



Industry meeting in Thuringia with useful information and insider tips

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The experts of the panel debate discussed the opportunities and risks of internationalisation of regional tool and mould making. (Source: Stahl)

In March, it was time again for one of Meusburger's industry meetings. This time, some 68 companies took the opportunity to meet up in Schmalkalden, Germany. The day was filled with networking, exchange of information and presentations by experts.

The most important message at the end of the day was how important it is for German tool and mould makers to co-operate. Co-operation is exactly what [Meusburger](#) had in mind with this industry meeting: The event aims to be a platform for exchanging news and information, for talking about practical applications, and – most importantly – for bringing together professionals from the sector.

This offer was accepted by 68 companies, bringing 129 professionals together at Schmalkalden University. The lecture hall was almost full. The atmosphere was friendly right from the beginning: People know each other in tool and mould making.

For everyone who had not set foot on the university grounds, Professor Thomas Seul, Professor for Production Engineering and Tool Construction and Pro-Rector for Research and Transfer at Schmalkalden University, first introduced the University and also the work of the Laboratory of Applied Plastics Technology AKT.

The series of lectures was opened by Stephan Klumpp, who held a very motivational presentation about tool adjustment with reverse engineering data. Klumpp, founder and CEO of Proplas, demonstrated how much time companies lose with analogue analysing and testing methods. According to Klumpp, those methods are highly time-consuming and at the same time don't provide reliable data. Proplas offers external analyses and return of scan data for efficient tool adjustment.

The subsequent questions from participants indicate that there is a great deal of interest in alternatives to analogue measuring methods.

The presentation was followed by a joined introduction of the co-operation between [Meusburger](#) and [PSG](#). After the merger last year, the companies presented the future of their co-operation. As of 31 March, [PSG](#) hot runner systems are available in [Meusburger](#)'s product catalogue, which is available online.

The third presentation was held by Stephan Schumer of Simcon. He presented the opportunities of injection mould simulation. According to Schumer, a simulation allows for automated optimisation of components, tools and processes without having to handle a huge amount of numbers and data. End users can therefore do without complicated data input and calculating times because the simulation does it for them. Optimisation is therefore possible in less time and independent of the user: The achieved optimum does not rely on the experience of a single person but on verifiable calculations of the simulation software.

Coffee break in the laboratory

The coffee break offered the opportunity for informal talk and a visit of the Laboratory of Applied Plastics Technology. Professor Thomas Seul, whose second function is President of the German Association for Tool and Mould Makers, offered a tour during which he explained the measuring equipment at AKT. One project is committed to examining poisonous changes in plastic materials that have been handled wrongly during the injection process. By injecting the material into living cells, the team of researchers around Professor Seul find out which mistakes in processing the plastic material lead to cells dying.

A captivating part of the programme was the panel debate. Five professionals discussed the opportunities and risks of internationalisation. The debate was led by Susanne Schröder, editor of the German magazine "Form und Werkzeug". The main topic was how companies can identify interesting markets and how they can find customers and co-operation partners in foreign countries. The debaters had very different backgrounds when it came to working internationally: From Schneider Form, a company that expanded internationally in 2001 and has subsidiaries in England, Portugal and China, for example, to Triwefo, which has not yet taken the leap to internationalisation. Also part of the discussion were Andreas Sutter, head of marketing at Meurburger, and Professor Seul. In the end, all participants agreed that internationalisation is a chance for German companies.

Talking about how to find the way into new markets, Andreas Sutter said: "The country-specific associations, as well as Istma as the global association, are a good resource to find out the requirements of a specific market."

Franz Tschacha explained why, in his opinion, German companies are not that present on the global market: "One problem of German manufacturers is that – because of history and tradition – they are strongly clinging to thinking regionally." Professor Seul added that other countries, Portugal, for example, could serve as role models by exporting the majority of production. According to Seul, associations like VDWF can help companies in getting an insight into markets like the US and Mexico – two very interesting markets at the moment.

When speaking about disadvantages, Dr Schneider brought up another important consideration. Speaking from experience, he said that every manufacturer has to find the balance between innovation capacity on one side and globalisation and export on the other: "It is obvious that expanding into other markets costs energy and workforce, which consequently is missing in the development of core business areas."

Tschacha pointed out one of the big advantages of relying on several pillars instead of only one: "Being present on diverse markets offers the chance that business is not subject to the economical fluctuations of only one country."

Concluding the discussion, Klaus Lemke, CEO of Triwefo, admitted that he considers it important to observe possible target markets. In his opinion, co-operation is an important factor when operating internationally.