

Working for the future

INTERVIEW Managing director Jürgen Sander reviews the past and future for VEM motors

VEM motors celebrated two important anniversaries with a festive get-together at the company's site on 3rd February 2007: 60 years of electric machine manufacture in Wernigerode and 10 years of successful development since privatisation. Pride in their achievements and optimism for the fu-

ture characterised the positive mood of staff, management and proprietor Dr. Adolf Merckle. As a manufacturer of special drives, the company has established a solid economic base and has claimed a leading position on the world market with its products.

What role does the 60-year history play for the company today?

We build upon traditions and have every reason to be proud of our past. After all, our experience has been gathered from the manufacturing of some eleven million electric motors here in Wernigerode. Our staff have developed and implemented countless technical innovations over the decades. This striving for innovation and constant improvement of our products is characteristic for the company.

In the 1970s and 80s, the company was one of the flagships of electrical engineering in East Germany. How did the company fare in the difficult years after German unification?

When the Treuhandanstalt, the government trust organisation, placed VEM Antriebstechnik AG in the hands of Pläschner Management GmbH & Co. KG in 1992, this kindled new hope. Over 2,300 jobs had been lost at the factory since unification. But the Treuhandanstalt was convinced that VEM motors was worth preserving and invested 70 million DM in the company, most of that money going into plant modernisation. We are still benefiting from this technical base today. Even so, it was a long time before an investor was found. It was only when Dr. Merckle arrived that things finally got off the ground.

How did you open up new markets?

We realised very quickly that we would not be competitive on the world market with our standard motors. Our strength lies in the series manufacturing of special drives tailored to the specific requirements of the individual user. With this approach, we have achieved a high level of acceptance with customers worldwide. I must say, however, that this was only made possible by unerring commitment, and we had to fight hard, also internally, to get where we are today.

Our sales activities are also aligned very closely to customer needs. We are not operating simple sales offices, but instead looking after customers specifically with local competence centres. These centres offer competence in two respects: Firstly, where technical advice is needed, but also when decisions are to be made regarding pricing. It is



Managing director Jürgen Sander assured the anniversary guests: "We want to stand in the front line of our market. And that is what we are all working for."

also for this reason that the competence centres are answerable directly to the management.

In which branches have your markets developed especially well?

We are supplying above all machinery manufacturers, steelworks, the chemicals industry, shipbuilding and the crane sector. All these products are machines which have to satisfy special mechanical or electrical conditions, for example special windings, special terminal boxes or additional corrosion protection.

How important are the integration of your company into the VEM Group and the cooperation with the other members of the group?

As a member of the VEM Group, we possess a major advantage over most of our competitors: We can operate as a general supplier. VEM motors, Sachsenwerk and VEM motors Thurm all offer different products. Consequently, VEM is able to cover the whole spectrum of drive technology from low-voltage to medium and high-voltage applications. And there are also many synergy benefits in our relationship to the Keulhütte foundry; we are work-

ing together more and more often for specific projects.

Where does the focus lie in research and development, and where do you see the markets of the future?

We are currently developing a new basic series of motors with diverse modifications for the most varied branches of industry. Key areas are the chemicals sector and energy-saving motors. One central feature of the new series will be its system capability, i.e. the compatibility with other components. At the same time, we are also working on a third generation of compact drives. This is a response to both demands from the users and developments in electronics, and is set to raise the quality benchmarks to new levels.

Talking about energy-saving motors: The energy consumption of electric motors is becoming an increasingly important issue. How is VEM motors reacting?

We have already been dealing with this question for a long time and have contributed in many different ways to the discussions of future solutions. We can expect to see new specifications at European level within the coming two or

three years. We are directly involved in the preparations, above all through our membership of the Central Association of the Electrical and Electronics Industry (ZVEI) and CEMEP, the Association of European Motor and Drive Manufacturers.

But we are also discussing the matter with our customers. At the Hanover Fair 2007, for example, we are devoting a separate panel discussion to energy-saving motors and the new European guidelines.

What makes you so confident in the future?

