

Small company has big ideas

ZORN INSTRUMENTS in Stendal focuses on its own research and development

The measurement and test equipment of Stendal-based ZORN INSTRUMENTS has state-of-the-art technical standards and a high degree of precision – and it is well-known all over the world. The ZORN brand on quick test appliances in a wide range of applications guarantees the best quality “made in Germany”. The customer base also now includes clients from medical engineering. Above all, they appreciate the flexibility of the company, which is based in the North of Saxony-Anhalt.

Thorsten Hildebrand takes a scalpel from the display cabinet. With the naked eye, you can hardly see that the finest saw blade is moving backwards and forwards at the end of the instrument. And he also shows a pair of forceps, with whose help an artificial vertebra is inserted into the spinal column. Both the tool and the replacement part were developed and manufactured by ZORN INSTRUMENTS.

The problems are mainly supplied to the Stendal-based company from practice. “We then analyse which technology could solve these problems,” says Thorsten Hildebrand. “A clip has just been developed by us, with which diseased tissue can be precisely marked during the preliminary investigation into intestinal cancer.”

Products, such as the scalpel and clip, are among the niche products, with which ZORN INSTRUMENTS has established itself on the medical engineering market. Its share in ongoing production is between 15 and 20 percent.

“We mainly work for renowned customers, who distribute their products all over the world,” says Thorsten Hildebrand. He is responsible for sales and the successful marketing of the company overseas and emphasises, “The Zorn team is proud that it enjoys a great deal of trust within the industry. This is to do with our flexibility, with our accuracy and with our willingness to invest money so that an innovative idea can be further pursued.”

Some of the company’s research partners are old familiar partners. Other new ones come through contact with the technology transfer institution, tti Magdeburg GmbH. “As a small company, we want to concentrate on our competences and are happy to make use of the help offered by tti,” says Hildebrand. The technology transfer institution in Saxony-Anhalt’s state capital connects national and international contacts for cooperations in the field of research and development. The management of the “Cluster Medical and Health Technology” is also based here. “We are a member of the cluster,” says Thorsten Hildebrand, adding that there is a series of new product ideas.

However, not every idea leads to a prototype. Sometimes, you have to accept halfway through that a certain technology is not yet sufficiently developed. But from experience, he can say that umpteen other ideas and lots of useful partial results are born, even along the ways that do not lead to the key objective. Sooner or later, they find a use among the 5-man team of the Zorn development department.

ZORN INSTRUMENTS e.K. is an illustrious name reaching into more than 60 countries. In 2013, the medium-sized company with its 40 employees was able to win second place in the *Deutscher Außenwirtschaftspreis* (German Foreign Trade Award). 35,000 testing devices and instruments are delivered to customers worldwide. Including, for example, a sugar manufacturer in Thailand. “The cane sugar grower is paid by the sugar content of the crude juice, meaning the relevant filters are used,” explains Thorsten Hildebrand. ZORN INSTRUMENTS has developed an environmentally-friendly filter made of kieselguhr for the customer.

Traditional appliances to inspect the load bearing capacity of foundation ground are also perfected in the company’s development department and adapted to meet modern challenges. They are sent as far as China and Indonesia, the USA and Arab Emirates, among other destinations. The management is optimistic that exports will soon be sent to Jordan as well. An intern made good progress in terms of developing this international business. Khaldoon Hamarneh is a student at the German-Jordanian University, which was set up in Amman under the management of the Magdeburg-Stendal University of Applied Sciences. His degree includes a practical year in various German companies. He is currently working at ZORN in the university location of Stendal.

Khaldoon looks at the company’s history, which is displayed in the display cabinets. Thorsten Hildebrand speaks justifiably of a “museum”. Zorn stands for the name of the family which is currently in the fourth generation of managing the company – set up in 1870 as a mechanical workshop. After the second world war, the company was a supplier for the German Imperial Railway. In 1955, it began to include the production of hardness testers for metallic materials in its repertoire.

A new company building is currently being built in front of the window. The research and development department will also get larger premises here. Lateral thinkers will then get even more leeway at ZORN.

Author/Photo: Kathrain Graubaum on behalf of IMG Saxony-Anhalt

Captions: ZORN sales manager Thorsten Hildebrand obtains information about tested appliances from the head of quality assurance Wolfgang Haupt.

30.09.2015

◀ previous article

next article ▶

Add page

