

INTERVIEW WITH REINHARD CORDES

Without A+W, the medium-sized glass industry would be less efficient

The businessman and visionary on the significance of A+W software for the German flat glass industry, and the internationalisation of the long-established Frerichs Glas business

A+W DIALOG _ You have been tracing the development of IT in the German flat glass industry since its beginnings. How do you rate the role of A+W?

Cordes _ A+W have acquired merits with regard to the medium-sized glass industry because they have always been challenging us with regard to the price level and the demands on the software, but they have also forced us to rethink and restructure our business, and they were proved right. Without A+W, the German medium-sized glass business would be less efficient. And this is not just hot air; I am firmly convinced of this – because other suppliers would not have achieved this. They have completed or copied things but they have never been pioneers. What A+W has been doing is like a new method of surgery: a bit painful in the beginning but looking back one does realise that this was the right track.

A+W DIALOG _ How do you rate the competency and the commitment of the A+W staff?

Cordes _ I have been dealing with two generations of A+W staff by now and like all of us, they are individuals who have their strong and their and weak points. All of them however are highly qualified and committed with the clear goal of satisfying their customer. They know both the software and the flat glass industry inside out, and they are competent and committed partners.

A+W DIALOG _ Frerichs Glas is currently internationalising, especially with regard to the product Mediafacade. How significant is your software partner for this internationalisation?

Cordes _ With our new product, Onlyglass Mediafacade, we enter a new territory here in Germany, but even more so internationally. This step abroad is being planned in close detail, very consciously and conscientiously, and we are applying the same meticulousness to integrating new product in our IT and communication system. The concept of A+W which we have been using for decades, is of special importance here. I believe that the international experience of A+W, for example in the Middle, East, in Asia and Eastern Europe, is an excellent prerequisite for the integration in our international business processes. We will be using the same software basis, and principally the same modules, only in other languages, and adapted to the individual needs of the market. We hold A+W's international know-how in high esteem as well as the opportunity of profiting from their experience.

A+W DIALOG _ Will internationalisation change the focus of your product range, and which significance will the regional market have in future?

Cordes _ Our roots are in here in the North of Germany where we have been active on the market since 135 years. For some of our customers, we are fourth generation suppliers. This is the core of our business. Internationalisation does not mean that we are going to neglect the regional market but on the contrary, that we can apply our experience from internationalisation to the regional market, to push product innovation. Our regional customers and business shall be as important to us as before, and customer satisfaction in our home markets will still have priority. Customers shall get from us the best value for money on the market. This is our maxim.

A+W DIALOG _ In view of the debt crisis, the economic prospects for the next years have been revised by analysis, with a negative result. Does this have consequences for the implementation of software systems at Frerichs Glas, with the target of further savings and process optimisation?

Cordes _ I do not believe this is directly dependent on the economy. Basically, we strive to perfection our production process which requires the use of IT, especially production control software, more than ever before. Today, production processes cannot be optimised without the support of qualified software. We do not consider the economic prospects to be quite as negative because we supply different industrial sectors not all of which react equally cyclical – consequently, we are fairly optimistic. Moreover, some countries outside Europe like the Middle East, China, and South America are developing rather positively – our business lies in the future growth areas.



Reinhard Cordes has been Managing Partner of the medium-sized family-owned Frerichs Glas since 1984

Reinhard Cordes has been interviewed by Dr Michael Küttner, Head of Company Communications at ALBAT+WIRSAM Software GmbH