First of all, we feel confirmed in our activities by the responses of our customers. This can be seen, for example, in some major new orders. Almost as if to mark our anniversaries, we have just received the largest single order in the history of the company. From now to the end of 2008, we are manufacturing roller table motors worth over €7 million for a steelworks in Russia. If we add to that the large machines which Sachsenwerk is supplying, the order volume for the VEM Group is €12.5 million.

Anniversaries are always good opportunities to sum up the past. And I can say with a clear conscience: We have achieved a great deal. At the end of 1996, when Dr. Merckle took over the company, VEM motors was writing considerable losses. The 2006 accounts were closed with a positive result. We have learned a lot together. But no-one is going to rest on their laurels. We still have many more new ideas. The creativity and motivation of our staff are flowing into new products. We want to stand in the front line of our market. And that is what we are all working for.

STATEMENTS



Prof. Wolfgang Böhmer
Minister-President of Saxony-Anhalt

"Today is a memorable day for VEM, as a successful and internationally renowned company, and indeed for this whole region of Germany. Dr. Adolf Merckle gave the location a genuine chance ten years ago, and made available considerable investments for the modernisation of the factory. He brought with him the successful model of a prospering SME sector from the 'old' Federal Republic of Germany, and an entrepreneurial spirit which stands for economic stability and professionalism, but at the same time also for openness and respect for the achievements of the employees. After all, it is not least thanks to the staff, that we are today able to celebrate a modern enterprise with international customers and innovative products."



Ludwig Hoffmann
Mayor of Wernigerode

"The electric motor works was from the early 1950s through to the time of unification the most important enterprise in Wernigerode. Practically every family in the area has some connection to the factory. As the second-largest industry employer and an important vocational training centre, VEM motors is still today a very important player for the town and the local region. It is also to the merit of the electric motor works that we are faring so much better than other regions of Saxony-Anhalt. We are especially proud of the international standing of the company. And we are grateful that, in Dr. Merckle, the company gained a new proprietor whose goal was sustainable development and not just short-term profit."



The factory site on the outskirts of Wernigerode. The Harz Mountains rise up in the background.

7 generations of standard motors from Wernigerode

Over the six decades of the company's history, the electrical engineers in Wernigerode have developed and manufactured seven generations of standard motors. The most important technical data are summarised in the following overview:

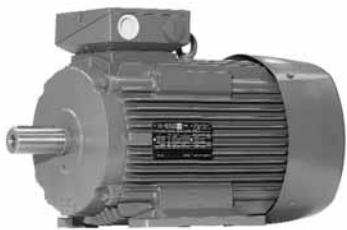
Legend:

- (1) Output
- (2) Weight
- (3) Efficiency
- (4) Temperature class
- (5) Degree of protection
- (6) Measuring-surface sound-pressure level

1996/1997

Type Progressive **K 20R 132 M4**
Shaft height 132 mm
Type IEC/DIN **K 21R 160 M4**
Shaft height 160 mm

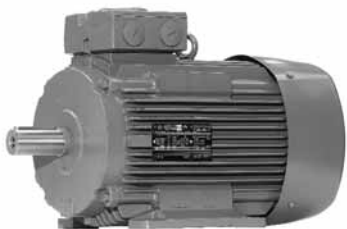
- (1) 11 kW
- (2) 92 kg
- (3) 87 %
- (4) F
- (5) IP 55
- (6) 60 Db |A|



1991/1994

Type Progressive **K 10R 132 M4**
Shaft height 132 mm
Type IEC/DIN **K 11R 160 M4**
Shaft height 160 mm

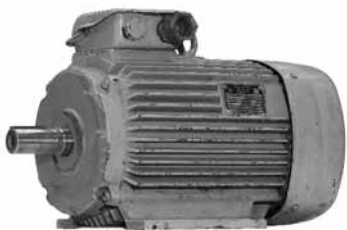
- (1) 11 kW
- (2) 92 kg
- (3) 87 %
- (4) F
- (5) IP 55
- (6) 66 Db |A|



1982/1988

Type Progressive **KPR 132 M4**
Shaft height 132 mm
Type IEC/DIN **KPER 160 M4**
Shaft height 160 mm

- (1) 11 kW
- (2) 86 kg
- (3) 87 %
- (4) F
- (5) IP 55
- (6) 66 Db |A|



60th birthday and still going strong

CELEBRATION Six decades of tradition and successful privatisation



Freiherr von Rothkirch (right) and Minister-President Prof. Wolfgang Böhmer (left) speaking to employees. Several bands contributed to a real party atmosphere for staff, partners and guests.

