

Vereniging van Effectenbezitters
Postbus 240, 2501 CE Den Haag
Bezoekadres: Amaliastraat 7, Den Haag

Tel.: +31 (0)70 313 00 00
Fax: +31 (0)70 313 00 99
Internet: www.veb.net
E-mail: info@veb.net

Dear Corporate Express Shareholder,

Office supplies distributor Corporate Express (previously called Buhrmann) has gone through another turbulent year. Disappointing third quarter figures in 2007 combined with an unsuccessful reorganisation of its US businesses were the last results of CEO Frans Koffrie and his loyal supervisory board president Paul van den Hoek. Despite a streak of profit warnings Mr Koffrie always maintained that his approach was the right one. Under his leadership Corporate Express lost 67% of its market capitalisation.

Fragile recovery

Peter Ventress, previously in charge of Corporate Express' European businesses, took over in October 2007. Mr Ventress spent his first few months as CEO by improving the operations of the company's sales organisation and giving it new sales targets. Sales for full year 2007 rose marginally to EUR 5.6 billion (2006: 5.5 billion) and operating profit (EBIT) dipped from EUR 222 million to EUR 201 million. The final quarter of 2007 (the first quarter under Ventress) showed a growth in the US businesses for the first time in a year.

Still, it's a fragile recovery. The crisis in the US - where Corporate Express posted over half of its sales in 2007 - may lead to further unemployment and thus decrease demand for office supplies. Corporate Express also suffers from the heavy exposure to the continuously declining dollar exchange rate. Total sales grew 6.7% in 2007 at constant exchange rates, but, once converted to euros, sales growth comes out at only 2.4%. With its low margin activities the company is highly vulnerable to these macro-economic factors. Above all it is unclear to which extent the company can gain market share and can consistently post higher margins. Mr Ventress has set himself the target of achieving an average 6% organic growth rate per year until 2010 with operating profit before depreciation (EBITDA) to reach 7% of sales (2007: 5.3%).

Takeover target

The question is whether Corporate Express can achieve these targets as an independent company. Years of poor performance under Mr Koffrie – who was supported by the supervisory board - and today's poor market conditions have made Corporate Express a tempting takeover target. In the meantime US competitor Staples has made a EUR 7.25 offer, which management rejected, claiming this bid significantly undervalues the company. It may be only a matter of time before Staples or some other party places a higher bid.

Anti-takeover mechanism

The VEB agrees with Corporate Express that at EUR 7.25, the bid undervalues the company, especially if the targets are achieved. In any case, shareholders should have the final vote about a possible bid. The VEB urges Corporate Express to drop any arrangements that might

discourage or block a potential bid. Corporate Express still has the option of activating a legal anti-takeover mechanism, frustrating a sound bidding process. The Stichting Continuïteit has the right to buy preference shares by which it would get the majority of the votes. This is a tried and tested method for fending off hostile takeovers. The VEB calls upon both Corporate Express and the Stichting not to use this unfriendly mechanism. It would clearly not be in the interest of its shareholders, who at all times should be given the opportunity to judge any takeover bid on its merits.

On behalf of the Vereniging van Effectenbezitters

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'JMS' or similar initials, written in a cursive style.

Jan Maarten Slagter, Director

Would you like to respond to this report? E-mail your reactions to info@veb.net.

The Vereniging van Effectenbezitters or Dutch Investors' Association represents the interests of investors in Dutch publicly quoted companies.