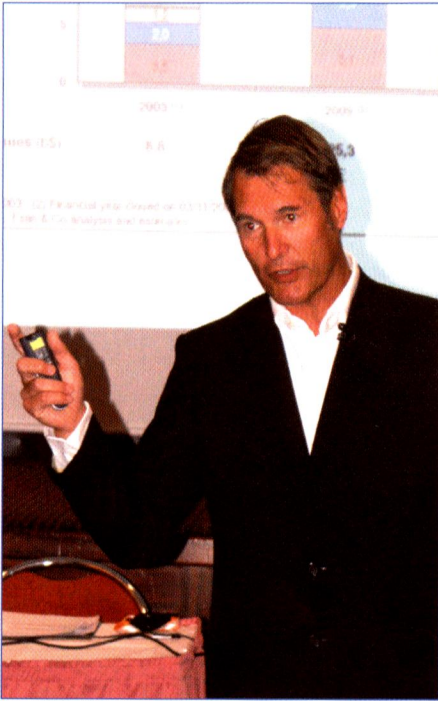




INDIVIDUALIZATION IS THE KEY FACTOR

TWO DAYS OF INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS AT WETZLAR

The word 'slug' has a variety of meanings in English. For example, a snail without a house, or a small shot of spirits. The word can also be used for an elongated or round lump of metal. Wherever the name comes from, Satisloh Slugfest 2009 was instigated based on the example of its US counterpart. The customer event first came into being there in 2006. Last year it was held for the second time for the North American market, and now the parent company in Switzerland has chosen to emulate it to Europe.



Beat Siegrist



Andreas Kunzmann



Frank Breme

By Isabel Spangemacher

Despite the difficult economic situation, 120 participants from 30 countries made their way to Frankfurt and Wetzlar (Germany) to find out about generating, coating, finishing and lens testing. Customers, suppliers and employees from all over the world met for two days in Frankfurt. Naturally the international press also had to be there!

After a relaxed and enjoyable get-together on the Wednesday evening in a business hotel in Frankfurt, the real program started early on October 8. In a large conference room, participants were greeted by Beat Siegrist (President, Satisloh Group), Andreas Kunzmann (CEO, Satisloh Group) and Frank Breme (Head of Marketing and Product Development at Satisloh).

INDIVIDUALIZATION

In his own competent and motivating way, Beat Siegrist made sure that everyone present understood that “Individualization is what we’re here for! Not one size fits all!” Using well-chosen examples from outside the industry, he demonstrated clearly that it doesn’t help a lab much just to follow the masses. You have to specialize in order to differentiate yourself from the competition.

One example he used was Apple. To get ahead in the brutally competitive world of the music industry, they had the idea that consumers

should be able to buy just the songs they really wanted to hear. Up to then only the following concept existed: If you wanted one or two songs from a band, you had to go into a music shop and buy the artist’s whole album. On the album, along with the two songs you liked were a load of others which you didn’t really want but still had to pay for. The only alternative was the relatively expensive method of buying singles – if they existed at all.

The Apple individualization strategy was to offer the customer exactly what they wanted. Uncomplicated, legal and quick to implement. And so it was that iTunes and all the accompanying products were born. All of a sudden consumers around the world were able to buy individual songs cheaply and easily! Let’s be honest, the idea was a massive hit. Which businessman could survive today without iTunes and an iPod?

According to Siegrist, at the end of the Slugfest everyone should be able to go home saying “This event has inspired me to provide more value and deliver better solutions!”

INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Andreas Kunzmann, on the other hand, put interpersonal relationships at the forefront of the event. “We want to come closer to you and you to come closer to us. We want to learn more about you and what you need!” In the

two following days he incited everyone to “Challenge us! It should be a learning experience for everybody!” After all, Satisloh wants to continue expanding its service worldwide. A part of this expansion is the planned opening of another Satisloh Academy in 2010 in Zhongshan, close to Hong Kong (China).

Another important factor is dialogue between the developers and the users of the machines. This is because Satisloh developers can create **concepts for wonderful machines and applications** – but information on what is actually needed in the lab and what is actually useful can only come directly from the labs themselves.

FUTURE OF MACHINE CONCEPTS

Frank Breme knows how the machine concepts of the future will look at Satisloh. Four to five years ago research and development was trying to come up with machines which could do absolutely everything. “This is no longer the case today. We need to think in a variety of lab-oriented directions” said the Head of Marketing and Product Development. Research and development is now focused on three areas:

1. On-Block-Manufacturing (OBM)

For large labs and mass production, with reduced labor costs – much faster and great



Mark Mackenzie



Shaun Bace



Andy Huthöfer

space reduction

2. Heavy-duty machines

Such as new polishing machines or VFT-orbit, and finally

3. Intelligent machine concepts

The machine informs the operator, for example, when tools need to be exchanged. This helps to “use the machine in a better way before it breaks down and achieve high yields and stability”.

Fundamentally, one should not just think and develop in only one direction, for example, for mass production or small labs. Today, machine concepts are created and then developed for a variety of applications. “Both machines are running the same process with the same quality – one fully automated, one manually”.