VEM motors. 3rd February 2007 was a busy day at VEM motors GmbH on the north-western outskirts of Wernigerode. The unusual sight of several marquees on the company car park already fuelled suspicions that no motors were going to be assembled on this Saturday. Together with the festively decorated sales hall, they formed the venue for the biggest party of the year so far. The company had invited its staff and their partners, customers, business friends, neighbours and numerous guests of honour to celebrate a special date. Or more precisely, two anniversaries: 60 years electric motor manufacturing in Wernigerode and 10 years privatisation by Dr. Adolf Merckle and his family. No less a reason to celebrate, however, were the successes of the past years and positive expectations for the future.

Representatives of local and regional politics also came along to pass on their congratulations. After all, the company has been a vital element of the local economy in Wernigerode and its surroundings for decades and today provides employment and training for 550 people.

Already soon after its founding on 31st January 1947, the Wernigerode Electric Motor Works – or “Elmo” as it was dubbed for short by the locals – became one of the strongest pillars and most important exporters of the East German electrical engineering industry. Under the widely known trademark “VEM”, it not only supplied domestic industry, but also exported to all the Comecon countries and more than 20 countries in the West. By the end of the 1980s, more than 3,000 em-

ployees were manufacturing 350,000 motors each year. After 1990, the Treuhandanstalt had the works restructured on a smaller scale as one of the most modern manufacturing facilities for electric motors in Europe. With new products, new production and management methods, and a series of investments, new markets



Dr. Merckle (right) in discussion with the Minister-President of Saxony-Anhalt, Prof. Wolfgang Böhmer (left)

were gradually developed. But it was only after the company was taken over by Dr. Adolf Merckle on 1st January 1997 that a second chapter of the success story could be opened in Wernigerode.

The first guests already flocked into the marquees for breakfast at 8.00 a.m. By the late morning, the party was in full swing and there was hardly a free seat to be had. More than 1,000 guests had gathered by the time the official event began at 11 a.m.

In his welcoming address, managing director Jürgen Sander reviewed the

milestones of the past 60 years and in doing so related an impressive example of East German economic history. He emphasised that it had been above all the competence and motivation of the employees, together with the entrepreneurial commitment of proprietor Dr. Merckle, which had made this successful development possible.

The Minister-President of Saxony-Anhalt, Prof. Wolfgang Böhmer, continued in similar vein. In his words of congratulation, he also praised the achievements of both proprietor and employees – Dr. Merckle for his commitment over the past ten years, the employees for their work of the past six decades.

Dr. Merckle was visibly moved by the fantastic response to the anniversary. After all, it was now at last also possible to make up for missing the location's golden anniversary. No-one had felt like celebrating ten years ago.

That things have changed in the meantime, he was able to demonstrate with a few figures. Turnover was increased from € 56 million to € 90 million between 1996 and 2006. A total of € 16.5 million have since been invested at VEM motors, € 3.9 million in 2006 alone. Research and development has been boosted with a total of € 9.2 million.

The company has trained 90 apprentices since 1997, and all have been taken over into full-time employment. This has enabled a valuable rejuvenation of the workforce. Dr. Merckle closed with the remark that the factory lived from its customers and that their wishes, therefore, are, have always been and will always remain the priority and guiding principle for VEM.

Wernigerode honours Dr. Merckle

Mayor Ludwig Hoffmann welcomed Dr. Adolf Merckle as a guest of honour in the historical town hall in Wernigerode on 3rd February 2007. In gratitude for his commitment and in recognition of his extraordinary entrepreneurial spirit, he asked the proprietor of the VEM Group to enter his name in the “Golden Book” of the town. Dr. Merckle's involvement, he said, had been a blessing not only for the electric motor works, but also for Wernigerode. VEM motors – still referred to almost lovingly as “Elmo” by the locals – is one of the most important companies in the area.



