

In January 2018, after 35 years of service to electric actuator manufacturer AUMA, Commercial Managing Director Matthias Dinse retired from active management. The son of co-founder Rudolf Dinse played a key role in building up the company's global network of subsidiaries and representatives that has enabled AUMA's continuous growth over the last decades.

By Lucien Joppen



## AUMA: global leader with strong family values

Now Mr. Dinse has handed over the baton to newly appointed CEO Dr. Jörg Hoffmann, while new CSO Ferdinand Dirnhofer has taken over responsibility for AUMA's global sales and service network. Valve World had the pleasure to talk with AUMA's new management team and meet the people behind the scenes. "There will be no radical changes," Jörg Hoffmann smiles. "AUMA is a success story. The company has gone through very positive development for more than 50 years, and we will carry forward our values as a family-owned company." "But of course we will also adapt to the changing requirements of an increasingly global

economy," Dr. Hoffmann continues. "The speed of change is accelerating, with megatrends such as urbanization and digitalization. So we face the challenge of balancing our competences and values. AUMA will move forward to be successful for decades to come, strengthening our industry focus and becoming even more international. We will make sure we continue to find the right answers for automation in the valve industry."

### Family values

"We still consider ourselves a family business, despite our global network of subsidiaries and more

than 2300 co-workers worldwide," says CSO Ferdinand Dirnhofer, flanking Dr. Hoffmann at the interview table. "As a family business AUMA embraces certain values which are ingrained in our culture. We focus on the long-term wellbeing of the company, and our success is built on long-lasting relationships with our business partners." "The appointment of Ferdinand Dirnhofer as CSO is the best example," Dr. Hoffmann chimes in. "This is a strong sign of continuity to our customers who have been relying on his expertise for more than 25 years."

### Reliable partner

According to Mr. Dirnhofer, the secret of AUMA's ongoing success lies in strong customer focus: "AUMA is recognized as a reliable partner to the valve industry, and our key focus is to serve that industry as an independent supplier. We talk with our business partners at all levels: the international valve industry, end users, plant designers and EPCs. And we listen to them, seeking to develop new automation solutions that meet their needs."

"Let me give you an example: One of our recent innovations – which is unique in our industry – is an underwater actuator for continuous immersion. We presented it at the last IFAT and received very positive feedback. These actuators are ideal for underground installation in regions with a high risk of persistent flooding, for example in monsoon areas. We also developed an explosion-proof version, as in sewers there's often a risk of flammable gases building up during dry periods. Other applications include hydropower and permanent underwater use."

### Quality products, quality people

"Our actuators are exposed to harsh environmental conditions, from coastal areas to



the tropics, from deserts to tundra," says Mr. Dirnhofer. "They are used in critical applications where it is essential that the valve operates reliably." AUMA addresses these challenges through rugged design, high manufacturing quality and robust components.

"We devote a lot of attention to quality control," says Henrik Newerla, COO at AUMA. "We are a true manufacturing company: we manage and control all critical processes in-house, from machining, surface treatment and assembly through to testing. We invest in the latest technology so we can create actuators that are engineered and built to last."

The emphasis on product quality that is typical of this German engineering company is exemplified by AUMA's

unique two-layer powder coating, which protects all housing parts. "The powder coating has made corrosion a non-issue. Our actuators are known for providing the best corrosion protection on the market," Mr. Newerla says.

"We prefer to 'keep the ball low', as we say in German," adds Dr. Hoffmann. "We don't like to talk much about ourselves, we simply deliver. Our products deliver."

"We see our staff as our key asset, and that's not just lip service," Dr. Hoffmann says. "We strive to create a healthy and enjoyable working environment, fostering mutual exchange and respect. We invest in training and young people. Our reward is a highly motivated workforce who develop and manufacture top-quality actuators."

### AUMA's new management team

#### Dr. Jörg Hoffmann, Chief Executive Officer (CEO)



Dr. Hoffmann joined AUMA on 1st April 2016. As of January 1st 2018, he is the CEO and Chair of the Management Board and responsible for R&D, PM, F&C and HR. His prior experience includes consultancy and various management positions at German multinational Bosch, where he last headed a worldwide business unit.

#### Henrik Newerla, Chief Operational Officer (COO)



Mr. Newerla has been with AUMA since 1986 and Managing Director since 1994. He is responsible for the global production network, quality management and IT.

