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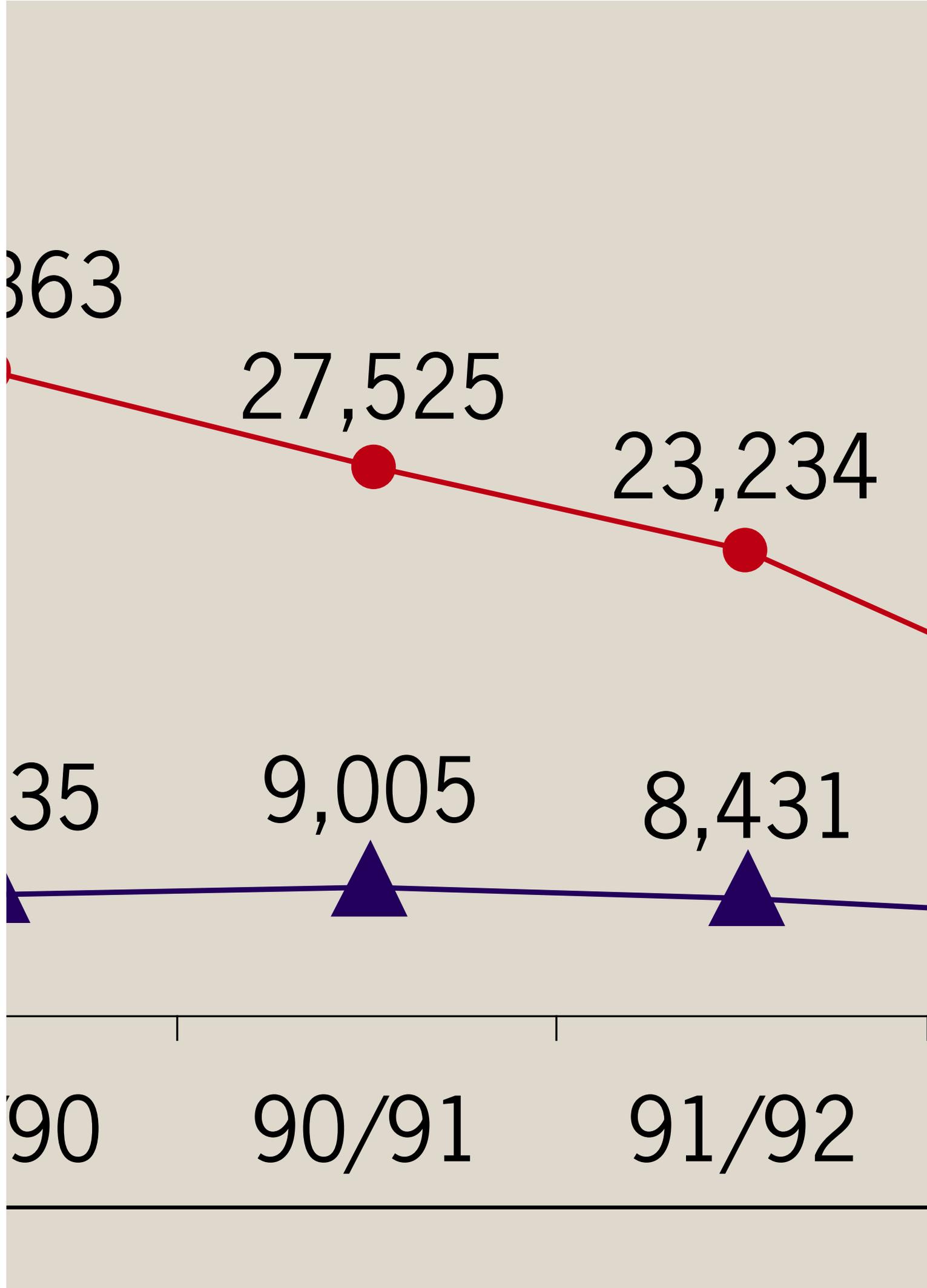
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