Seine Eintragung ins „Goldene Buch“ der Stadt Wernigerode nahm Dr. Merckle im Beisein von Oberbürgermeister Ludwig Hoffmann im Rathaus vor.

7 generations of standard motors from Wernigerode

Legend:
see left column

1971

Type Progressive **KMR 132 M4**
Shaft height 132 mm
Type IEC/DIN **KMER 160 M4**
Shaft height 160 mm

- (1) 10 kW
- (2) 146 kg
- (3) 86 %
- (4) A
- (5) P 12 (new IP 13)



1964

Type Progressive **KR 160.1/4**
Shaft height 160 mm

- (1) 10 kW
- (2) 146 kg
- (3) 86 %
- (4) A
- (5) P 12 (new IP 13)



1957

Type Progressive **DMK 7/4 RC**
Shaft height 180 mm

- (1) 10 kW
- (2) 146 kg
- (3) 86 %
- (4) A
- (5) P 12 (new IP 13)



1952

Type Progressive **SK 55/4 M**
Shaft height 200 mm

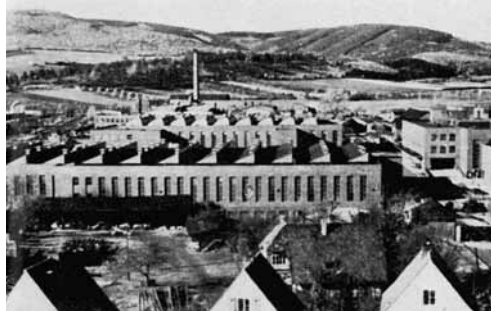
- (1) 10 kW
- (2) 146 kg
- (3) 86 %
- (4) A
- (5) P 12 (new IP 13)



Electrical engineering in Wernigerode

Chronicle of the most important dates and events from the history of VEM motors GmbH

1935–1945



The light-metal works "Rudolf Rautenbach", later "Rautal Works", was set up on the outskirts of Wernigerode in 1935. From 1938, the works supplied aluminium castings for the aircraft industry to orders from the German Ministry of Aviation. Production was discontinued on 10th April 1945. At the end of the war, the Soviet Military Administration for Germany (SMAD) placed the works on the list of factories to be dismantled; the whole machinery and equipment was dismantled.

1947

On 31st January, the central office for industrial operations in Saxony-Anhalt, acting on orders from the SMAD, founds the Wernigerode Electric Motor Works on the site of the former Rautal Works. This marks the beginning of electric machine manufacturing in the town.

Around 200 employees immediately begin the production of the first 200 three-phase motors. The drives are ready on 1st May. They are urgently needed to assist the reconstruction of industry.

1948

On 1st April, the electric motor works becomes a nationally-owned enterprise (VEB) and is shortly thereafter assigned to the Association of Nationally-Owned Enterprises in Electrical Engineering, with headquarters in Dresden. From that same year, the products carry the VEM mark, which is also used as a trademark by many other enterprises in the branch from 1954.

1949

The 10,000th motor is delivered. The factory in the meantime employs 1,000 people.

1951

The works is allocated its own specific product range. The workforce has in the meantime grown to 2,000 employees.

1950s

At the Leipzig Fairs in the early 1950s, the exhibition hall for electric machines is dominated by the trademark VEM.



1958

Introduction of a standardised series, and start of series production.

Wernigerode is one of four factories serving the whole GDR demand for asynchronous motors and is responsible for the output range 3 to 100 kW.

1961

In the early 1960s, workshop production was gradually replaced by production-line methods.

1963

Start of production for the 3rd generation of standard motors of the KR series.

In the mid-1960s, there are more than 800 women working at VEB Elektromotorenwerk. In the production departments, they are working above all in the press room and in the coil, boring and winding shops.

1964

As the existing capacities are not able to satisfy the growing demand for electric motors, it is planned to increase manufacturing output through streamlining measures, restructuring and the construction of a new hall.

1965

All basic types of the KR and SR series from 5.5 to 100 kW are in production as standard motors. Their parameters correspond to international specifications.



1970

The Wernigerode works becomes an independent enterprise within the Electrical Engineering Combine.

