

Car giants beating a path to prototype manufacturer's door



This year, eight apprentices are starting their training at the **Vorrichtungsbau Giggel GmbH** in Bösdorf in Saxony-Anhalt. Four of them are being trained to become chippers and four to become designers. Thus, there will be a total of 12 apprentices working in the company, which was founded in 1998. 'That makes up twelve per cent of all employees', states Managing Partner **Bernd Giggel**, adding, 'We have had extremely good experiences with our own training of specialists'.

The development of its own personnel is imperative for this innovative company. 'If we could only find a sufficient number of specialists, we could double our order books', says company founder Giggel. Customers from the automobile industry are literally beating a path to the door of the prototype manufacturer in specific areas. This is the reason for Giggel GmbH undertaking its own training as well as financially supporting students during their study at a college in Magdeburg.

Although three-quarters of all orders come from the nearby VW works, the names of nearly all the car manufacturers are listed in the order books. For example, the Giggel specialists also carry out orders from Audi, BMW, Bentley, Bugatti, Daimler, Lamborghini, Porsche, Renault Rolls Royce, Seat or Skoda. Furthermore, orders from automotive suppliers and companies in other industries are also executed.

'Our company has specialised in the manufacture of prototypes and of small batches. We are an end-to-end provider', states Giggel. Although a lot of today's preparation work on computers, many customers insist on seeing what certain components look like in reality, on being able to touch and feel them. For this purpose, the company manufactures prototypes, milling components from a single piece. Although the company does specialise in processing aluminium, it does not focus on the actual material but rather on its weight, explains the 58-year-old graduate engineer. 'Today's theme is the reduction in weight in order to save on fuel. It is a question of being more efficient than the others', he added.

According to Giggel, the company has achieved this because its range of products is tailored to highly diverse requirements. This applies to the programming of tools, to jigs and gauges, to the mechanical chipping of components, to the reshaping of metal sheets and tubes, as well as to lasers or welding.

According to information provided by the company, a unique selling proposition of Giggel GmbH is its closed production chain, ranging in his words from development, construction and manufacture via quality assurance through to customer care. The company accompanies its projects starting from the initial design through to small batch production, working in conjunction with the customer in each case. 'The diversity of the technologies available in our company covers virtually all aspects in order to produce each component in the car as a prototype', assures Giggel. This does not, however, apply only to cars.

By way of an excursion into the bicycle industry, Vorrichtungsbau Giggel GmbH has participated in the development of a unique chainless electrical bicycle. This e-bicycle, named X-Pesa and presented at the Hanover Trade Fair, was jointly developed by the Mitteldeutsche Fahrradwerke (Central German Bicycle Works - MIFA), the Institut für Automatisierung und Informatik (Institute of Automation and Computer Science) at the Harz University in Wernigerode, the Institut für Kompetenz in Automobilität (Institute of Automotive Expertise - IKAM) in Magdeburg and, indeed, Vorrichtungsbau Giggel GmbH itself. Collaboration is also ensuing with the IKAM, Magdeburg University and Fraunhofer Institutes in the field of renewable resources, material development and construction.

This innovative company was founded in 1998, Bernd Giggel deciding on the location of Börsdorf due to its proximity to the motor city of Wolfsburg. This consideration proved to be a complete success, manifested by a rapid growth in the company. In 2002, a 3,000 m² production facility was built. Ten years later, an additional 5,000 m² were added, more than doubling the hall capacity. Twelve million euros were invested. Thanks to constant modernisation of the technical equipment, the processing of a wide range of customer orders is now possible. Giggel GmbH is now investing in a second location in Barleben (near Magdeburg). Together with a Swedish and two German partner companies, a production facility for fuel cells is being built there at a cost of five million euros. Six engineers are already at work and their number is planned to increase to 20. Giggel anticipates that in two years it will be possible to produce fuel cells with a capacity from 500 watts to one kilowatt.

By 2016, the number of employees in Bösdorf is intended to climb to 150. At that point, however, Bernd Giggel will no longer be at the helm of the company. The 58-year-old has announced that in two years time he will hand over management to his 33-year-old son Patrick, who also received his training at the company. He is currently working there as shift supervisor.

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17.09.2013

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