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Partnership for safety

Safety technology for conveying bulk material

Two industry specialists for processing and plant safety in the heavy industry have embarked on a sales partnership in order that, in future, they can offer their customers complete solutions for safe and productive bulk material conveyance: the Schmersal Group and the Coal Control Gesellschaft für Automation. In a discussion with Udo Sekin, Heavy Industry Manager of the Schmersal Group, he reports about equipment manufacturers turning into solution providers and about the first results from the Coal Control merger.

Mr Sekin, if one were to assign the Schmersal Group to an area of activity in a target sector, it would be the safety of machines and plant for industrial production. What is your position in the heavy industry?

Udo Sekin: Mechanical engineering and automation technology are our core target sectors – though only since the 80s since machine safety became what it is today. For more than 60 years, however, we have been developing and manufacturing heavy duty switchgear that is used in mining as well as mobile work machines. Our heavy industry business division has been further developed by this area of activity consistently. As such, we are now able to offer not only vehicle and plant manufacturers but also operators of systems a broad array of industry-specific switchgear – along with the associated services.

You have now entered into a sales partnership with Coal Control. What does this mean exactly for the customers of both companies?

Udo Sekin: For our joint customers this means that they now have access to complete solutions from one source, all over the world as well: We are present in more than 50 countries and, especially in countries with large mineral deposits such as Australia, Brazil, China, India, Canada and the USA, we have our own subsidiaries or long-term

representatives. We offer our customers significant added value in this way. The shared product portfolio is a really unique selling point. No other market player offers the systems and solutions, which we now offer in conjunction with consultation services, in their programme.

Can you think of a handy example for the extension of the product range?

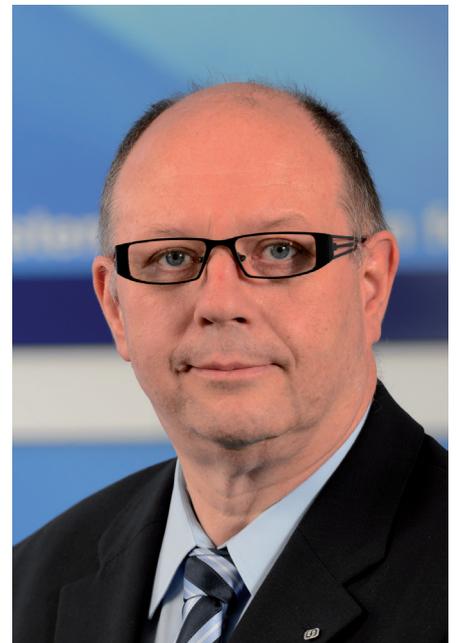
Udo Sekin: Coal Control, for example, is a specialist for monitoring the speed of conveying belts and it also has measuring systems for monitoring linked conveyor belts and detecting longitudinal sections. Among other things, we offer a broad range of belt alignment switches for monitoring true running and sturdy cable-pull emergency switches with reliable emergency stop function. Their signals are evaluated by safety relay modules and controllers from in-house development and production.

Why did you choose to go down the path of collaboration rather than extend your own portfolio in the area of plant safety?

Udo Sekin: Our core competency at Schmersal is quite clearly machine and personal safety. Coal Control is a specialist for production and investment protection. We recognised that we are able to offer our customers better services than we would be able to individually. Together we can achieve more.

One area of the new partnership are the consultation services – what exactly do you offer customers in this regard?

Udo Sekin: Our globally active customers desire complete solutions from one source that they can call upon around the world. And they desire – to name but a few examples of services – risk assessments as well as co-operation and support in the projection of functional safety for the whole conveyor system. Our clear objective is to work together to markedly expand these consultation services for functional safety in future. This also coincides with the strategic demands of our customers.



Udo Sekin

What can your own sales team now expect? Since the geographical gap between the companies is already small, are you planning in future to bring together staff from both companies to form project teams?

Udo Sekin: That's right, there is not much distance between our head offices in Wuppertal and Hilden. Though, what's more important for our customers is that we combine our global sales channels and now offer them even more sales points internationally, from which they can call upon our services locally. We want to roll-out our range of products and services not just in Germany but all over the world as well. For example, in September 2015 at Aimex, the international leading trade fair for the mining industry in the Asia-Pacific region in Sydney, we successfully debuted our complete solutions for the raw materials industry. And we have already established a common sales channel for all of our products in Australia.

Are any joint projects with Coal Control already afoot?

Udo Sekin: At the Aimex trade fair, we have already held successful talks with renowned international customers that were aimed specifically on existing projects in which complete solutions from one source make sense. In the Chinese and Chilean markets, in particular, there are companies who want to work with us.

Do you aspire to similar partnerships in future in other areas of industry?

Udo Sekin: We are open to collaborations – but only if the partners are right for us and we can work on the same level. There has to be a win-win scenario for both sides through the collaboration. For example, in its business

division of safety consulting, the Schmersal Group founded the "CE network" over ten years ago. This is a partnership involving ten engineering offices based throughout Germany who, as highly specialised consultation companies, cover a certain area of machine safety respectively. In this way, they can enhance their offers and do not compete with each other. The collaboration between Schmersal and Coal Control works in exactly the same way.

What percentage does the heavy industry currently have in the total turnover of the Schmersal Group and what do the growth prospects look like for this target industry following the merger?

Udo Sekin: A continually growing percentage. We want to achieve a significant percentage in international business to be at least considered as a provider of complete solutions in all important projects around the world.

Images:

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