1971

The third generation of the "M" standard motor series is introduced between 1971 and 1974. The works has thus established contact with the international technology leaders.

1972

As a contribution to consumer production, production of the electric lawnmower "Trolli" commences. 6,100 mowers are produced in the first year. By 1989, the annual production is to rise to 70,000.

Mid-1970s

Vocational training with tradition. Hundreds of young people have learned their future trade here.

1977



Extensive expansion of production capacities between 1977 and 1982. Considerable investments in equipment and a further hall. Implementation of these measures is intended to double the 1977 figures for production output.

Within the electrical engineering combine, Wernigerode is responsible for the output range 5.5 to 132 kW. This includes motor series in standard versions, as well as numerous special versions for individual drive and location conditions.

1980s

In the 1980s, ELMO is one of the combine's cornerstones and its most important exporter. More than 30 per cent of the total production is sent abroad. Customers are to be found in all the Comecon countries, as well as in more than 20 countries in the West. The main domestic users are the heavy machinery and plant industry, shipbuilding and general mechanical engineering. The works offers not only employment, but also social facilities and leisure opportunities.

1987

The electric motor works celebrates its 40th anniversary. Around 1,550 motors come off the production line every day.

1988

A transistor converter with an output of 10 kVA marks the entry into electronics manufacturing.

1988–1990

The fourth generation of three-phase asynchronous motors for the output range 5.5 to 200 kW is launched. This includes the KPR and SPR standard motor series, as well as up to 6,000 variants and special versions each year.

1989

In the year prior to German unification, the works occupies a total area of 58,000 sq.m., and 3,260 employees produce some 348,000 motors.

1990

In April 1990, the nationally-owned electrical engineering combine is transformed into a public stock company: VEM Antriebstechnik AG. The shares are held solely by the government trust organisation "Treuhandanstalt". Following its transformation into VEM Elektromotorenwerk Wernigerode GmbH, the previously nationally-owned enterprise becomes a subsidiary of the new AG.

1991

In April, the works still employs almost 2,500 people. Within a year, however, this number drops to just 900.

1992

The Treuhandanstalt places VEM Antriebstechnik AG in the hands of Horst Plaschna Management GmbH & Co. KG.

1993

Following disincorporation from the AG, VEM motors GmbH is formed on 1st January with facilities in Wernigerode and Thurm. At the same time, a restructuring plan is elaborated.

1993/1994

A new generation of electric motors is introduced in April. The K11R and S11R series for the output range 5.5 to 250 kW incorporate a host of technical innovations.

1994

Far-reaching restructuring measures are initiated under the banner "New, Small, Strong" – without interrupting existing production. The manufacturing of motors is to be concentrated in Hall V, for which an area of 21,000 sq.m. is earmarked.

1995



From May, move to the new production facilities in the former Hall V. The first motor is assembled in July and the official opening is celebrated in October. The new facility is one of the most modern production centres for electric motors in Europe. A compact machinery base with short transport paths and a clear process flow make the factory so fast and flexible.

1996



Investments of around DM 53 million are realised to modernise the production facilities up to the end of 1996. The product range covers squirrel-cage and slipping motors in nine different shaft heights from 112 to 315 mm for outputs from 5.5 to 315 kW. They are manufactured in around 9,000 variants.

1997

The entrepreneur family of Dr. Adolf Merckle from Blaubeuren privatises the company. VEM motors GmbH becomes a member of the VEM Group.

1998

Expansion of the output range for three-phase motors to 500 kW and delivery of the 10,000,000th motor.



1999

With the new electronic catalogue, customers are for the first time offered product data also in digital form.

2001

The VEM trademark association invites partners and friends to Wernigerode in November to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the VEM trademark. The VEM Group organises a conference on drive technology to mark the occasion. It was the first in a series of annual events which have since become known as the VEM Technical Conferences.



2004

VEM motors presents a world premiere with its so-called memory motor.



2005

Subsidiaries are already operating in Sweden, Finland, Singapore, Austria, Great Britain and Slovakia.

1997–2006

€ 16.5 million are invested in the modernisation of equipment.