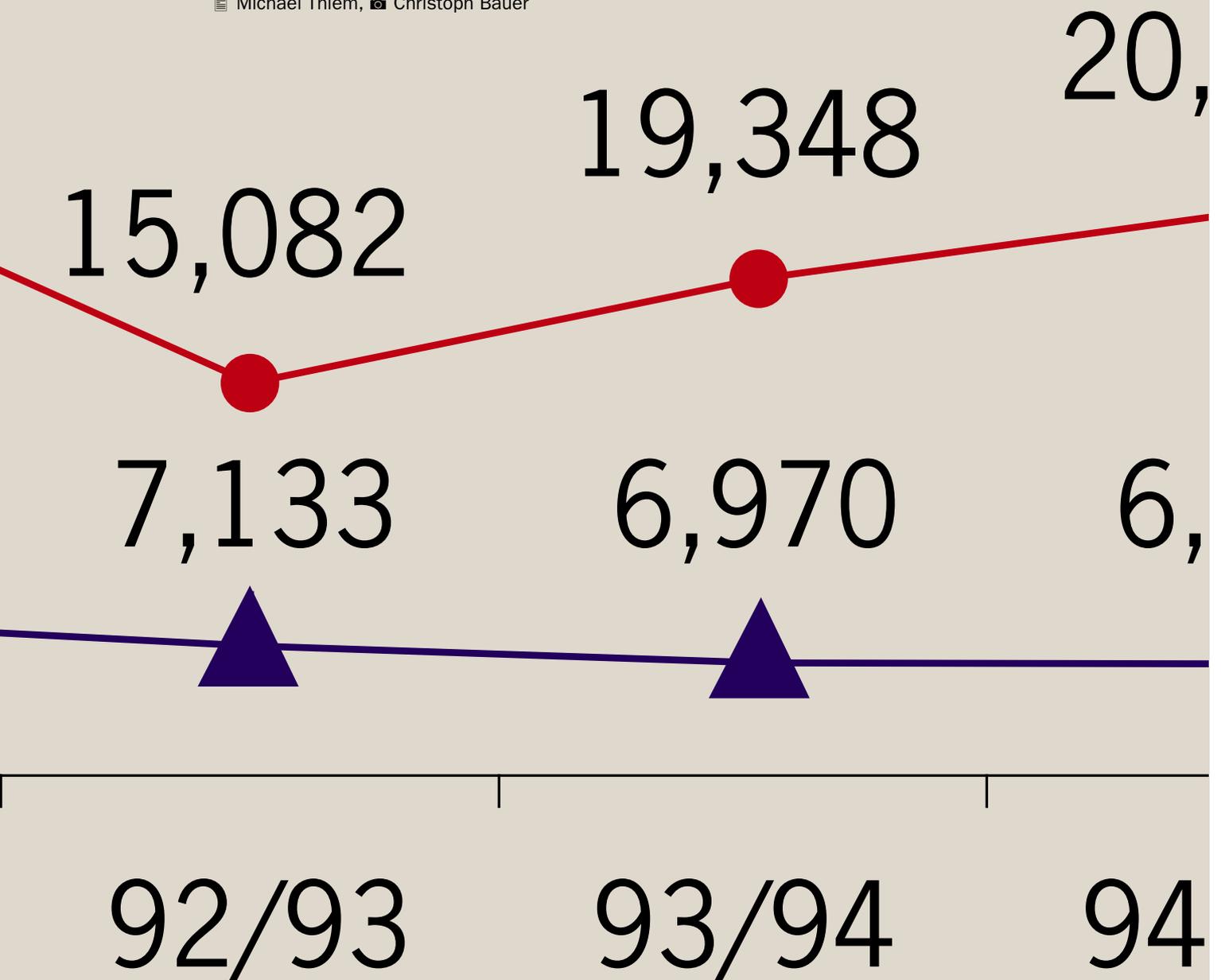
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Pain Therapy

