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How TRUMPF plans to cut spare parts delivery times in half

Overnight spare parts delivery is already a reality across Europe thanks to the TRUMPF logistics center. But department head Axel Erber and his team hope to make it even faster.

The contents of the high-bay storage systems at TRUMPF's logistics center in Ditzingen are worth a small fortune. The warehouse contains over 2.5 million spare parts worth more than 67 million euros. The total number of different parts for TRUMPF machines exceeds 36,000 – and almost all of them are in stock. "Getting parts to customers quickly is one of TRUMPF's top priorities. If a customer's machine stops working, they have a significant problem. That's why we invest so much time and money in our spare parts business," says Axel Erber, who heads up spare parts distribution at TRUMPF.

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— Parts can be ordered at any time – even at night

TRUMPF ships spare parts to customers all over the world from its headquarters in Ditzingen. Over 120 staff work in the warehouse, with another 20 employed in international spare parts distribution. The logistics center is open for business around the clock. From early morning to late evening, employees are on hand to prepare shipments for customers. Outside normal business hours, customers can order parts by calling a dedicated hotline. "In urgent cases, we even have a service provider who will go to the warehouse at night to prepare an order," says Erber. The team can deliver parts Europe-wide overnight, with same-day dispatch of the order from the logistics center and delivery to the customer the very next day. So how does TRUMPF do it?

— Paperless logistics center

Digital connectivity is one of the key drivers of speedy deliveries. That's why TRUMPF began digitalizing and improving its processes in fiscal 2017/18. Whenever a customer anywhere in the world orders parts from a TRUMPF site, the employee responsible at that site creates an electronic ticket in a standardized system.



We run a paperless logistics center. That saves time and prevents errors.

Axel Erber, department head spare parts distribution



Some 400 new tickets are input into the system each day. These can then be handled directly by the sales team in Ditzingen. Monitors in the warehouse keep employees up-to-date at all times with a digital display of current orders. "We run a paperless logistics center. That saves time and prevents errors," says Erber.

Smart logistics for fast shipping

TRUMPF also relies on smart logistics. An automated small-parts warehouse whisks small spare parts to the packing station as if by magic. A warehouse vehicle rides up a vertical conveyor system and grabs a blue box with a part in it from the high-bay storage system. The box then completes its journey on a belt conveyor. Prior to dispatch, warehouse staff use smart scales to check the right parts are in the package. These scales compare the weight of the package with the figure stored in the system. If everything is in order, the package is loaded onto a truck, ready to make its way to wherever in the world the customer is based.

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Ambitious goals by 2023

Erber and his team have set some ambitious goals for the future. By 2023, they intend to slash their throughput times by 50 percent. They have already notched up a 27 percent improvement since the 2017-18 reference year. Now Erber is focusing his efforts on ensuring that the spare parts distribution team gets even faster access to all the necessary information to process orders even quicker. Is the part in stock? Do special payment terms apply in the country in question? Does TRUMPF have to take any export regulations into account, such as customs declarations? All these questions need to be answered before the order can be processed in the warehouse. "We hope digital connectivity can make that kind of information available even faster in the future," says Erber. These connected logistics could even set a precedent for other countries, with Ditzingen's connectivity solution acting as a blueprint. "Then we'll be as fast in other parts of the world as we are in Europe!" says Erber.



Axel Erber joined TRUMPF in 2003. The doctor of law has been in charge of international spare parts sales since 2018, since last year as part of his responsibility for Internal Sales. Here, TRUMPF has brought together the commercial back office for machine tools and services. Erber and his team have set some ambitious goals for the future. By 2023, they intend to slash their throughput times by 50 percent.



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