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Burckhardt Compression: Good results in fiscal year 2008 – order intake weakens in the final quarter

Burckhardt Compression, one of the world's leading manufacturers of reciprocating compressors, produced an overall very good set of results in fiscal year 2008 (closing March 31, 2009). Sales growth was again in the high double-digits and both EBIT and net profit further increased. Order intake reached a record high in the first nine months but weakened in the final quarter, resulting in a full-year decline of 8.6% compared to the prior-year level. The Board of Directors will propose an unchanged dividend of CHF 6.00 per share at the General Meeting. Burckhardt Compression expects that the financial results for the 2009 business year will be lower.

Orders received totaled CHF 389.9 million, of which CHF 296.8 million were for new machines (-9.1%) and CHF 93.1 million (-7.1%) for services (CSS). The decline in new orders after a new record high was set in the first nine months of the year is solely due to the significant deterioration in the general economic environment in the fourth quarter.

Sales were up by 15.3% from the previous year, at CHF 424.5 million, and surpassed the CHF 400 million mark for the first time in the company's history. New machines accounted for CHF 327.4 million thereof (+19.1 %) and the service business accounted for the remaining CHF 97.1 million (+4.3%).

Gross profit increased by 7.0% to CHF 146.2 million. Excluding one-time effects of the previous year, the increase in gross profit represents 12.9%. The decline of the gross profit margin is due in part to changes in the product mix in the new machine business. Administrative and selling expenses increased by 15.9%, at the rate of the top-line growth. Operating profit of CHF 94.3 million (+4.9%) was above the previous year's level and, at 22.2%, the operating profit margin exceeded the 20% mark once again. Burckhardt Compression achieved another outstanding bottom-line result with net profit of CHF 72.8 million and earnings per share of CHF 21.46 clearly surpassing average performance levels for industrial companies in general as well as for our competition. Bottom line return on sales reached 17.1%.

Thanks to our good operating performance, the company's equity base grew by 23.2% to CHF 203.9 million. The equity ratio stood at 47.3%, in the middle of the targeted range of 45 to 50%. The high cash position of CHF 130.9 million puts Burckhardt Compression in a good spot to weather the difficult market environment and to seize business opportunities as they arise.



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The number of employees at the end of the year under review stood at 916, an increase of 97 or 12% compared to the end of March 2008. Among various other measures taken in response to the more difficult economic environment, we significantly reduced the number of temporary staff in the final quarter.

Outlook

In contrast to previous years, this year forward-looking statements are subject to much greater uncertainty due to the deterioration of the market environment. From today's standpoint, Burckhardt Compression anticipates a significantly lower order intake for the current business year (closing March 31, 2010). The high order backlog should permit sales of approximately CHF 350 million and an operating profit margin of more than 15%.

Unchanged dividend

The Board of Directors will propose an unchanged dividend of CHF 6.00 per share at the General Meeting. This corresponds to a payout ratio of 28%.

About Burckhardt Compression

Burckhardt Compression is one of the worldwide market leaders in the field of reciprocating compressors and the only manufacturer that offers a complete range of Laby® (labyrinth piston), Process Gas, and Hyper Compressors. The compressors are used to compress, cool or liquefy gases. Burckhardt Compression's customers include multinational companies active in the chemical, petrochemical, refinery, industrial gas and gas transport and storage industries. With the leading compressor technology, the high-quality compressor components and the comprehensive range of services Burckhardt Compression supports its customers in their effort to minimize the life cycle costs of their reciprocating compressor systems.

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Key figures at a glance

in CHF million	2006 business year*	2007 business year*	2008 business year*	Change 2007/2008
Order intake	408.2	426.7	389.9	-8.6%
Sales	266.7	368.0	424.5	+15.3%
Gross profit	99.2	136.6	146.2	+7.0%
Operating profit (EBIT)	55.6	89.8	94.3	+4.9%
As a % of sales	20.8%	24.4%	22.2%	
Profit for the period	40.1	68.0	72.8	+7.1%
As a % of sales	15.0%	18.5%	17.1%	
Balance sheet total	270.1	359.7	431.0	+19.8%
Shareholders' equity	108.3	165.5	203.9	+23.2%
As a % of total assets	40.1%	46.0%	47.3%	
Earnings per share (in CHF)	11.80	20.00	21.46	+7.3%
Headcount (end of fiscal year)	712	819	916	+11.8%

* 1 April to 31 March