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The openness and professionalism of information when cooperating with the media and this, apart from the excellent management results, were the main criteria for awarding the prize of the *Economia* publisher as part of the Manager of the Year Competition. This was awarded to caricaturist Josef Blecha, general manager of the company Fezko. In the main competition he was placed among the first ten.

While the Czech textile industry is experiencing a dark period, Strakonice's Fezko is continuing to grow and show profit. Although it still contains the word *fez* in its name, or a head cover, it mostly produces textiles for the car industry. This may not be credited to Blecha, the decision to focus on car seat covers came at an earlier date, but under the present general manager the company has entered world markets.

When experienced exporter Josef Blecha took over Fezko in 2001, over 85 % of proceeds were due to one sole customer, the producer of Škoda car seats, the Czech branch of the company Johnson Controls. In the last few years the number of customers has significantly increased. Textiles from Fezko end up in vehicles produced by Daimler-Chrysler, Volkswagen, Ford, Opel, Suzuki (Hungary), Kia (SR), Volvo, MAN and Iveco. At a time when Europe is being flooded by textiles from Asia, Fezko has managed a tour de force: its other customers are also the Malaysian car plants Perodua and Proton. At the same time Fezko is not part of a multinational concern and its management has to find its own contracts. It is helped above all by its own design, ability to continuously present customers with new patterns and cooperate with car plants during the development of a new car.

Although foreign customers have increased, the share of Škoda Auto remains high – it has only fallen to 63%. Of course this is due to the production of Škoda cars having significantly increased and Mladá Boleslav is pleased with the covers from Fezko. The Strakonice company has gained orders for the Fabia II cars and also the next generation of Superb cars which should appear on the market next year. Fezko has earned proceeds exceeding 1.3 billion crowns for last year which means about a 33% growth. The manager of the Year competition judges appreciated Blecha's concept, determination, consistency, communication skills, openness and directness in business dealings. The general manager also stresses the importance of lifelong employee training. They have experienced the success of the business in their salaries as they earn far more than the average pay in the Czech textile industry, and a little more than the average in the South Bohemian region.

The production of Fezko head covers has been moved to the subsidiary Tonak Nový Jičín. Blecha occasionally wears a beautiful hat from his "own production". The fact that he also draws portraits of artists and his caricatures are also known by readers of the *Hospodářské noviny* supplements also helped him gain the award of the *Economia* publisher. Besides this, he is good to work with. Unlike some managers he answers questions during an interview which he is asked and does not try to ask himself better questions. He also means what he says, and does not irritate editors with the sentence: "But don't write this!"

Josef Blecha (55) is a graduate of the University of Economics. He worked at the Motokov foreign trade corporation and then from 1987-1995 and from 1998-2001 he was the manager of the company American Jawa Ltd. (with the property participation of Motokov). During Blecha's management the company managed to find and make use of room in America for Czechoslovak tyres, tractors and agricultural equipment. Blecha began with his caricatures overseas. In the years 1995 to 1998 he managed the company Opel C & S. He has been the head of Fezko since 2001.