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The aim: safe machines Schmersal Group founds service division

The Schmersal Group is bundling its comprehensive range of machine safety services based on the tec.nicum brand. GIT SICHERHEIT asked Jörg Schreiber, Director Strategic Market Development at the Schmersal Group, about the product range of the new division and the positioning of the company as a system and solution provider.

GIT SICHERHEIT: Mr Schreiber, the Schmersal Group started offering various machine safety services last year under the banner of "Safety Services". Does the foundation of the new business division represent a new departure - or is it essentially just a change of name?

Jörg Schreiber: The foundation of a separate division for our services is evidence of the success of the offer, which is, in fact, not grown and has grown organically. For many years, we have offered training course on machine safety subjects and our sales engineers have always provided the customers with intensive support and advice. The demand for safety services has now reached an order of magnitude which made us decided to restructure the services sector, expand it strategically and move it towards a separate business division.

Which customers are you targeting with your services?

Jörg Schreiber: There are various target groups. The main customer group for the whole Schmersal Group is mechanical engineering, as the tec.nicum training covers new standards - but also individual engineering such as programming of safety controllers. However, in recent years, the most important buyers of our services have proven to be the end users of machines and systems. To name just a few examples, they wanted support in safety-technical evaluation and with the modernisation of machines and systems - often on a global scale. We also have system integrators among our customers. Machine importers and distributors also often ask for our support, for example, when it comes to complying with standards in specific markets.

Can you give an example of a typical job for the new business division?

Jörg Schreiber: An international manufacturer of pharmaceuticals and cosmetics took over a competitor, who was also active all over the world, and wanted a safety-technical assessment of its whole fleet of machinery across more than 130 production sites. First, we worked together to produce an evaluation system based on more than 60 criteria and questions, laying the foundations for the international standards on hazard and risk assessment. Then we visited and audited the sites. This was a massive amount of work, but it reflects our abilities well. And the customer came to us because they were confident that we could fulfil the brief in the best possible way.

How can you find the personnel for orders of this size?

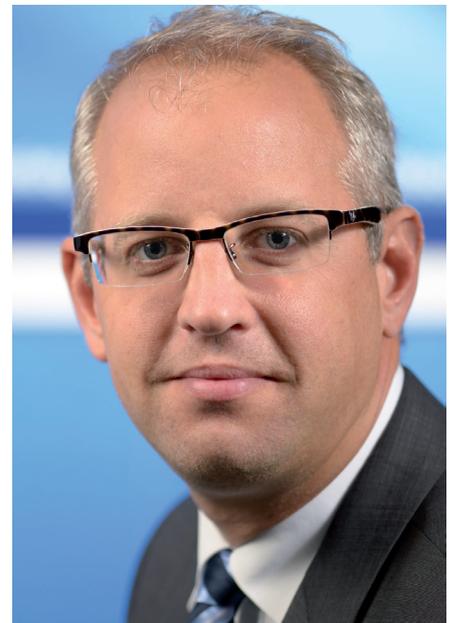
Jörg Schreiber: All over the world, we have qualified employees and partners as Functional Safety Engineers and had them certified by TÜV Rheinland. This means we can provide the necessary expertise for these challenging briefs. At the same time, we have extensive experience from many years of practice in machine and plant safety and embedding it into standards. By founding the independent tec.nicum business division, we are responding to increasing demand for these services and guaranteeing consistent global standards across our group network.

Costs are obviously a tricky question. Are customers prepared to pay for services of this kind?

Jörg Schreiber: The general trend towards "focussing on core expertise" means that com-

panies are open to outsourcing services and accessing expert knowledge from specialists. At the same time, we offer our services on a modular basis. If they wish, customers can access individual services such as training or expert advice, or the whole package from initial consultancy through to consultancy of industrial safety solutions. Essentially, we see our services as triggered by the business with components and systems and machine safety.

We are now deliberately underlining this by setting up a separate business division for safety services. But we set great store by our core philosophy of deliberately always providing our consultancy services on a product and manufacturer-neutral basis.



Jörg Schreiber, Head of Strategic Market Development at the Schmersal Group

In extreme circumstances, that would mean that you would also use third-party products if a consultancy project demanded it.

