

# Product-oriented quality management also prevents piracy

**Product piracy turns into an increasingly serious problem for European producers. According to the study of a renowned audit firm, customs officials of the EU member countries seized more than 79 million counterfeited goods in 2007, and the trend is rising. Not only classic objects such as T-shirts, watches and sneakers but also technical products like screws, chains or machines are counterfeit in growing quantities.**

**T**he AUMUND Group based in Rheinberg, a manufacturer of mechanical conveying and handling equipment for (secondary) raw materials, regards this development with the same concerns as the competitors in the German Engineering Federation (VDMA) – and complicates matters for the pirates as far as possible by means of an efficient quality management.

„Plagiarism causes enormous damage to the manufacturers of the original goods. This does not only concern the financial loss but also the image, when the imitations do not meet the expectations raised by the genuine products,“ says Thomas Pelz, Head of Quality Management at the worldwide active

AUMUND Group, whose good reputation is based on its solutions for the transport of hot and abrasive materials in the bulk material and cement industries.

The biggest source of counterfeits now as before is China: According to a survey of the VDMA, roughly three out of four counterfeits have their origin in China. Above all complete machines are produced by the counterfeiters with components and spare parts closely following.

## Every fifth plagiarism has its origin in Germany

„Comprehensive protection can only be reached through a package of constructional, production-related and IT-based

approaches. We critically examine the options for complicating the copying of products or proving their genuineness, implementing these options accordingly, wherever possible,“ states Thomas Pelz. However, he also points out that product piracy is not an issue exclusively restricted to the Far East: „At least every fifth counterfeit is produced in Germany,“ indicates Mr Pelz with reference to the VDMA statistics.

„Trademark infringements in the consumer goods sector often just mean a loss of turnover but in the pharmaceutical industry and in machine building the stakes are higher in most cases,“ warns Thomas Pelz with regard to product liability.

The quality assurance manager watches with interest the impact of the campaign „Choose the Original – Choose Success“ through which the VDMA together with its members addresses potential customers, using positive statements to fight against product counterfeiting and the infringement of intellectual property. This initiative was launched in 2007 to strengthen the awareness for the value of genuine technology on international markets. AUMUND thwarts the ambitions of product pirates primarily by a conscientious split of the production steps. „No supplier builds a complete machine, the assembly of the know-how components takes place at selected production locations exclusively,“ emphasizes Mr Pelz. The five main arguments for genuine machines (quality, innovation, efficiency, experience and safety) also form the core of the AUMUND quali-



AUMUND Apron Feeder (Design: with arched plates)

ty management. Moreover, AUMUND secured comprehensive protection and trademark rights.

### Differences in the lower ppm range

The Quality Management of the AUMUND Group has two bearing points – the product and the process. „Many suppliers have been engaged in the production of the AUMUND products as extended workbench for more than 15 years now, and here a continuous further advancement of the manufacture is taking place which above all is to the benefit of our customers,“ describes Thomas Pelz the situation. Each supplier is a proven specialist and subjected to a continuous audit of his processes by AUMUND. It is recorded in full detail which supplier disposes of which know-how and technical equipment to meet the high requirements from Rheinberg. The results of this meticulous work and audit system are impressive: „The differences between parts produced many thousand times a year such as the rollers for our pan conveyor are within the lower ppm range,“ informs Thomas Pelz. No matter, whether standard or catalogue parts are concerned, each production process is scrutinized in full detail. In close co-operation the departments of engineering, manufacture and quality assurance organise an in-house acceptance after completion of machines such as the rotary discharge machine whose results considerably influence the further process. On a global scale, the AUMUND quality assurance system is optimized to such an extent that e.g. all test reports are available in multilingual version so that the corresponding responsible have the know-how on hand worldwide – from Brazil to Hong Kong.

### Material testing in own bulk materials laboratory

„Wherever possible, we carry out project-related comprehensive material tests on customer's request in our own bulk materials laboratory at the head office in Rheinberg. The outcome normally provides a quick decision, whether a conveyor is suited for a certain product at all,“ states Thomas Pelz.

Complete laboratory tests already saved the one or other customer from costly misinvestment into wrong technology.

For decades AUMUND has now been using not only the scientific know-how of engineers, developers and partnership universities, but also and above all, practical experience. „More than 20 years ago many activities which form part of the daily routine in quality assurance today were carried out by the foremen in the workshops on their own initiative,“ explains Thomas Pelz. Besides, internally much emphasis is placed on avoiding the production of tons of paper for the documentation, and on focussing instead above all on the work on the product. Hence, the certification as per ISO 9001 roughly 15 years ago was just a side effect of the daily work.

### Defects: Clearly below industry average

This led to a vast store of experience which is required to turn the partly complex machine production resulting from forging, casting, machining and processing by heat treatment into a first-class outcome. „Compared with the industry figures of the VDMA we are far below the half of the industry average,“ outlines Thomas Pelz rather cautiously a yardstick for the occurrence frequency of production defects. Besides, just a minimal fraction of those defects is actually noticed only upon or after commissioning - the efficient quality management already fulfils its purpose prior to this stage. Within the AUMUND Group roughly two dozens of qualified employees worldwide are committed to this work.

„The human being remains as the factor that is most difficult to calculate in all planning,“ describes Mr Pelz the essential problem of probably all those engaged in quality assurance work. Wrong assembly, improper handling of individual parts or incorrect alignment of installations constitute the root causes for failures of the operational processes to a larger extent than the actual product. If filling levels or conveying quantities are exceeded, parts are installed wrongly or a machine has been used for an

unsuitable bulk material, even the best quality management will no longer be of any help.

Caption: Details reflect the know-how: In its fight against product piracy AUMUND trusts in innovative solutions and a sophisticated manufacturing concept. All suppliers only contribute with a certain share to the product, while the overall knowledge of the product remains with the manufacturer. |