Motor production over six decades

1949	10,000
1961	1 million
1969	2 million
1984	7 million
1998	10 million
2006	11 million

VEM motors offers customers new interactive catalogue

INTERNET Simplified language selection promotes international understanding

VEM motors. Ever since 1999, VEM motors GmbH has implemented a three-tier information system based on classic printed catalogues, flyers for important products or product groups as a source of fast information, and as the core element the electronic product catalogue on CD-ROM and on the Internet. This catalogue has proved an invaluable tool on the international market over the years and has been constantly further developed. In the meantime, some 20,000 CDs have been produced in various versions and distributed to customers. With Version 5.0, which will become available on DVD and CD in April, a new quality in product documentation will be attained (Fig. 1).

New user interface with more language options

Alongside the fully redesigned user interface, the customer is now offered even more language options. Whereas users of the previous Version 4.6 were able to choose only between the languages German, English, French, Danish and Finnish, the new catalogue now includes also the language options Italian, Spanish, Russian and Chi-

nese. The chosen program structure also facilitates the later addition of further languages. As it is possible to set a language for the document output independently of the chosen interface language, it is a very simple matter to produce foreign-language documents. This is especially important in the case of languages which are less commonly understood in Western Europe, for example Russian or Chinese. By the same token, a customer in Russia can select the required products in his own language, but can still create a German enquiry, without any need to actually understand the German language.

The catalogue was developed in close cooperation with the company Plan Software GmbH in Saarbrücken. The transition to the e-CLASS-compatible catalogue software EASYKAT®, furthermore, created the necessary prerequisites for the displaying of Eastern European and Asian languages (Fig. 2). We have also expanded the design variant selection options. Multiple selections which are often required in practice, such as PTC thermistor and PT-100 in the winding, can now be selected, and the new version of the catalogue offers even faster and more di-

rect access to product information and documentation. The terminal plans for the main connections, connection drawings and approval certificates, for example, can be called up immediately for a particular product. The 3D models have been extended to cover the whole K21R series.

DVD version with additional information centre

The customer still finds all the proven tools he knows from the previous versions. The essential elements of the structure for product selection have been maintained.

The DVD version, however, includes not only the catalogue itself, but also the information which makes up the VEM Internet presence and a comprehensive information centre. It has been significantly extended and restructured, and thus makes available all important printed documents, such as catalogues, flyers and approval documents, in the form of PDF files. The motors lexicon can be used separately from the catalogue in the form of a Windows help system.

The information on the commercial side is presented in a new quality. An

overview page between the configuration tool and the project list, for example, displays the basic price for the chosen product along with all the supplements which are applicable for the chosen modifications. In the project list itself, the user can now also see all the selected options, together with corresponding evaluations. This ensures that enquiries or offers created with the CD are already unambiguous and meaningful without further processing.

The system requirement for use of the new catalogue is a PC with Windows 2000 or XP.

Customers who do not have access to a DVD drive can request a CD version. For space reasons, however, this version includes only the electronic catalogue.

Both the CD and DVD versions run directly from the disc and do not need to be installed. Both can also be used across a network.

It goes without saying, finally, that the electronic catalogue can also still be accessed in the proven manner via the VEM Internet site (Fig. 3).

Try out the new catalogue for yourself. You, too, are sure to be convinced.