Porsche Consulting relies on a practical approach to consultancy, to a large extent shaped by personal experience. Good examples of this are proved by Edgar Ebersoldt and Siegfried Runkel. These consultants once experienced the restructuring process up close at Porsche, including the introduction of Japanese production methods. Today, they have brought KAIZEN and lean production to Porsche's customers, and gladly look back at how it all began.

Michael Thiem, Christoph Bauer





Consultants with plenty of self-awareness: Edgar Ebersoldt (l.) and Siegfried Runkel were involved in Porsche's restructuring from the start



Stack economy: How things used to look in Porsche production

The premiere of this unusual drama was given in October 1992, in the Porsche Plant 2 at Zuffenhausen. Chihiro Nakao, from the Japanese management consultancy Shingijitsu, lay down flat for a moment beside the assembly line, stood up again, gesticulated wildly about him and took the automotive foreman Edgar Ebersoldt ruthlessly to task at the 911 vehicle assembly-line intake: “Your people aren’t working. I can only see people standing around.” When he also contemptuously dismissed the brand-new components shelving as “nothing but waste,” Ebersoldt had had enough. The foreman locked himself in his office.

His colleague Siegfried Runkel was also hauled over the coals. The then foreman of the paint shop had a confrontation with Nakao after a KAIZEN workshop. Runkel was busy sorting his notes when the Japanese, the wind full in his sails, without further ado ripped the papers away, flung them in the air and told the dumbfounded Runkel, “You should be doing your homework instead!”



Only what’s needed: Assembly of the 911 in 2008

Sixteen years later, both men can look back and laugh at such incidents. “But at the time,” says Ebersoldt, “it tore the ground away from under my feet. I could only think, ‘What on earth is going on here?’” Edgar Ebersoldt and Siegfried Runkel have settled themselves in the conference room on the third floor of Building 1, Plant 2 at Zuffenhausen, to take a trip down memory lane once more. Because this place, at the heart of Porsche’s production operation, is where the two Porsche Consulting consultants have grown up.

Siegfried Runkel started at Porsche to complete his apprenticeship as a sheet metal worker. Years later, like colleague Edgar Ebersoldt, he enthusiastically took part in designing the restructuring process at Porsche from the start. And however painful the first encounters with KAIZEN and lean production were then, the results have brought rich reward—to this day. Porsche extricated itself from the crisis, and became the world’s most profitable automobile manufacturer. ▶



Foreman Edgar Ebersoldt: “What on earth is going on here?”



Siegfried Runkel (middle): Apprenticeship at Porsche



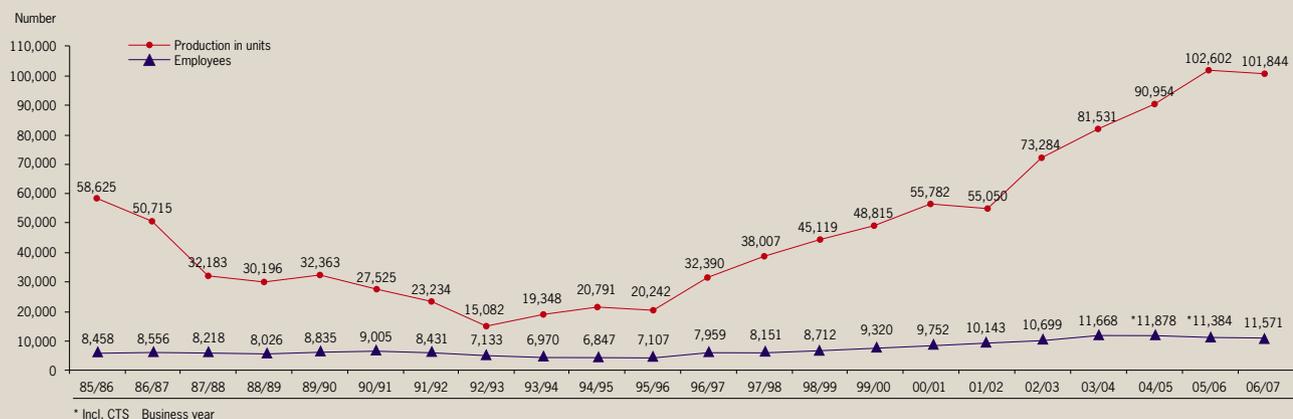
Japanese consistency: Chihiro Nakao clears things up

Porsche Consulting continues to set an example of this spirit, conveying it to external customers from all kinds of industries. Consultants like Ebersoldt and Runkel are symbolic of the story. They know from their own experience what it means to introduce lean

processes, and to make the will to change an integral part of daily work. It has a lot to do with knuckling down and tackling problems, and with team spirit. As Siegfried Runkel says, “Optimization goes nowhere without the workforce.”

