to a full vehicle plant. “Everyone pitched in to achieve our common goal,” he recalls warmly even today.

For Walker, the team is always the focus

As the new man at the helm of Audi’s global production network, Gerd Walker naturally has an eye on all Audi’s plants. But he also states: “We are aware of our responsibility to the German sites in Ingolstadt and Neckarsulm. There is an incredibly high level of expertise there that we want to continue to leverage,” Walker emphasizes. “Our employees in Ingolstadt and Neckarsulm have made the brand great.”

Going forward, the production of all-electric cars will pose unique challenges for Walker and Audi's workforce. "I am also focusing on making production flexible, resilient, and future-proof in the long term, even with geopolitical causes making the supply situation difficult at the moment. We are in the biggest transformation in our company's history, and manufacturing is playing a key role," Walker says. Together with his management team, Walker has used his time in office so far to revitalize Audi's production strategy – and, above all, to back it up with concrete goals. "With our passion and creativity, we are reshaping value creation – for a world worth living in," says the new Board Member for Production and Logistics, outlining the ambitious mission he and his team have worked out. In service of this mission, Walker wants to reduce complexity, work closely with other business divisions such as Product Development – and fully digitalize production at Audi, across all locations and areas.

For Gerd Walker, the focus is always the team – especially in times of increasing automation and digitalization. "We use automation in the production process to relieve the burden on our employees. But machines can never replace the performance and, above all, the creativity that they bring to the table," says Walker. Thanks to his approachable, open management style, Walker is able to get Audi employees excited about digitalization and electromobility – and encourage them to try new things. "As a team, we at Audi pull together in a very goal-oriented way. Others could learn from us there. If we see change as an opportunity, we will have a very successful future ahead of us. That's what I want to work on together with everyone."

Short biography

Gerd Walker was born on February 1, 1970, in Reutlingen, Germany. He first worked at AUDI AG in 1997 as a working student in mechanical engineering, writing his thesis on concept design for small-series production. In 1998, he took his first job as a concept designer in the Production division at Audi in Ingolstadt. From 2002 to 2006, Walker had various positions in Technical Development in Neckarsulm and Ingolstadt. From 2006, he was responsible for product and process technology, body construction and exterior, in the pre-series center for the worldwide production of new models. In September 2012, today's new Audi Board Member for Production and Logistics took over the management of vehicle production at AUDI HUNGARIA in Győr. In 2016, he moved into the Group and managed production strategy in Wolfsburg. From July 2018 to January 2022, Walker headed up production at the Volkswagen Group. Since February 1, 2022, Walker has been the Board Member for Production and Logistics at Audi AG.

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The Audi Group is one of the most successful manufacturers of automobiles and motorcycles in the premium and luxury segments. The brands Audi, Ducati, Lamborghini and Bentley produce at 21 locations in 13 countries. Audi and its partners are present in more than 100 markets worldwide.

In 2021, the Audi Group delivered around 1.681 million cars from the Audi brand, 8,405 sports cars from the Lamborghini brand and 59,447 motorcycles from the Ducati brand to customers. In the 2021 fiscal year, AUDI AG achieved a total revenue of €53.1 billion and an operating profit before special items of €5.5 billion. More than 89,000 people all over the world work for the Audi Group, around 58,000 of them in Germany. With its attractive brands, new models, innovative mobility offerings and groundbreaking services, the group is systematically pursuing its path toward becoming a provider of sustainable, individual, premium mobility.
