

They know what they're doing

The work never stops at Laser Alsace Production (LAP) in Rosheim. Jacques Kammerer and his machines understand one another intuitively. The pioneering entrepreneur has taken the first steps toward building a digital production network, in partnership with TRUMPF. But forklift trucks still run around the factory.

Jacques Kammerer has always had a tendency to do things differently. After obtaining a degree in physics, specializing in optics, he worked for five years in a research group focusing on laser technology.

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>
> Jacques Kammerer, CEO LAP

His aim was to stake out the limits of what is physically possible. After this phase as a researcher, the scientist switched tracks and became an entrepreneur. "Making new discoveries, moving forward, staying a step ahead – these are the motivating forces of my life," he says. This enthusiasm convinced his bank to lend him the money he needed to set up LAP. "I succeeded because I steadfastly believed in my dream project. I was determined to create LAP, and that determination paid off." His factory is equipped with the state-of-the-art machinery and Jacques Kammerer knows all about the innovations taking place in his sector of industry.

A life devoted to progress

Kammerer is up to date on the latest technological developments, but until recently most of his administrative processes were still carried out manually. Realizing this, he saw that there were advantages to be had from implementing Industry 4.0 – or the industry of the future, as it is known in France.

In early February 2016, members of the TRUMPF Smart Factory consulting team traveled to Alsace for a week to help Kammerer realize his vision with the support of their expertise in connected manufacturing. The team noticed two things

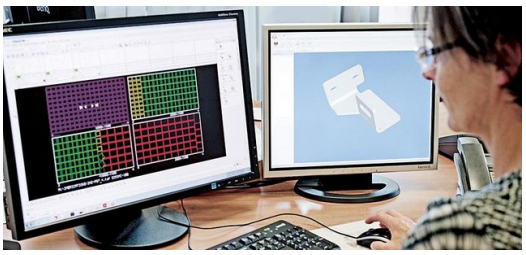
about Kammerer's modern production facility. One was the lack of interfaces between the various (non-integrated) software systems, making it complicated and time-consuming to transfer information and data. The other was that the French company's production process resembled a black box: there was absolutely no information available about the current status of jobs or about capacity utilization. These are things that Kammerer now intends to change. "We have formulated tangible goals as part of a two-year plan, which is currently being implemented." An important point for him was that, as he says, "I don't want to have to become an IT expert." The solution is a TruTops Fab ERP system, which he is implementing as the first building block. It will be followed by other components of the TRUMPF TruConnect portfolio, such as the TruTops Boost programming system, a detailed planning tool and, at a later date, the AXOOM platform to allow the integration of suppliers.



CEO Jacques Kammerer, LAP, has taken the first steps toward building a digital production network.



The modern high-bay storage system is based on the latest advanced technology and was the first step toward digital connectivity. Suitably integrated software interfaces are now being added in gradual stages. (Picture: Niels Schubert)



To ensure digital connectivity runs smoothly, Jacques Kammerer needs employees with different skillsets. (Picture: Niels Schubert)

Contrary to what might be assumed, there are actually more people working at LAP than before: new positions have been created in the sales department, for example. This is because the distribution of functions has changed. Today, it takes just one person to operate three machines simultaneously. The machines know what they're doing. On the other hand, additional staff are employed in order acquisition. This reallocation was necessary, explains Kammerer, "because digital connectivity is only cost-effective if there are enough orders to make it worthwhile." Since he started using automated technology a year ago with two new machines and a storage system, he has managed to increase sales by 27 percent and the workforce has grown by 10 percent. He expects digital connectivity will bring an additional 15 percent of sales growth.

A good partnership

The love of innovation that drives Jacques Kammerer does, however, call for a large measure of flexibility. The market is constantly changing – not only the machines but also the customers. "I don't know where we'll be in five years' time, but we're ready for anything and everything," says Kammerer.

He has a clear objective: to reduce manual interventions in the machining process to the strict minimum. The desired result can be realistically accomplished within two years – even if this seems a short time for such an ambitious plan. Jacques Kammerer describes TRUMPF as the perfect partner for this project, especially because of the software solutions and innovations like AXOOM: "I can get everything I need from a single source – machines, a storage system, software and the appropriate business platform. What's more, they're the best and most advanced machines on the market. The ideal fit for me and my demanding standards."