

A Young German State Sets Out to Solve Old Age



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The German federal state Saxony-Anhalt only turned 25 two years ago, but was part of a duchy originally founded by none other than Charlemagne some 1,200 years ago, as the “Father of Europe” sought to remake the world. Saxony-Anhalt might be said to be remaking the world of medtech.

The state has earned a global reputation for welcoming innovative thinking in medical engineering and technology in order to solve the medical questions of tomorrow. The latest chapter is the ambitious launch of a state project called “Autonomy in Old Age” (*Autonomie im Alter*), where countless products for neurosciences and medical research into beating back the limits

of aging are being explored. They focus on the most common curveballs getting older throws at us, including the early recognition of dementia, telemedicine and the treatment of widespread diseases. A model region for independent living in old age is being established in Saxony-Anhalt. A model that suggests medical companies are really tech companies. That healing is as much about data as about band aids.

Enter Nielsen. Yes, that one. The very same company which for decades has helped advertisers decide which shows to throw money at is now in the medical industry. And they picked Saxony-Anhalt to launch their medical-device company, employing the selfsame technology they use to determine viewers’ subconscious preferences.

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“We’ve developed a revolutionary method for measuring brain activity [wireless dry contact electroencephalogram (EEG)],” says Nielsen Tele Medical founder and CEO Robert Stokes. The Fi headset developed with the Department of Neurology at the University of Magdeburg makes it possible to record the brain activity of the patient in their home environment and transfer it to the doctor’s office to be evaluated by specialists, allowing doctors to provide ‘in home’ medical care remotely.

Says Stokes, “We have a huge science advisory board. They saw the limitless potential for this technology to help people, and Magdeburg is the perfect place to grow this business.”

In fact, the entire state is staged for this sector to flourish, thanks to the efforts of the Investment and Marketing Corp. (IMG) of Saxony-Anhalt.

“From start-up to medium-sized companies to global players, we have a wide range of companies in the country,” says IMG General Manager Thomas Einsfelder. Some of them, along with representatives of the STIMULATE research campus, will accompany the IMG team to a Germany Trade & Invest medtech showcase event in Minneapolis October 9-13.

All of these companies, says Einsfelder, “value three things: ideal sites for growing, good interfaces to research facilities and the potential for skilled workers. Companies often highlight the speedy processing of approval procedures. Saxony-Anhalt is a proven pharma and chemist site and also has renowned engineering and medical courses for qualified employees. In these

well-established networks, life sciences companies can be well integrated and benefit from these clusters.”

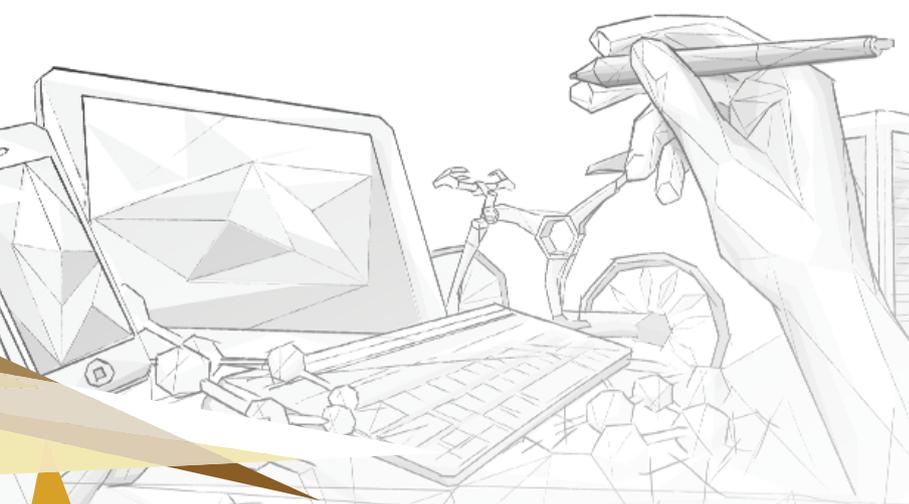
“IMG offered us an incubation lab to start the company on the edge of the university campus, relatively close to the hospital,” says Stokes of Nielsen TEle Medical. “The expertise in the neurological clinic is world renowned. We’ll outgrow this space by mid-2018, but we won’t go far — Magdeburg is the perfect mixture of access to modern technology and a network mentality.”

This won’t be news to anyone familiar with Saxony-Anhalt. Medical engineering in this state so steeped in history is spurred by a pioneering spirit, world-class innovation and forward-looking solutions to society’s medical challenges.

Other innovators in this medtech ecosystem include SpinPlant, which produces biological nanofibers supportive of tissue regeneration and wound healing, and is located in the city of Halle. Hasomed produces software for cognitive therapy to treat stroke patients, and has a subsidiary in Port Charlotte, Florida.

Another name to know, and one churning out products to help you remember, is Neotiv, a life-changing corporate hybrid combining world-leading dementia research with know-how in software development, engineering and entrepreneurship.





“Just like cardiovascular health, cognitive health is modifiable,” explains Dr. Chris Rehse, Neotiv’s CEO & co-founder. “Because the irreparable brain damage caused by Alzheimer’s Disease begins sometimes more than a decade before symptoms appear, diagnostic research increasingly focuses on early diagnosis and prevention. Neotiv offers high-frequency monitoring of neuroanatomically-specific memory functions that are particularly vulnerable to AD. For the same reasons Neotiv will be an ideal tool to monitor the efficacy of treatment interventions and life-style modification.”

That means that Neotiv plans to read your brain, skip to the last chapter and map out a course to ensure it’s a happy ending. Think of it as neuroscience’s answer to the polio vaccine.

Incubating tomorrow is often as much about where as how. World-changing companies like Neotiv need local support to succeed.

“Being located in Saxony-Anhalt offers a unique opportunity for Neotiv,” says Rehse. “The German Centre for Neurodegenerative Diseases [DZNE] of the Helmholtz Association, and the Institute of Cognitive Neurology and Dementia Research [IKND] are world-renowned dementia research centers located in Magdeburg, which offer a vital environment for transferring groundbreaking science into products that offer high value for users and patients. In addition, we benefit from the local network of researchers, entrepreneurs and the local

government. This network was crucial, when the founding team first met, to bring together expertise from dementia research, startup engineering and design thinking. Saxony-Anhalt also offers great programs to get early-stage startups up and running, and help them through the first phases of founding a company.”

So they have the expertise and the workforce. What about the funding? Dr. Rehse praises the support they received.

“Neotiv was the first startup that had been funded from the new initiative ego.-Gründungstransfer, and the Otto-von-Guericke-University supported Neotiv with a successful application for the renowned Exist research transfer grant. We started this journey together with the government.” ▼

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— Dr. Chris Rehse, Neotiv Co-Founder and CEO

This Investment Profile was prepared under the auspices of the Investment and Marketing Corp. of Saxony-Anhalt (IMG). For more information, contact Kristin Gabor, Regional Manager, North America, at +49 391 568 9922 or by email at kristin.gabor@img-sachsen-anhalt.de. On the Web, go to www.invest-in-saxony-anhalt.com