



“We want to become
30% more effective”

The TRUMPF Group is one of the pioneers of digitization in the field of mechanical engineering. The producer of machine tools and industrial laser technology, based in Ditzingen near Stuttgart, is seeking to leverage its efficiency and offer customers comprehensive services. In our interview, Dr. Ing. Mathias Kammüller, TRUMPF Chief Digital Officer and member of the Group Management Board, reports on how far the company has already come and how it is winning its employees to the cause of digital transformation.

HOW IS TRUMPF DRIVING DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION?

KAMMÜLLER / We developed our digital strategy and outlined our digital ambitions three years ago. The digital strategy involves four associated areas: Processes; products; the platform on which our customers can network their processes and the data from their machines; and disruptive business models such as capacity markets. In terms of our digital ambitions, we have set specific goals that we are aiming to achieve by 2022/2023, relating to the company, our employees and our customers. For example, we want to become 30% faster and more productive – and we are confident that we can do that.

WHAT ARE THE GREATEST CHALLENGES YOU FACE ON THE PATH TO BECOMING AN “AUTOMATED COMPANY”?

KAMMÜLLER / For a large company like ours, it is particularly challenging to fundamentally change our software architecture and structure. This is a step we have completed now, and we have developed a very clear picture of our future software architecture. Next we need to focus on creating the integration platform, standardized interfaces and harmonized master data that are required for networking, which also means orienting the IT team in such a way that it functions as an enabler and accelerator of digitization. Thanks to the collaboration and expertise of everyone responsible for digital matters, the level of knowledge at TRUMPF is consistent and there is a clear, shared sense of our direction. Another key aspect here is that the functional divisions and employees all support the changes we are making.

HOW DO YOU ENSURE INTERNAL ACCEPTANCE OF CHANGES?

KAMMÜLLER / Through our information management and intensive trainings for all managers. We also agreed basic principles in terms of changes to human resources policy in advance, as we do for all major changes in the company. These stipulate that nobody will lose their job as a result of the digital transformation, nobody will end up earning less than they used to, and every employee will be deployed in accordance with their qualifications or trained to perform new duties. This commitment makes people feel secure and minimizes anxiety. After all, it's better to implement changes in collaboration with employees rather than against them.

WHERE DO YOU SEE THE GREATEST POTENTIAL WHEN IT COMES TO DIGITIZATION?

KAMMÜLLER / There is huge potential to improve the entire “order to cash” process, and an end-to-end view across the entire value chain here will enable us to become faster and more efficient. The significant improvements of recent years have primarily been in the area of production, and we have not focused as closely on the areas of planning and order processing.

TO WHAT EXTENT WILL THE WEAKENING ECONOMY AFFECT YOUR FUTURE DIGITIZATION PLANS?

KAMMÜLLER / The downturn that is becoming apparent is forcing us to prioritize our measures more acutely and to develop even more specific business plans. There are advantages to that. We have more clarity on costs and benefits, and we have clearer project goals that we can pursue more effectively. We are generally well prepared for a possible impending crisis, as we predicted a year and a half ago that incoming orders would decline from the end of 2018, and back in January 2018 we set out specific, comprehensive measures for the event of such a crisis. By implementing these measures now we are able to make considerable cost savings and also boost sales.

HOW IS TRUMPF POSITIONING ITSELF TO PROVIDE CUSTOMERS WITH A COMPREHENSIVE RANGE OF DIGITAL PRODUCTS AND SERVICES?

KAMMÜLLER / There is a lot of emphasis on our customer experience platform, into which an e-shop will also be integrated. From there we will offer customers digital products and services, give them the opportunity to view and optimize their existing portfolios, and provide access to new offerings – and it will also all be available via mobile device. Our goal is to empower our customers with full oversight and controllability of their machinery and production. We have already implemented the platform in a number of pilot markets.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO DIFFERENTLY IF YOU HAD TO START DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AGAIN TODAY?

KAMMÜLLER / I would begin by focusing even more closely on bringing together all of the company divisions and arriving at a common understanding. That said, some considerations and dependencies that arise in the handling of highly complex processes and structures could still only be covered in detail during the concrete implementation. ■