The mastermind at the time was Dr. Wendelin Wiedeking. The new CEO exemplified the KAIZEN philosophy, liked to question everything, and worked in a hands-on way. One of his first actions in the context of the change process was to take an angle-grinder and cut banks of metal shelving in the production facility down to half height, before the very eyes of the workforce. “He never faulted anyone for making some change that didn’t help,” remembers Runkel, “He only got mad when someone hadn’t changed anything.” Sawing off the shelving gained Wendelin Wiedeking a good measure of acceptance among the workforce, and also imposed a colossal mental constraint: suddenly everyone was having to think about what to do with all the excess material for which there was now no storage space. Plenty of “corpses” were gotten rid of that way. ▶

Numbers and staff development at Porsche AG



The worst of times, the best of times: Porsche's transformation to the sustainable successes of today began at its lowest point in 1992–93

Porsche adopted a breathtaking tempo in its fight against the crisis. Selected employees attended workshops in Japan, production sequences were analyzed, improvement measures developed and the entire assembly line subjected first to scrutiny and then to total redesign—while not one sports car fewer rolled off the line. A hard time, but mostly an exciting one.

Edgar Ebersoldt has made particular note of October 5, 1992. At one station of the assembly line, employees' walking patterns were investigated and mapped using a so-called spaghetti diagram. It emerged that people were walking 230 meters there for every vehicle and cycle. The forest of lines made deciphering the resulting documents tricky. In the workshop, routes were optimized, the sequence of work steps was altered along with the insertion of parts. The result was impressive. To do the same work, employees now only had to walk 130 meters. Edgar Ebersoldt says, "That was what showed

me: we have to do something, and we can do something. But when you're breaking up existing processes, you need to be that much more creative than when setting up new ones."

Machinery was moved, shelving torn down, and assembly lines dismantled station by station and rebuilt. After three years, the numbers and facts were: quality improvement of 50 percent, productivity up 35 percent and stock cut by 45 percent. As Edgar Ebersoldt says, "Things started to get really fun."

And it all turned into an enterprise in its own right. In 1994, Porsche founded its own consultancy company. Porsche Consulting put together all the expertise gained in change processes on the Japanese model, and since then has been offering that expertise to external customers. Runkel and Ebersoldt were spurred on by the task. They've been consultants since 1997.



Setting the tone: Tom Turbo promoted change

Today, Runkel is the man for special cases, heads up the coaching of management, and is hailed as a specialist in consultancy topics involving bodywork, bodyshell work, and paint processes. Ebersoldt is the senior expert at the Porsche Akademie. Both are still practical workers, heart and soul. “You always have to be fair with people, and motivate them. Because change processes only work once you’ve got everybody on board,” says Runkel.

Stable processes need stable management—and Porsche continues to lead the way here. When for example, Michael Macht, the first managing director of Porsche Consulting, was appointed Executive Vice President Production and Logistics at Porsche, one of his first acts was to immediately spend the weekend getting a detailed picture of production flows, and on Monday at 6 a.m. he was on the line, to get a deeper practical understanding—and to get that understanding from the perspective of the workforce.

Then as now, the same has continued to apply: Porsche consultants can’t achieve much without acceptance. And anyone who doesn’t bring the will to change with them will fail. “So just telling them isn’t enough. We have to lead employees by the hand,” says Ebersoldt. Motivation has to be there, too. At Porsche, there was a major amount of natural psychological pressure, since the employees were fighting for their jobs. Today, the necessary drive is provided for customers by means of target agreements. These, Ebersoldt says, must be laid down and conveyed to everybody “as early as possible and as realistically as possible.”

This voyage into the past ends for Edgar Ebersoldt with a visit to his old workplace: the vehicle intake of the assembly line for the 911. He has a lot of hands to shake as he walks through the hall. On the way, he passes a notice: “Quality, delivery service and motivation.” “All three areas are explained and defined here,” says Ebersoldt. Everything is almost as it was—only much better. “And that’s how it should be,” says the consultant. Not even Mr. Nakao would be able to find any cause for complaint now. ◀