



Interview with the Owners of Hotel Gut Brandlhof

Birgit Maier & Alexander Strobl, and General Manager Thomas Bauer

The new World of Congress was completed at a rapid pace in just nine months. How do you look back on the overall process?

Birgit Maier & Alexander Strobl: Together with our planning office Aigner and the respective specialist planners, we spent a good year thinking, developing, and planning. The actual construction phase took around nine months. Overall, the construction process ran largely without complications, which we are extremely pleased about.

What were the highs and lows?

Birgit Maier: Highlights included the stripping-out and complex demolition of the former indoor pool area, relocating the approximately 21-meter-long concrete beams, installing the two artworks in the foyer by expert Herbert Golser, placing the concrete star in the outdoor area by Paul Wallach, and installing the three Diamond Tubes daylight lamps. There was only one real challenge shortly before completion of the basement areas, when major replanning and delays became necessary due to fire protection compartmentation. But even that was something our team was able to resolve quickly.

Which types of events will the new World of Congress cover in the future?

Alexander Strobl: We remain true to our philosophy and continue to offer the full range of events. These include medical and physicians' congresses, strategic sales and management meetings including kick-off events, automotive events in cooperation with the ÖAMTC, incentives, conferences for insurance companies and banks, as well as mindset training and coaching sessions. We focused on more innovative room equipment, modern technology, and functionality. Due to the close connection with the ÖAMTC and its many automotive events, some areas of the World of Congress can be accessed by heavy vehicles weighing up to 20 tons.

Thomas Bauer: Doctors, pharmaceutical companies, insurance firms, banks, as well as IT, EDV, and AI experts can also hold their training sessions in our new World of Congress. In addition, atmospheric gala events for up to 700 guests are possible, as well as product presentations, trade fairs, and international conventions with generous exhibition areas.

What economic impact do you expect for the Saalfelden-Leogang location and the wider region as a result of the new World of Congress?

Birgit Maier: As a driving force and flagship business in the region, Hotel Gut Brandlhof continues to strengthen the region's image. International large-scale events generate added value for the entire region. We are proud to have been contributing to this since 1982.

Thomas Bauer: New benchmarks and new dimensions are opening up, along with an expansion of our customer base. We will operate more internationally, attracting international conferences to the Pinzgau region, while at the same time maintaining the flexibility to host equally important small-scale meetings. Our core business is MICE. We will continue to improve not only in terms of hardware, but also software—through our outstanding team and our strong service philosophy for seminar participants and event organizers.

Which sustainable measures were integrated into the construction?

Thomas Bauer: Sustainability was a key focus. Examples include climate control for the entire new building and integration of the existing structures via a groundwater cooling system, expansion of the existing photovoltaic system, de-sealing around 1,300 m² of roof area and converting it into green recreational roof spaces, installing a wet-waste system with an external tank to reduce truck traffic, and—last but not least—installing an in-house cardboard baler. We are setting benchmarks in environmental responsibility, also for future generations.

What is your personal highlight in the World of Congress?

Birgit Maier: We love all of the artworks that we personally and carefully selected for the World of Congress.

How important is digitalization—for example for hybrid events, streaming, or innovative event technology?

Alexander Strobl: It plays a very important role. We provide innovative event technology in cooperation with partners from the region. Guests have access to state-of-the-art sound systems and high-resolution screens, among other features. Individuality is key. Hybrid events already existed during the COVID period, but since then we have noticed that companies want personal, on-site interaction. Everyone wants to get out of the home office—or, in other words, out of the normal office and into the mountains and nature. New ideas often emerge in a new environment. That is exactly what we want to achieve with the World of Congress.

Were you able to stay within the originally calculated costs?

Birgit Maier: Yes, the costs are within range. The budget was approximately 17 million euros. What does it mean to you to now celebrate the opening of the World of Congress after such a long planning phase, construction process, and financial investment?

Birgit Maier & Alexander Strobl: With the opening, our vision has become reality. Celebrating this unique building with close friends, long-standing guests, customers, and our fantastic team means a great deal to us and fills us with immense joy.

Further information is available at: www.brandlhof.com/world-of-congress-saalfelden/

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