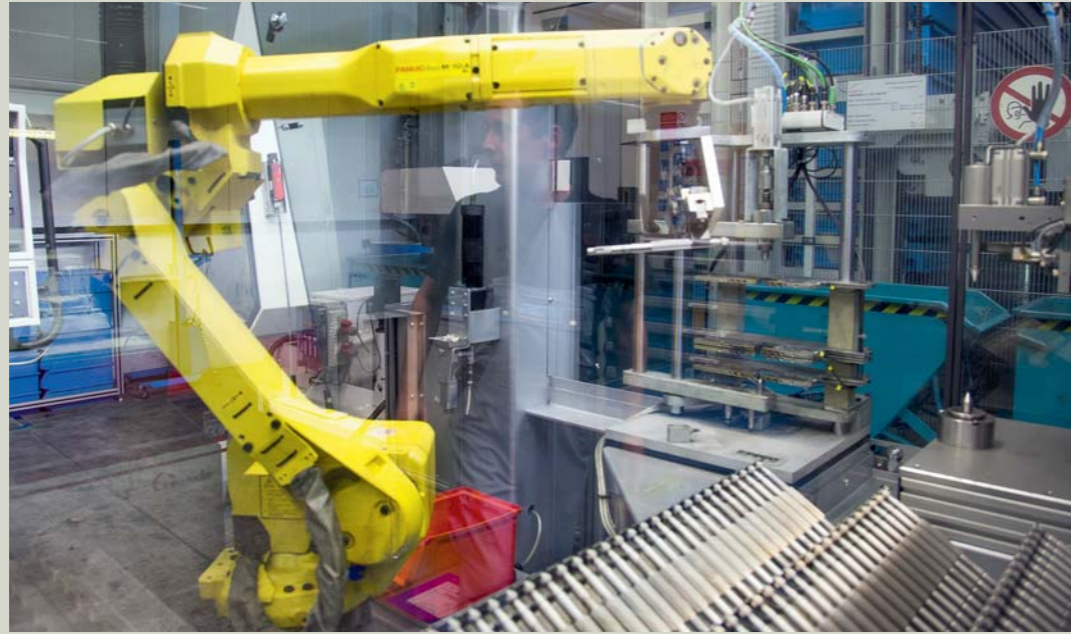
#### Ferdinand Dirnhofer, Chief Sales Officer (CSO)



Mr. Dirnhofer joined AUMA in 1993 and has been Head of International Sales since 2001. As CSO he is responsible for AUMA's worldwide sales and service network.

### A true manufacturing company

Before the interviews with AUMA's management, Valve World visited the production facilities at AUMA's vast Müllheim premises. The modern appearance was striking across all three manufacturing plants dedicated to machining, electronics and actuator assembly. The continuous investment in state-of-the-art manufacturing and test equipment, the rigorous quality control and process efficiency were obvious wherever we looked.



### Staying local

Since its very early days AUMA has had a strong international focus. Mr. Dirnhofer explains how AUMA is well positioned to get things done for customers across the world: "We have more than 20 AUMA-owned subsidiaries across all the key geographic regions, plus more than 50 representative offices, with highly committed teams ready to spring into action. From Benelux to Singapore, you'll get the same products and the same service."

### AUMA: world leader in electric actuators

AUMA has successfully developed and produced electric actuators and gearboxes for more than 50 years, offering reliable automation solutions for all valve types and sizes. Founded in 1964 by Werner Riester and Rudolf Dinse, the company has grown to become a leading valve automation supplier to the water, energy, oil and gas, and process industries. Headquartered in Müllheim, Germany, AUMA produces more than 180 000 electric actuators a year, tailoring each device to the specific needs of each application. A global sales and service network in more than 70 countries ensures local support all around the world.



"We continue to expand our network in strategic locations," Mr. Dirnhofer continues. "Only recently we opened a second location servicing the Middle East and a new office in Mexico. Essentially it is AUMA's strong local support worldwide combined with a broad product portfolio that gives our clients the trust that AUMA is the right partner to work with."

### 'Blue gold'

AUMA's success started in the water sector as early as in the late 1960s. Key players in the German water industry gave the young company their trust, and ever since AUMA has striven to meet the demanding requirements of this market.

"We remain proud of our ongoing service to the water industry," Mr. Dirnhofer says, "and we intend to build on our lead. Our SA actuator type range has set the industry's standard in many ways. Plug and socket connectors for easy installation, a modular design that adapts to all site and application requirements, advanced diagnostics and preventative maintenance – these are all AUMA innovations."

"We now have a worldwide installed base of several hundred thousand actuators in water and wastewater treatment plants alone," Mr. Dirnhofer continues. "They bear witness to our products' reliable service and robust design – and of course these actuators have also become industry standards in other sectors like power, process industries and oil and gas."

Global trends will drive AUMA's expansion in water and wastewater, Dr. Hoffmann

says: "Drinking water supply and wastewater treatment are critical for economic and societal development. Yet water shortages in places like Cape Town will become more prevalent, due to climate change and population growth."

For greenfield installations AUMA sees rising demand in emerging economies such as China and the Middle East. In mature economies, most projects relate to maintenance or upgrades – the latter typically to increase automation or to add treatment steps to remove impurities such as plastic microbeads and medicines.