But there will be more change in the future: “A one-stop shop for everything!” and naturally Frank Breme immediately explained what he meant. “Machines, processes and designs – everything coming from a single company!” Alongside the familiar machines for generating, polishing and coating, Satisloh is now also making a name for itself in finishing. In conjunction with National Optronics, this operation is now offered and fully integrated into OBM. Moreover – and this is absolutely new – they will soon have their own FreeForm lens design. Three designs (regular, intermediate and short), in three materials, should be launched on the market at the beginning of 2010.

POLISHING, COATING AND FINISHING – PART I

After the general introductory session, participants were taken by bus on an hour long journey through traffic jams to the destination of the day – the Wetzlar site which opened its doors to the international delegations.

After initial chaos, the Slugfest horde gradually quietened down and came to order. Divided into six groups, the participants submitted to a strenuous program of presentations. The groups rotated through the building every half-hour. Polishing, coating and finishing were on the program. But it was not just machines from Satisloh and National Optronics on display. Other ‘partners for automation’, such as LaserOp, presented equipment indispensable in an up-to-date lab.

However, the absolute highlight was the full OBM line! Blocking, generating, polishing, cleaning, hard coating, anti-reflection coating, hydrophobic coating and de-blocking – fully automated without the intervention by an operator. The first fully automated RX-lab – something that until now has never been seen before and, as Frank Breme said proudly, “We believe it is the first one in the world!”

POLISHING, COATING AND FINISHING – PART II

After the tiring Thursday, the program continued equally strenuously in the hotel on

the Friday. One presentation followed after another; the hard work of the Satisloh organization team around Nicole Faust and Alexandra Witzlar ensured a varied program.

Mark Mackenzie (Strategy With Vision) kicked off the day with a keynote speech and presented current figures from the industry. He’d carried out a survey of opticians on behalf of Satisloh in Colombia (C), Poland (P) and the United Kingdom (UK). Furthermore Mark referred to a research published in France by Galileo Business Consulting. The aim of both surveys was to research the ‘future trends and needs of the RX lab’.

Among other things, he examined the business relationship between opticians and labs. Not surprisingly – but nonetheless not entirely understandably – 23% of opticians in France perceived years of experience (by habit or by historical relationship) and the accompanying long-term business relationships as decisive when ordering from a lab. Luckily there were also other opticians who placed more value on service and other criteria than on tradition. Fundamentally, it was clear that the following criteria are pivotal in the business relationship:

| Quality (C: 29%, P: 27%, UK: 13%)

| Delivery time (C: 26%, P: 23%, UK: 17%)

| Price (C: 3%, P: 23%, UK: 17%)

| Service (C: 11%, P: 7%, UK: 23%)

With a wink, Mark summarized the results,

"Offer good quality and service and you'll be on the winning side!"

Another point in his survey was the awkward topic of 'FreeForm'. Do opticians even know what it is? Yes they do ... at least some of them. The level of understanding differs among opticians. Some define it as a 'production method'; others have understood that it has to do with 'lenses with added benefits to the customer'. Here it became clear once again: the lab has to educate its customers – the opticians! You can't just put a new design or new technology under their noses. No, you also have to explain WHAT is new about FreeForm lenses and WHY the optician – and the patient – should spend more money on it. After all, if the middleman doesn't know exactly what he is selling, how should the end customer understand it?

Shaun Bace (Sinclair Coating Division), who has been in the coatings business for 32 years, shared his knowledge in his presentation, 'Best practice for coating'. This was more about general approaches for improving the product than about the coating process itself. He gave common, but useful advice, for example, "Listen to what your clients want but don't wait until clients call you – be the one who acts first!" The suggestion that quality tests should be carried out regularly is not really new but it

has been shown time and again that this seems to go under in day-to-day business, and in time may even get forgotten.

In the US only a few opticians do the edging themselves – in Europe the picture is altogether different. Here opticians are doing their own edging as if there was no tomorrow. All the same, according to Andy Huthöfer (National Optronics), a lab should certainly not miss the connection to Industrial Remote Edging. Since edging is becoming ever more specific and more complicated, there will come a time opticians will no longer be able to provide it. Remote edging is used increasingly by opticians (also in Europe) and this provides an excellent way for a lab to distinguish itself from the competition: Invest in the finishing department! This is not just so as to keep existing customers. Other labs, which do not have a suitable finishing department themselves, may also be seen as potential customers.

Georg Michels (Carl Zeiss Vision) went into the subject of FreeForm. What does a FreeForm lens contain, what do FreeForm generators offer, what should you watch out for when polishing and, above all, when does investment in a FreeForm generator pay off? These were the questions he dealt with in his presentation, not forgetting to talk about manufacturing lead

times and the reduction in material costs with polishing.

SUMMARY

These were just some of the numerous presentations given on the last day of the Slugfest. I look forward to Slugfest 2011! Finally, a remark by one of the participants seemed to sum up the general impression: "Excellent for making contacts – it was better than Silmo!"

*Individualization
is the
key factor*

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