

MCS Saxony-Anhalt bustles successfully in three markets

15.02.2012



Pope Benedict XVI praised the reformer Martin Luther as a "passionate God-seeker" during his visit to Germany last year. These words were broadcast all over the world from the St. Augustine's Monastery in Erfurt by ARD radio and television. The audio signal and public address system for this purpose were realised by Media & Communication Systems (MCS) GmbH Saxony-Anhalt. Since its inception MCS has been the technical operator of the radio and television sector at the MDR (Central German Broadcasting) state broadcasting centre in Magdeburg. But it is also

becoming increasingly active in two other business segments, including MDR and ARD (First German Television) programming as well as major events beyond the organisational sphere of public law broadcast institutions. MDR does not have its own production and studio technology – neither in the radio nor television sector – at its broadcasting centre in the state capital. The independent MCS Saxony-Anhalt company provides this technology on account as a professional, full-service partner. "We see ourselves as a broadcasting centre operating company", says MCS Saxony-Anhalt managing director Dieter Sommerfeld in describing the firm's function. According to Sommerfeld, in addition to news and magazine programmes, MCS is also able to produce quiz and small-scale entertainment broadcasting formats at the state broadcasting centre in Magdeburg, which features a 200 square metre studio, a 300 square metre performance area in the foyer, the television production and on-air control room as well as seven special editing suites. The MDR 1 Radio Saxony-Anhalt station is supervised 24 hours a day by MCS. The company emerged through the outsourcing of MDR technical sectors at the end of the 1990s. Since then it has belonged to DREFA Media Holding GmbH (DREFA MSG), a wholly-owned MDR subsidiary. A thrust in effectiveness with regard to the utilisation of broadcast technology, outside broadcasting vans and studios ensued. In addition to economic effects, at the same time this enabled the possibility to utilise freelance employees for additional tasks, remembers Sommerfeld. He has been managing MCS since its inception in 1998. Such service companies also exist in Saxony and Thuringia. They have distinguished themselves in different ways. In its third business segment, MCS Saxony concentrates on the production of image films for industrial firms. The Erfurt-based specialists provide productions for children. In addition to their daily bread activities at the state broadcasting centre, the Magdeburg-based radio and television technicians have also specialised in organising technically complete major events and equipping them with proprietary sound, light and large-screen projection technology. "This business has grown from year to year", explains Sommerfeld, a certified electronics engineer. MCS can utilise its own high-quality technology for conferences with and without interpreters. Sommerfeld cites the 2010 Conference of Minister-Presidents in Magdeburg as an example of the capability in this sector. At the same time, MCS – together with its employees and its high-quality technology – has lived up to the highest demands. The managing director gladly refers to the use of MCS as a complete technical service provider. For instance, MCS provided services for two exhibition halls during the 33rd Protestant Church Congress in Dresden, for the Cinema for Peace Gala at the Berlin Concert Hall during the Berlin International Film Festival (Berlinale) and also for the meeting of the international tourism industry at the Germany Travel Mart in Rostock-Warnemünde. MCS also provided the sound system at the Hanse Sail maritime festival in Rostock or at a German armed forces grand tattoo ceremony in Magdeburg. Moreover, the company also offers sound level measurements according to DIN 15905-5 at major events. MCS not only has special technology, but is also certified for this purpose. While doing so, the company has to stand up to other providers in hard tendering competitions. "We are not cheap providers", admits Sommerfeld. "We have cutting-edge technology, top experts and we provide a top-quality product. This all has its price. But we also provide top quality services", assures the 65-year-old, who is retiring this summer. The third business segment not only includes broadcast programmes supervised by MCS for Saxony-Anhalt, but also the overall programming produced for MDR or ARD. This includes the "Festival of Folk Music", the "Riverboat" talk show, the daily show "MDR at Twelve", the political talk show "Fact is..." from Magdeburg or the Saturday evening programme "Quickie – the fast-paced quiz". In 2006 the service provider started to provide stage, light and sound technology for the North German Broadcasting (NDR) Summer Tours in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. The annual nine events, each with up to 15,000 spectators, ran so well that a year later MDR Summer Tours were started according to the same model. The private limited company fulfils all these tasks with 70 permanent employees and about 30 freelance employees. The staff members include cameramen, sound technicians, supervisory production engineers, master editors, IT administrators, event technicians and vision mixers. They annually generate a turnover of six to seven million euros. The strongly increased workload with the same number of personal is only manageable because the company has undergone crucial technical changes, among other things, says Sommerfeld. For instance, radio and TV contributions of any nature are edited without tape nowadays. "We only have tapes in the archives", says the MCS boss. Moreover, continuous investments in the technical infrastructure are being made. In 2014, MDR will completely launch the HDTV standard, the abbreviated designation for high-definition television. Sommerfeld envisions that the technical basis must be completely converted for this purpose. But he advises his successor not to focus attention on technology, but on employees. "MCS is nothing without them", he explains. That is also why considerable importance is attached to the training and development of film and video editors as well as event technicians or cameramen. Internships are offered for Bachelor's and Master's degree diploma candidates. Job positions had already resulted via engineering internships, says Sommerfeld. As a result, MCS appears to be as well-prepared for in-house business as for tasks within all of MDR as well as for the business with major events in other third markets. Contact Dieter Sommerfeld MCS Saxony-Anhalt Media & Communication Systems GmbH Sachsen-Anhalt Stadtparkstraße 839114 Magdeburg ph: 0391 539 24 00 E-Mail: Dieter.Sommerfeld@drefa.de Web: www.mcs-sachsen-anhalt.de

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