Fig. 1: Start page for product selection



Fig. 2: Product configuration tool

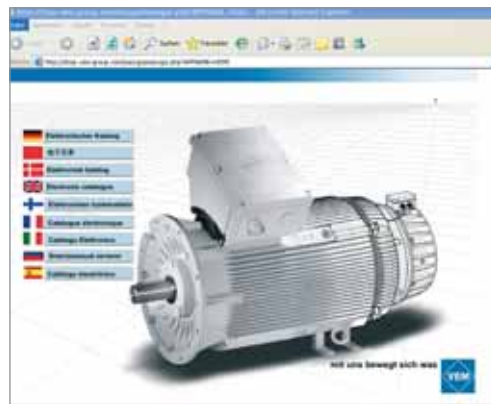


Fig. 3: Web start page

Open to new ideas

PEOPLE Hartmut Badstübner: Quality manager at VEM motors in Wernigerode

VEM motors. Hartmut Badstübner has no trouble with preparation for his 7 o'clock meetings with the works management each morning. The day begins punctually at 4.44 a.m., with morning sport, breakfast and a browse through the newspaper before setting off on his 18 km journey to work in Wernigerode. He has remained faithful to the electric motor works for decades, having completed his apprenticeship here in the early 1960s. After studying mechanical engineering in Magdeburg, he returned to the company in 1967 and completed a correspondence course as a graduate engineer specialising in mechanical engineering. Quality issues have accompanied Hartmut Badstübner throughout his work in various areas of the company. Since 1995, he has been head of the quality department. "Our 25 staff are well trained, and the working atmosphere promotes both independent action and a readiness to stay abreast of the latest developments," he states with a certain satisfaction. The electric motor works already applied strict quality standards during the GDR years. Following unification, new standards, rules and certification requirements were added to the daily agenda. With DIN EN ISO 9001-2000, VEM motors is right up to

date in terms of quality certification. Together with his counterpart in Thurm, Hans-Joachim Kittler, Hartmut Badstübner has elaborated a quality manual for use not only in their own two companies, but also at VEM motors Slovakia. "Our Slovakian subsidiary is an extremely competent partner when it comes to implementation of the quality standards, and we enjoy excellent cooperation," he says.

At VEM motors, no motor leaves the works without making contact in one form or another with the quality department. "Our important goal is for the customer to come back, not the product," is Hartmut Badstübner's simple summary of the responsibilities assigned to his department. At the same time, his staff also certify motors on behalf of Germanisch Lloyd and other classification societies, and test energy-saving motors for the North American market, e.g. for the Canadian authorities. The monitoring of incoming goods and customer service are further elements of their work - including, of course, the processing of complaints. "Complaints are the least pleasant aspect," the head of department admits. "But their number is dropping, despite the parallel increases in production volume. In this re-

spect, we have no reason to shy comparisons with other engineering manufacturers."

One of the tasks handled by the head of department is a customer- and application-oriented research topic with an important environmental component, namely the reduction of noise and vibration to enable motors to run more quietly. A great deal of Hartmut Badstübner's knowledge has gone into a design series of low-noise motors

which VEM motors is able to offer its customers. But this is not his only link to research. He also acts as a mentor for students from colleges and universities during their periods of practical experience at the company. This experience is similarly incorporated into Hartmut Badstübner's retrospect over a 45-year career: "If you are open to new ideas and are prepared to question the status quo, then you will also be able to contribute to progress."



Hartmut Badstübner is married and has one son. His hobbies include skiing, hiking and photography.

OPINIONS

How Wernigerode employees view their works

"I wanted to learn the same trade as my father, who works as a machining technician at VEM. I was thus very pleased to be taken on as an apprentice. The work is great and we are learning a lot, especially from our older colleagues. I put in my maximum effort, because I know it will pay off. After all, if I am good enough, I will get a full-time job at the end of my apprenticeship. And there is also a bonus for good training results."



Stephan Längefeld
Third-year apprentice machining technician

"Even though we all retired a good few years ago, we are still very involved with the works. Together with five colleagues, I look after 580 former VEM employees. This voluntary work is done in close cooperation with the works council. Our 'veterans' receive birthday cards and we organise a Christmas party each year. From their 70th birthday onwards, we visit with a bouquet of flowers every five years. I know most of the former employees, because I used to be responsible for allocating holiday places. Many of them are still very interested in what goes on at the works, and there are some regular readers of 'VEM-Impulse'. We are very pleased that the company still cares about its former employees."



Jutta Floß
Former trade union secretary

"I was one of the first employees at the works. My first job was to assemble star-delta switches for motors. I was 19 years old and a trained high-voltage technician when I started with the company in April 1947. Later, I obtained the necessary qualifications to become maintenance electrician. Together with a colleague, I was then responsible for all electrical maintenance and repairs, particularly regarding the machines. I live in the next town. In the old days, buses ran from the surrounding communities to the factories in Wernigerode for all three shifts. I worked at 'Elmo' for over 43 years, before taking early retirement in October 1990. Whenever I walk through the town today, I nearly always meet former colleagues."



Alfred Pfob
Long-serving maintenance electrician