



Integration of Voumard in Kellenberger and the Hardinge Group proceeds according to plan

»We've acquired an intact product line«

At the end of 2014 the reintegration of the traditional brand Voumard in the Swiss machine tool scene caused a sensation. Kellenberger, the specialist for universal and outside round grinding machines in the Hardinge Group, purchased Voumard and added high-quality inside round grinding machines to its portfolio. The reintegration was considered a major effort, however was resolutely initiated. We interviewed Urs Baumgartner, Director of Sales/Service at Kellenberger and designated CEO, on the status of the integration process and the company's current plans for further development.

ANDREA JÄGER CONDUCTED THE INTERVIEW



Mr. Baumgartner, since September 2014 Voumard has belonged to Kellenberger within the Hardinge Group and, after an interlude in Germany of over five years at Lapmaster-Wolters, has returned to Switzerland. How is the integration process going?

Urs Baumgartner: We are quite satisfied with the development. Our without a doubt ambitious project of moving an entire machine tool production plant from its location in Germany to Switzerland has meanwhile been largely implemented. By the end of 2014 we had already relocated the entire hardware to the new production site near St. Gallen. At first, four of the existing seven series will now be manufactured there, i. e.

the Voumard grinding machines VM 110, VM 130, VM 150 and VM 300. Since March 2015 the assembly stations have been set up; we already began assembling the first machine tools in April. The Sales, Service and Application departments are located at the site in Biel. For those responsible at Kellenberger, everything has gone according to plan up until now.

Are you going to integrate additional machines from Voumard in your product range?

Urs Baumgartner: That remains to be seen. First, with the four machine models I mentioned, we have adopted an intact product line on a technologically highly sophisticated level for

Photo: Kellenberger



1 High-performance grinding machines from Voumard, like this VM 150, are optimised for the flexible inside and outside round machining of complex workpieces (Photo: Kellenberger)

which we can take full responsibility. After all, with the new series we want to satisfy our customers' requirements for product quality and technical support to the same extent as with the established Kellenberger products.

What specifications have you set for yourselves?

Urs Baumgartner: Our objective is to complete and deliver the first Voumard machines built in Switzerland by the end of 2015. Machines for demonstrations and testing will probably already be available somewhat earlier. However, a major expansion of the capacities at both locations in Switzerland will be necessary for everything to run smoothly. A Voumard-specific build-up from 30 to 50 positions here in Switzerland, but also on an international level, is therefore planned for the coming months and years.

With the completion of the technological range for grinding, you can now offer the users the entire range for this production process and use joint distribution channels. Are additional synergies noticeable?

Urs Baumgartner: Of course, we also see synergy effects in additional areas between the two brands or within the entire group. These include the joint use of existing resources and facilities in production, especially in Assembly, Quality Assurance and Development. Particularly on the level of key components, far-reaching synergy effects to the existing product range of Kellenberger will result. The customers can expect from Voumard that all machine models will be scrutinised and developed further by us with new technical features that provide advantages for the customer. But there's one thing the customers can already depend on now: Our highest priority will be to maintain and improve the high quality and the outstand-



2 Kellenberger places particular importance on comprehensive services. Since March of this year, the manufacturer also offers revisions of Voumard inside grinding spindles (Photo: Kellenberger)

ing performance of the machines. Together with an efficient, comprehensive service and expert application support.

That sounds like a tremendous task...

Urs Baumgartner: You can bet on it. However, we will also accomplish this task. You see, more than 9,000 Voumard machines at 2,500 customers are active on the market. Therefore, it won't be possible to realise good machine service for four new series at the same time over night. Especially since our planning provides for the sales figures reaching the previous

»The objective is to provide efficient, comprehensive service«

figures of Voumard in the next three to four years. But our experience with service and spare parts support, which we have already been processing 100 percent ourselves since 1 January 2015, make us extremely optimistic. Our strategy is to have the customer service cases processed by a team of Voumard specialists and new employees. And since March we have also offered revisions of Voumard inside grinding spindles.

How would you formulate your expectations for yourself?

Urs Baumgartner: As I already mentioned, our claim is to raise the service for Voumard to the same level of quality as for the Kellenberger machines. For this reason, the establishment of customer service is the area we have already treated with priority from an early phase by recruiting Voumard experts in Service, Spare Parts and Applications. Based on this already existing team of proven Voumard experts, in future we will expand the team with new employees from the machine tool sector gradually and according to the requirements. We are convinced that we can provide new ideas for the further growth of our company for the benefit of the users, our customers.

Mr. Baumgartner, thank you for the interview.

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