

# Swiss precision meets German thoroughness

## US Engineering values the locational advantages of the state of Saxony-Anhalt

The historical town of Wernigerode in the German state of Saxony-Anhalt is rich in history and a popular tourist destination. It is here that the Swiss entrepreneur Urs Schweinfurth had decided to establish a second company site a few years ago – approximately an eight-hour drive north of the Swiss town of Dällikon, where US Engineering AG is headquartered.

The core business of the globally active company is the design, manufacture and sale of machinery and equipment for the industrial production of electric motors. Urs Schweinfurth had been looking for a location in one of the German-speaking countries where he could expand his company. "We need more space for our products and more employees for our assignments", he explained his commitment to Wernigerode at the topping-out ceremony in the summer of 2012.

He came to Wernigerode through personal contact with a business owner from the region, who is also engaged in electrical engineering. Here, efforts were made for the potential investor. The Investitionsbank Sachsen-Anhalt and the Investment and Marketing Corporation Saxony-Anhalt supported the settlement with a low-interest loan as well as by providing advice on funding opportunities and searching for a suitable location.

US Engineering Deutschland GmbH is in good company in Saxony-Anhalt. Mechanical engineering has a long tradition in the region and is one of the major industrial sectors. Many medium-sized companies combine their expertise through cooperation and thereby improve their market opportunities. Boris Wietmann is responsible for maintaining existing contacts and further networking within the industry in order to become better known and acquire new contracts for the company. As managing director, the 46-year-old recently became in charge of the fortunes of US Engineering Deutschland GmbH. The company founder Urs Schweinfurth sold his company in the autumn of 2013 and went into retirement.

When Boris Wietmann takes visitors or customers through the brand new 2000-square-meter production hall in Wernigerode, it quickly becomes clear that there is no shortage of space here. "It would have been much more expensive to build such a hall in Switzerland", he says. "The land alone costs much more."

The managing director is actually from Southern Germany but has recently lived in Switzerland for ten years. He can understand the arguments for settling in Central Germany. "I can tell a Swiss company that wants to expand that this is a good alternative. It has a central location, good transport links and affordable investment costs." As a business economist, he naturally had the numbers in mind and was honest about the fact that the cost of labour is lower in Germany and that the strong Swiss franc against the euro slows down the export business in Switzerland. However, it is not only the financial aspects that make him optimistic about the future. He discovered that Switzerland and Saxony-Anhalt are not so dissimilar. "The people both here and there dislike strong hierarchies – people quickly get on first-name terms. The employees not only see themselves as recipients of orders, they also want to take on responsibilities, think for themselves and make decisions" says Wietmann. He has also observed a great deal of loyalty in his employees.

US Engineering Deutschland GmbH currently employs seven workers. Boris Wietmann is confident that the number will grow to approximately 20 employees in one or two years. "We are a small company in development. But we serve a niche market. Not many can build what we do. That is our opportunity." He does not doubt that he will be able to find appropriate professionals in Central Germany when the business grows. "The universities here cultivate young talent in this direction."

The managing director, who commutes between Saxony-Anhalt, his home on Lake Constance and the sister company in Switzerland, has no worries about the future. "All I'm saying is e-mobility. It is doing an awful lot in the world of electric motors right now". The company developed an innovative method for waterproofing electric motors and implements this in Wernigerode. A large automobile manufacturer is already showing an interest. The good reputation of the Swiss and German industries is also beneficial internationally in order to expand. When Swiss precision meets German thoroughness, little should go wrong.

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