

TRACTO-TECHNIK invests in the future

29 January 2018 by TRACTO-TECHNIK GmbH & Co. KG

Extensive modernisation and extension of the company's Lennestadt location in Germany

As a "Hidden Champion" the special machine manufacturer TRACTO-TECHNIK GmbH & Co. KG ranks among the most innovative medium-sized companies in Germany. All of the machines and systems for trenchless pipe installation are developed and produced at the headquarters in Lennestadt and sold all over the world from there. As part of a long-term growth strategy, the company is now making an extensive investment in optimising the organisational structure and modernising production and logistics at its Lennestadt location.

Fit for the future

High manufacturing quality "Made in Germany" together with know how gathered over decades and service with close proximity to customers provided by sister companies and sales partners worldwide are the basis of the TRACTO-TECHNIK group's continual success. However, in times of increasing globalisation and digitalisation, with rapidly developing markets, these qualities alone are not sufficient to ensure long-term success. The TRACTO-TECHNIK management recognised this fact and developed specific strategies for making the company fit for the future. Based on the management's integrative and solution-oriented approach, all structures and processes in the organisation have been reappraised to detect their potential for optimisation. The insights obtained have been implemented into specific measures in order to meet the requirements of the markets and the globally increasing demand for innovative trenchless solutions in sales, service, production and logistics in the long-term at the established high level. This is done in line with the company philosophy, which focuses on striving for superior solutions in customer service.

Initial work on implementing the future vision began back in 2014 by focussing sales and marketing on the global markets and making them visible through a new brand identity. At the same time, reorganisation of internal structure, logistics and manufacturing process was launched under the label "plant structure planning" to make them even more productive and efficient.

For this purpose, the assembly of the trenchless systems, which takes place in different plants to date, will be centralised at the Lennestadt-Saalhausen location by late 2017 and will be complemented by a new, state-of-the-art logistics centre. For promoting innovative ability, a new technology centre for the Design Engineering and R&D departments is being built at the Lennestadt-Langenei location. Timotheus Hofmeister, Managing

Director and CEO of TRACTO-TECHNIK, notes that, "We are making a conscious investment in bundling the core competences in manufacturing and development at the respective locations. That way, meaningful synergies are created that allow us to achieve sustainable growth in order to secure long-term company success and the jobs that go along with it."

NODIG production 4.0 in Lennestadt-Saalhausen

The invention of the first German GRUNDOMAT soil displacement hammer by company founder Paul Schmidt laid the foundation for the success of TRACTO-TECHNIK and redefined the industry. The soil displacement hammers are the company's best-selling product to date; global demand is unabated - with increasing tendency. Therefore optimising the assembly process in Lennestadt-Saalhausen was the first re-structuring measure

Keynote of the project was to automate the individual assembly steps to the extent possible with optimal, order-related material flow based on state-of-the-art supply chain management. With this and all other projects relating to plant structure planning, external expertise is being supplemented by the employees' wealth of experience. This approach led to a centralised, automated handling system which automatically brings all of the heavy parts to the right spot, eliminating the physical stress for the employees. Workflows, stock-keeping, material flow and work paths were also changed substantially, leading to more speed, higher efficiency and lower space requirements for the entire assembly process while maintaining the high quality standard. The gained area provides space for also manufacturing the steerable GRUNDODRILL bore rigs and the GRUNDOBURST machines for pipe renewal at the same location, starting in 2018 after completion of the logistics centre. This centralisation means a faster production cycle and shorter delivery times for the customers.

First-class logistics

The new logistics centre is being built on Winterberger Strasse next to the existing production hall in Lennestadt-Saalhausen. Centralised control over both the internal material flow and the external delivery process will take place from there. The new building consists of two building sections for storage and shipping with a total of approximately 4,500 m² of effective area. Up to six lorries can be loaded and unloaded simultaneously in the dispatch area. The upper story, which provides offices and staff facilities, is supported by a column-free construction. The high-bay warehouse for material and spare parts has a storage area of approximately 4,000 m². A kanban system is used to ensure that all necessary materials for constructing the NODIG machines are available in the required quantities at all times. The logistics centre is architecturally

linked to the assembly hall, ensuring a fast, smooth production cycle, covering all steps from goods receipt, assembly and quality control of the NODIG machines and accessory parts and delivery to the customer, who receives a reliable, faultless product within short time and can use it for profitable business ventures as soon as possible. Architecturally, the new building follows the TRACTO-TECHNIK design. The silver-grey outer facing is broken up by blue elements and large window areas that provide plenty of daylight and give the 128 m long reinforced concrete construction a sleek, modern look. The noise protection meets the latest standard.

Due to maximum automation and digitalisation of the processes, a state-of-the-art NODIG production facility with workstations designed in accordance to the latest ergonomics principles as well as fast, synchronised "just-in-sequence" production and logistics will be located in Lennestadt-Saalhausen. Maximum digitalisation offers more than just a positive effect on the manufacturing process. It is in fact a key factor in the overall growth strategy that makes all processes in the company more efficient. "Digitalisation is a key component to making TRACTO-TECHNIK fit for the future. It allows us to offer our customers even more innovative products and outstanding services. Because our customers always were and will always be our most important driving force," explains TRACTO-TECHNIK owner Wolfgang Schmidt.

Bundling of research and development

The consistent focus on customers and markets based on available company knowledge provided the basis for the company management's decision to make an extensive investment not only in production and logistics but in research and development as well. The new technology centre in Lennestadt-Langenei forms the future centre of innovation for the company by combining various design areas for pipe installation and pipe renewal. A space covering 550 m² gives engineers and developers plenty of room to brainstorm and exchange creative ideas for making the NODIG systems from TRACTO-TECHNIK even more innovative, competitive and profitable for users.

Construction of the new technology centre in Lennestadt-Langenei starts in early 2017. All of the new facilities will be up and running by the start of 2018. These extensive investments are the key step for TRACTO-TECHNIK to be successful worldwide in the long term with its innovative and inspiring trenchless technologies and outstanding customer services.

Construction works under way

The construction of the new technology centre in Lennestadt-Langenei commenced at the beginning of the year. On March 17, 2017 the construction works for the new logistics centre started as well with the official ground-breaking by the TRACTO-TECHNIK management, the mayor of the city of Lennestadt and further project participants. All of the new facilities will be up and running by the beginning of 2018. These extensive investments are the key step for TRACTO-TECHNIK to be successful worldwide in the long term with its innovative and inspiring trenchless technologies and outstanding customer services.

Source: TRACTO-TECHNIK GmbH & Co. KG