Jörg Schreiber: Indeed. If we have been charged with the safety-technical modernisation of a machine and this results, for example, in replacement of drive components (tec.nicum consulting and engineering), then we will also procure, install and commission them on request (tec.nicum integration).

The business division officially started work on 01 January 2016 - in which countries?

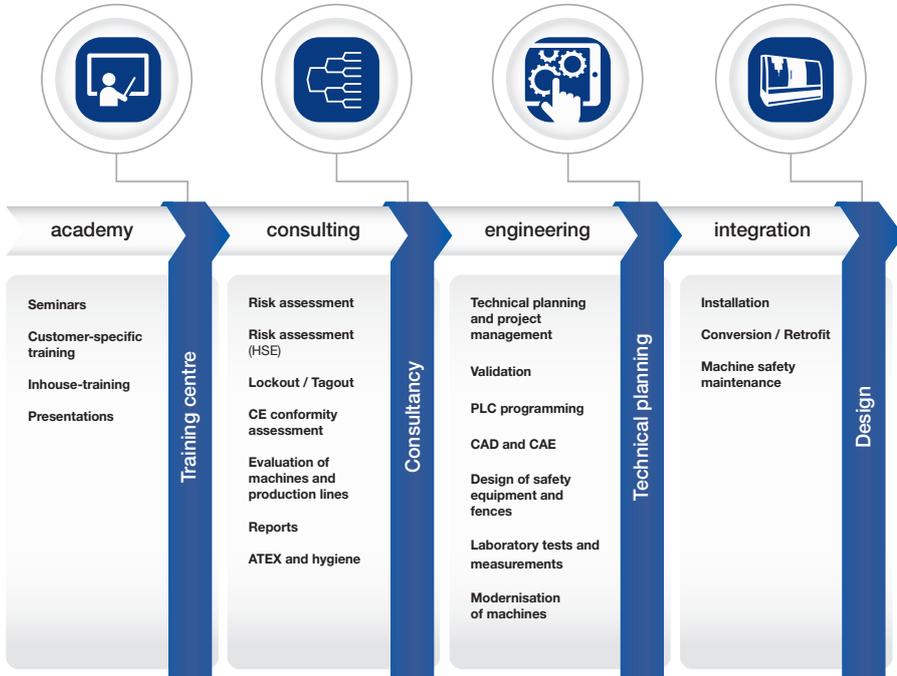
Jörg Schreiber: Essentially, we are pushing ahead with a global market launch. Of course,

there are regional companies which have focussed on the service sector for longer - with training and also with intensive consultancy for manufacturers and end users of machines. These include, for example, Spain and Great Britain, plus Brazil and India outside Europe. But in some markets, we are just starting to get our services established. We have developed a sponsorship model whereby our global experts specifically support individual national companies when complex consultancy is required.

The name tec.nicum is not new, it stands for your event centre in Wuppertal and

for your training services, Will you still be providing these services?

Jörg Schreiber: Of course. We have now established the term, which we introduced in 2006, as an umbrella brand for all our services. Training - whether centrally or on a decentralised basis on the customer premises - will, in future be carried out by the "tec.nicum academy". There are also consultancy services through "tec.nicum consulting". These include the evaluation and assessment of risks and hazards, the validation of safety functions, CE conformity assessment and other specialist subjects such as hygienic design and explosion protection.



The tec.nicum service portfolio incorporates four columns: tec.nicum academy (training), tec.nicum consulting (consultancy services), tec.nicum engineering (technical planning) and tec.nicum integration (execution and implementation).

The third pillar of the portfolio, "tec.nicum engineering", takes on the planning and design of safety-specific hardware and software, inc. necessary measurements, for example, a turnkey project for the retrofitting of a machine or process line. At the shop-floor level, we offer the customers installation services for safety equipment and safety components as part of the "tec.nicum integration" pillar.

In their daily work, the tec.nicum specialists are faced with the practice of machine safety - among machine designers and operators. What are your recommendations based on these experiences?

Jörg Schreiber: We recommend that design engineers integrate safety functions as early as possible in the development of machines, design and functionality. This is the best prerequisite for optimum productivity and safety. The users are well advised to consider the safety features of a machine when making investment decisions. This is the only way to guarantee not only economic interests, process reliability and efficient production.

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