

Cleanroom Technique quo vadis?

Evolution instead of revolution - basan celebrates 25th anniversary



basan is celebrating a special anniversary this year and looks back on 25 years of successful sales of cleanroom products in Europe. GIT ReinRaumTechnik spoke with the company's proprietor Jacobus C. Bartels and managing director Frank Braun about the history of the family business and its future plans.

The interview was conducted by Dr. Katja Habermüller.

Mr. Bartels, basan is celebrating the peak of its 25-year success story this year. What is the current development?

J. Bartels: For several years already we have been in an internationalization phase. After establishing diverse sales cooperations in Europe and the founding of basan UK in 2003, we are now facing the greatest challenge in our company's development. After the total acquisition of the shares of basan Nederland BV and basan Belgium BVBA at the end of last year, we acquired the distribution division of cleanroom consumables in Europe and Southeast Asia, in addition to

the production of cleanroom clothing in Malaysia from Metron Technology Inc. in April. This acquisition is for us a significant expansion of the international sales activities for high-quality cleanroom equipment and cleanroom consumables, and of our logistics services and personnel training.

Does that mean that basan will establish a presence beyond Europe as well?

F. Braun: That is correct, because basan is taking over sales of cleanroom consumables in Belgium, Germany, France, Great Britain, Ireland, Italy, the

Netherlands, Malaysia and Singapore. In Malaysia we are also taking over the production plant for cleanroom clothing. In the countries where basan has already been successfully established for many years, the current business activities of Metron Technology will be integrated. In the markets that are new for basan, we have established our own basan branch offices and a complete infrastructure. We will implement a comprehensive integration plan in the coming months. Strategically we will develop new markets in France, Italy, Malaysia and Singapore; from our point of view, especially Southeast Asia has the potential for above-average growth rates.

What is the significance of the acquisition for your existing and new customers?

J. Bartels: This step will bring tremendous advantages for both our customers and for existing Metron customers. For one thing, the acquisition will give us access to strategically important vendors and products. The resulting benefits, such as higher purchasing volumes, an even better cost structure and other synergy potentials, can be passed on directly to our customers.

Furthermore, having our own production plant for cleanroom clothing in Malaysia will help to overcome any production and capacity bottlenecks and to counter the medium-term increase in job order production costs in Eastern Europe. A smooth transition of the ordering and delivery processes will be ensured by the introduction of SAP at all locations.

What role will the German office play in the future?

J. Bartels: The central control of the company will take place from within Germany, where we also have the highest number of employees so far. Altogether, the number of employees in the basan group will grow to 120 as a result of the acquisition.

Following this important announcement, I would like to learn more about one of your core competences – the concept of total supply.

J. Bartels: The introduction of the total supply concept in 1997 was a very important milestone in the company's development. We had been specifically working toward being able to offer this concept, with a broad range of products and services, to offer the customer real added value.

Our breakthrough came in 1997 when we acquired Wacker (now Siltronic), an important customer. Wacker served many of our customers as a vendor, and was an ideal reference, since the customers regularly audited the company. In this way, many of the Wacker customers recognized the advantages of the full supply concept, which they adopted for their own use.

Mr. Braun, what exactly does basan mean by the term 'full supply concept'?

F. Braun: Our customers practice classical outsourcing, which eliminates expensive and time-consuming warehousing, for example. They receive an absolute supply guarantee from us, which means that the right products are available at the right time, in the right quantity and quality. In addition, we actively develop recommendations for our customers – which are frequently financial, qualitative or sometimes also quantitative in nature – for product optimization, conduct requirements analyses and understand the importance of services connected with the product (supply intervals, for example), for the benefit of our customers. Of course, the total supply concept has been continually developed since 1997, so that additional services have been added up until the present day, such as seminars, training at the customer's site and electronic commerce for the processing of orders. It should also be emphasized that the total supply concept always provides customer-specific solutions.

J. Bartels: A very important step for us with respect to electronic commerce was the introduction of SAP in the year 2002. We thoroughly considered all aspects of this investment – since the time

and costs are enormous for a mid-sized company – but it was worth it, because many of our customers also use SAP systems. Therefore, we are at eye-level with our customers; we use the same technology and have a very good understanding of the processes used by our customers. The integration of our services in the processes of our customers is also much easier.

What are the most important markets for basan with respect to industrial sectors? Is there an increased focus on the pharmaceutical market?

F. Braun: The pharmaceutical industry is a very interesting market for us. For several years we have been investing intensively in personnel, know-how and product development for this sector. Our share of the total sales from these measures has already increased substantially. As a service for the pharmaceutical industry we developed our Cleanroom Forum, which offers practical information and networking possibilities tailored to the needs of pharmaceutical customers. Meanwhile these forums are a well-established institution and are conducted twice each year, with a growing number of participants. Due to the huge success we will initiate similar events for other industries – the first event for the semiconductor industry took place in January.

The semiconductor industry therefore remains your most important market?

J. Bartels: The semiconductor industry still plays an important part in the group. However, the importance of other industries, such as life sciences, is growing enormously. And one of the strengths of basan is certainly

the fact that we are not limited to one industry, but also have broad knowledge of the pharmaceutical and semiconductor industries – in other words, wherever there is a requirement for controlled production conditions.



Cleanroom technology, quo vadis? How do you see the future requirement for cleanroom products in different industries, such as the pharmaceutical and semiconductor industries? Where do the strong future trends for cleanroom products point?

J. Bartels: There is no revolution in the field of cleanroom consumables, but there is evolution. Many of our products are subsequent developments. What is possible in cleanroom technology is often the basis for the products that we can deliver.

For example, if production processes change from a large-capacity concept to encapsulation of the individual processes, which enormously reduces the risk of contamination, then it is possible to lower the cleanroom classification of the immediate vicinity and use other processes that are less critical.

The added value for the customer will be achieved primarily by the range of products offered by a vendor, the services offered to supplement the product spectrum and the flexibility of ordering and delivery processes.

