

Letter from the Editors

Collaboration is key

Nowadays, the chemical industry faces a variety of challenges coming along with current and future developments and the need to satisfy the associated changing demands of different stakeholder groups. Since companies only have limited possibilities to provide all required abilities and capacities by themselves, pursuing cooperative exchange with stakeholders evolves to be a key competence. Companies benefit from collaborating due to the access to external knowledge and technologies (in new fields) and might thus be able to shape industry developments by taking early action. In the recent past, chemical companies have already recognized the high importance of collaborating and thus increased their range of activities. Exemplary interfaces are funding and supporting start-ups, integrating customers and suppliers in the product development process or handling changes and mutual interdependencies with related industrial sectors. The present issue comprises articles reflecting the industry's formation of different forms of relationships as well as their emerging benefits and consequences.

The first article of this issue is a commentary by Philipp Rittershaus and addresses the topic of "Fostering start-ups in the chemical sector through the joint support offered by seed funds and established companies". The interactions between start-ups, investment funds and established companies active in the chemical sector are described and the resulting benefits for each partner are highlighted.

The research paper "From customer understanding to product understanding: collaboration with industrial lead users in a B2B context" by Magnus Tottie, Thomas Lager and Sofia Nordqvist conducts a single case study examining the co-development of a product with lead users. The fuzzy front end of the product development process at LKAB, a world-leading producer of processed iron ore products, is optimized by applying a modified Quality Function Deployment methodology and the integration of lead users, resulting in an improved knowledge-based platform for new product and process concepts.

"The logistics profile of the German chemical industry" is our article for the practitioner's section. The authors Martin Schwemmer and Annemarie Kübler provide basic data as well as associated conclusions on the current status of the chemical logistics sector in Germany. The article presents logistics service providers specialized in the German chemical industry, special requirements for handling chemical goods as well as the geographical clusters of logistics service providers in Germany.

Please enjoy reading the second issue of the thirteenth volume of the Journal of Business Chemistry. We are grateful for the support of all authors and reviewers for this new issue. If you have any comments or suggestions, please do not hesitate to contact us at contact@businesschemistry.org.

Birte Golembiewski Ruth Herrmann
(Executive Editor) (Executive Editor)