

Speaker Spotlight

Fabian Schmahl

President & CEO

*thyssenkrupp Bilstein of
America, Inc.*

Fabian Schmahl was named President & CEO of thyssenkrupp Bilstein of America, Inc. in April 2008. He is responsible for managing the development and manufacture of premium quality, high performance automotive suspension solutions for Original Equipment, Aftermarket and Motorsports applications. Schmahl oversees the operations of thyssenkrupp Bilstein locations in Hamilton, Ohio (headquarters); Poway, California; Troy,



Michigan; and Mooresville, North Carolina. Since 2011, thyssenkrupp Bilstein has completed three major expansions to facilitate the implementation of the latest technologies in the industry while expanding its Hamilton workforce by 500 employees. As President & CEO of thyssenkrupp Bilstein, Schmahl has earned extensive recognition for his commitment to his employees, community and the manufacturing industry. Under his leadership, thyssenkrupp Bilstein has been recognized as a Top Workplace in 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013 by Enquirer Media and Best Workplace in 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013 by Business Courier. In 2015 and 2017, Butler County Board of Developmental Disabilities voted thyssenkrupp Bilstein of America Employer of the Year.

In November, Fabian will speak at the American Automotive Summit on his topic: "Innovate in Constantly Changing Times: Reinventing Front-Line Leadership to Drive Sustainable Growth and Innovation."

We spoke with Fabian in advance of the summit to learn about his leadership style, the current challenges in the automotive industry and the exciting new initiatives taking place at thyssenkrupp Bilstein.

How would you describe your leadership style?

It's my job to create a culture that encourages and inspires. My leadership style fosters an inclusive and collaborative culture built on thyssenkrupp Bilstein's values of customer focus, open communication, trust and respect. We focus on empowering our teams and keeping our customers at the center of our thinking; and, very essentially, we recognize achievements and successes along the way. Within the automotive industry, we have the reputation as a brand and technology leader, a position that would not be possible without the dedicated people who bring their best to us every day.

"The manufacturing industry has never been more exciting and dynamic."

What is the greatest challenge that automotive executives face?

One of the biggest challenges facing the manufacturing and automotive industries is finding and retaining the best talent. At thyssenkrupp Bilstein, we are very conscious of the need to attract and retain talented individuals not just in manufacturing but also in other areas of our business such as technology and innovation, process engineering, quality, purchasing and our testing and prototype lab. So, we invest in the expansion of our training and development programs and enable thyssenkrupp Bilstein employees learn new skills and pursue new opportunities throughout our organization.

In terms of recruiting the best talent, we try to be proactive, creative and open-minded. We currently work with several universities to recruit and offer scholarships to students. This work helps promote and further interest in the fields of engineering, logistics and supply chain management among the future workforce. We partner with local high schools to offer seniors apprenticeship opportunities that combine on-the-job learning with industry certification. Another great win-win for us has been our partnership with the Butler County Board of Developmental Disabilities. We currently have 18 full-time employees with disabilities on our staff, and they are all doing an exceptional job and are an incredibly valuable segment of the workforce.

What advice would you give someone coming into the industry?

Get involved in Industry 4.0. The manufacturing industry is at a tipping point and we are at the start of the next great industrial revolution. Industry 4.0 is disrupting old business models and creating new, exciting career pathways where you can advance your career quickly and keep your skills fresh. The manufacturing industry has never been more exciting and dynamic; for those just coming into the industry, it will be an exciting ride!

To learn more, join us at the American Automotive Summit.

[View the program](#)

What are some of the new and exciting initiatives taking place at thyssenkrupp Bilstein?

At a time when the auto industry is growing at a rapid pace, we are constantly looking for ways to serve our customers more efficiently and provide more sophisticated technologies. This is an ongoing and exciting challenge. thyssenkrupp Bilstein has invested heavily in our employees, R&D and infrastructure to create a best-in-class company.

We are also active in our local communities which has driven interesting projects ancillary to our business. For instance, we have people in our community who are ready to work but face logistic hurdles like access to transportation. We championed for new bus routes and this success is a compelling example of how cities and businesses can work together to unite businesses like ours with talented people.

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