

Letter from the Editor

How will upcoming technological trends affect the chemical industry?

In academic journals as well as in the press, the discussion on so-called “emerging” technologies is ubiquitous. Thereby, different technologies are named but their future role for industry and everyday life can only be presumed. This uncertainty presents a major challenge for companies. How should the chemical industry and related value chains e.g. deal with technologies involving far-reaching consequences such as hydraulic fracking? As a result, it is a never-ending task for companies to stay flexible and to decide how they want to handle emerging technologies. To which extent do they engage with upcoming technological trends? Do they only adapt to changed environments and policies or is the company even at the forefront?

In 2015, trends affecting chemical-related industries such as 3-D printing, the usage of GMOs or innovative catalytic processes might be pioneering whereas in some areas, e.g. renewable energy technologies or nanotechnologies, developments seem to stagnate or technologies are falling short of expectations. It will be exciting to observe the technological trends in the New Year as well as companies’ responses in order to get involved or even to stay ahead of new developments.

The research paper of this issue “Nanotechnology companies in the United States: A web-based content analysis of companies and products for poverty alleviation” by Thomas Woodsen and Duy Do deals with the social engagement of companies active in nanotechnology R&D and patenting. By analyzing information on companies’ websites, the authors identify characteristics of nanotechnology-related companies which are showing initiatives to promote CSR and poverty alleviation in particular.

The first paper of our Practitioner’s Section “Supply Value Management - A benchmarking study and a new theoretical approach show that procurement in the chemical, pharmaceutical and healthcare industry has only average performance” is written by Thorsten Makowski and Florian Walter. By presenting the results of a study series, the authors introduce three frameworks in order to provide a holistic approach to procurement and emphasize its manifold value creation levers. The article demonstrates specific features and gaps in managing procurement within companies of the chemical pharmaceutical and healthcare sector compared to the average results for all industries.

In the article “Chemical industry activity as a leading indicator of the business cycle”, Thomas K Swift describes the set-up of the Chemical Activity Barometer (CAB). This barometer displays the development of the chemical industry’s production. Due to the upstream position of chemical companies, this composite index serves as a leading indicator for future up- and downward trends in the US economy reflected by the Federal Reserve Board’s index of industrial production.

Please enjoy reading the first issue of the twelfth volume of the Journal of Business Chemistry. We are grateful for the support of all authors and reviewers for this new issue.

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