

Talking to Georg Stausberg, CEO, and Jochen Adler, CTO

En-route to becoming a digital trendsetter

Shanghai, China, October 15, 2018 – How does a manmade fiber systems world market leader with currently more than 3,000 employees successfully undergo digital transformation? This first and foremost requires an economically solid foundation and numerous digital change modules such as organizational adaptability, agility and the qualifying of employees. Georg Stausberg, CEO, and Jochen Adler, CTO describe the exciting path the Oerlikon Manmade Fibers segment is embarking on to create new digital products and services with superlative customer benefits.

Mr Stausberg, do you remember taking your first steps into the new Digital Age?

This was more of a creeping process than a conscious step. It started with me using the Internet and e-mail – first on PCs, then on mobile end-devices. Meanwhile, digital technology has invaded every aspect of our lives, be this in our homes or in our modern cars. About four years ago, the latter resulted in our company starting to consider how we could create additional customer benefits using artificial intelligence. And automobiles are today increasingly differentiating themselves from each other more by means of digital assistance systems than through classical transmission or chassis technology. We want to become the textile machine construction trendsetter for technologies of this kind.

What have you done to successfully achieve this in collaboration with colleagues and customers?

Even in economically difficult times, we had the courage to invest in the future. Following detailed strategy discussions within the management team, we decided to set up an international project group two years ago. In discussions with research institutes, companies from various sectors, in-house experts and numerous customers, the group developed concrete ideas and analyses on which digital products and solutions could be interesting for our customers and what customer benefits could be generated with these. The result is numerous ideas that are meanwhile being marketed or are currently be trialled as prototypes. When putting together and organizing the project team, we also tested new forms of collaboration, which have proven to be effective and are now being rolled out in other divisions of the company.

Can you elaborate a little on these new forms of collaboration?

The speed and dynamism of the development of digital products and solutions is breath-taking. Agility is therefore an absolute prerequisite for an organization to be successful here. Our project group has been able to organize itself and – without any clear hierarchies – only had to interact with a functional steering committee. It was important that we also had representatives from China and India, two of our most important markets, on board. To this end, we were able to include local aspects early on. Departmental boundaries also have to disappear when developing digital products. The Development, IT, Customer Services and Operations departments can only develop multifunctionally-interesting digital solutions if they work together.

Mr Adler, you have been our CTO since 2017. What have you done to master digital transformation?

Very much in line with our 'We drive the markets' maxim, we are once again ramping up the speed. This means that we have established and expanded digital pacemakers on the basis of our product and service portfolio and tried-and-tested innovation processes. This has resulted in agile organizational units, innovative work methods such as design thinking and scrum and also in the utilization of virtual reality and augmented reality at the customer.

What can your customers now expect 'digitally' from Oerlikon?

I would say the digital refinement of our machines and production systems for manufacturing yarns, fibers, nonwovens along the textile value chain. Here, our pledge is: value-added beyond our excellent hardware. We want to further optimize the efficiency of the systems and the quality of the end products with digital solutions. True to our e-save philosophy, our mission is to protect the environment and to promote the sustainability of our solutions. For this, we are deploying the know-how of our newly-integrated partner AC-Automation – which specializes in large-scale systems automation, transport, packaging and warehouse logistics and end product automated quality control. We combine this with our process competencies and digital data handling using our Plant Operation Center, or POC in short. This has created innovative Industrie 4.0-solutions for our customers – with integrated storage and communication capabilities, wireless sensors, embedded actuators and intelligent software systems. In turn, this allows us to build bridges between data and material flows and between the virtual and real worlds.

Mr Stausberg, what aspects of this will your customers already be able to see at the ITMA Asia 2018?

At our trade fair stand in hall H2, B24, we will be offering our visitors a digital experience that allows them to intensely discover and understand our machines, systems, components and services. Here, we will be deploying playful solutions to present the topic of artificial intelligence. We will be taking our 360-degree and augmented-reality applications as well as our virtual showroom with us, to allow visitors to experience complex systems live in 3D. The 'digital factory' is already in part becoming a reality in conjunction with our machine exhibits.

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Georg Stausberg, CEO of the Oerlikon segment Manmade Fibers, has been driving the digital transformation at his company since 2015.

With his team of more than 200 experienced engineers, Jochen Adler, CTO of the Oerlikon segment Manmade Fibers, is focusing on future-oriented technologies with high customer value.