"We also see an increasing demand for desalination, and we are very successful in this market," Mr. Dirnhofer says. "Our actuators are in some of the largest desalination plants in the world. This is where our unique corrosion protection comes into play, with AUMA actuators installed close to the seashore, exposed to a highly saline atmosphere 24 hours a day, seven days a week."

### Gaining ground in oil and gas

"We have intensified our activities in the oil and gas sector over the last few years, and we are reaping the rewards," says Kai Ewald, Head of Sales in Oil & Gas. "We expect significant growth as the sector recovers from the low oil price. We can rely on our track record with major oil companies such as Saudi Aramco, Shell, and Gazprom. Our actuators are everywhere in upstream, midstream and downstream applications." Safety and environmental protection are top of the oil and gas agenda, Mr. Ewald says. "The market is characterized by a lot

of regional and customer-specific regulations triggered by high safety requirements. Our actuators meet all the national standards, such as ATEX in Europe and FM in the USA, and have extensive vendor list approvals."

Mr. Ewald notes increased interest in AUMA's safety-related solutions including the FQM mechanical fail safe unit, SIL-certified actuators and fireproof housings. He also emphasizes AUMA's role as an innovation driver in the industry, quoting the company's new SAVEx variable-speed actuators (see box).

As for environmental issues, Mr. Ewald says emissions regulations are a driver for electric actuation. "In Canada, for example, moves are underway to stop methane emissions from pneumatic actuators. This favors our electric actuators because they simply don't use any gas that can leak."

### Over 70 service locations worldwide

To keep its actuators working smoothly AUMA has a comprehensive service network. Thomas Knecht, Director Service, says the company's global service network is one of the key reasons why customers choose AUMA.

"We manufacture our actuators to last for 25 or even 30 years, and we take care of our products throughout their lifetime," Mr. Knecht says. "We have over 70 service locations worldwide, and you will find qualified and experienced AUMA engineers in the most remote locations on Earth. Take our Khabarovsk office, for example: In the Far East of Russia, even further east than Siberia, we have engineers who go out to our customers' sites and service our actuators at temperatures below -40°C!"

### Benefits of variable-speed actuators

AUMA's new SAVEx variable-speed actuators bring significant advantages to oil and gas applications, because each change of valve position can be done at the optimum speed. High speeds favor rapid opening and closing. Low speeds give best positioning accuracy, which considerably increases the effectiveness of pressure control valves in gas pipelines, for example. On multipoint valves, variable speed aids rapid and accurate switch-over between ports. Reducing operating speeds close to the end positions minimizes mechanical stresses on valves, actuators and pipelines.



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Werner Laengin, Senior Product Manager Digital Communication: "Industrial processes will be more data-driven, using new communication technologies, and that's why we are investing in this field of expertise."

### Managing aging plants

Managing aging plants is a big issue across every industry, and AUMA's service organization has a strong focus on end users. "We regularly complete modernization and retrofit projects in water treatment and power plants as well as tank farms," Mr. Knecht says. Such projects are often driven by a need for automation to rationalize operations or increase safety. "Very often these projects require mechanical and electronic customization, especially if some of the original equipment remains in place," adds Mr. Knecht.

That was certainly true when AUMA Service helped Vattenfall modernize the Klingenberg power plant in Berlin, Germany. To fit new actuators to the wide range of existing valve types and sizes, many with non-standard flange dimensions, AUMA service engineers went on site for a detailed analy-

sis of each valve. They not only installed and commissioned the new actuators but also provided the custom-made mechanical adapters, all within a tight time frame.

### The future is digital

IIoT and digitalization are buzzwords in every industry. "AUMA is well suited to address these trends," says Werner Laengin, AUMA's undisputed expert in digital communication. "Industrial processes will be more data-driven, using new communication technologies, and that's why we are investing in this field of expertise. 25 years ago we were spearheading fieldbus. Now we are one of the front runners in Industrial Ethernet, and the first to offer actuators with an integral Profinet interface." "Our products are ready to integrate into IIoT applications. They are already proving their capabilities in flood protection, for example, using mobile communications, and in Vienna's real-time sewer network control system. We are now in an intensive dialogue with customers to discuss their needs and develop intelligent new services."

Such developments include the AUMA Assistant App and the AUMA Cloud, the latter allowing users to upload and share actuator-related data for analysis and detailed diagnostics. "The results will give our customers added value in asset management and predictive maintenance for valves and actuators," explains Mr. Knecht, "and the cloud also provides a platform linking services and experts."

"The future is digital," says Dr. Hoffmann, "and as a trusted partner to end users as well as our customers in the valve industry we will move in that direction with our products and services."