

PRESS RELEASE
SIEBENWURST GMBH & CO. KG
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Siebenwurst once again named “Toolmaker of the Year”

Process-oriented knowledge management key to victory

Christian Karl Siebenwurst Modellfabrik und Formenbau GmbH & Co. KG won the coveted “Toolmaker of the Year” award for the second time. Siebenwurst, a system supplier that builds injection moulds, die-casting moulds, compression moulds and design models, was recognized for its innovative approach to company-wide, business-process-oriented knowledge management. Siebenwurst won the “Excellence in Production” competition in the category “External Tool Manufacture with over 50 Employees”, beating out even tougher competitors than in previous years.

The Fraunhofer Institute for Production Technology (IPT) and the Machine Tools Laboratory (WZL) at RWTH Aachen University launched the first competition in 2004. Siebenwurst initially participated in 2008 and made it to the final round. Then the company went on to win the title for the first time in 2009. Winning again this third time around is even more gratifying because the invitation for 2012 had split the categories up differently: The dividing line for company size was lowered from 100 to 50 employees, which meant that Siebenwurst had many more competitors than in previous years.

A consistent, comprehensive strategy

Many different benchmarks were used to determine the overall standings. The organization, company vision and strategy had as much weight as the resources, level of education and training for employees, the range of services and customer structure. Another key factor the jury of experts considered was the “Matrix Organization” introduced throughout the company over the past two years, which was implemented to optimize collaboration between project managers and department heads with regard to customers.

The close linking of process and knowledge management means that Siebenwurst is able to recognize its own strengths. This lets the company “focus on tool manufacture”, which directly increases customer benefits. Managing Director Christian Siebenwurst: “By focusing on the product range, our customers always have the same contact person. They gain valuable experience, our lead times become shorter, and fewer mistakes happen.”

Wiki for all business processes

All workflows centre around our internal Wiki, which was introduced last year. Siebenwurst uses “Q.Wiki”, a spin-off from the RWTH Aachen GmbH model tailored to the special needs of the company with features that are auditable and ensure compliance with standards. “The Wiki is made for the entire company. Everyone can and should make use of it,” says Alfons Dunkes, Head of Siebenwurst Quality Management, explaining the philosophy behind it. After recording business processes in the initial phase, the information was gradually transferred into the Wiki. Siebenwurst is already very close to its goal of being able to map entire workflows via the Wiki. “The trick is making sure it gets down to the last employee and continues to work like this in the long run,” so Dunkes.

One major advantage is that all workflows can be viewed in real time. Both simple processes like defining requirements and complex workflows are posted on Wiki pages that are available for all employees to work on. For example, participants in meetings can incorporate their topics on standardized pages. A thread is then created in the Wiki if issues need further

discussion after the meeting. "We don't need to prepare minutes from meetings to post up for workers; now we can solve problems in real time and directly implement the solution in our company," says Dunkes explaining the advantages of this method of working.

Challenges for the future

The next steps include perfecting the keyword search and integrating internal knowledge management so that employees can share their special skills and knowledge with their colleagues. It may take at least another year before the system runs smoothly, but Dunkes already sees the potential: "This system puts us ahead of many other competitors who will have to play catch up."

The award represents both a milestone and a challenge for Siebenwurst: The jury of experts offers detailed recommendations for improvement and enhancement and key metrics for assessing a company's competitive position. "Based on the key metrics we wouldn't have made it into the final round again with the concepts we had in 2009," says Christian Siebenwurst. That's why Siebenwurst took a "break" from competing in the competition – to implement the recommendations and to use the outside view as strategic guidance in the face of increasingly complex requirements.

Note: This press release is also available under siebenwurst.com/hp1124/Siebenwurst-once-again-named-Toolmaker-of-the-Year.htm

About Christian Karl Siebenwurst Modell- und Formenbau GmbH & Co. KG:

Christian Karl Siebenwurst Modell- und Formenbau GmbH & Co. KG produces pressure diecasting and injection moulding tools for 3D moulded components in aluminum and plastic, including complete solutions for special processes for the manufacture of large-area components. As a systems supplier for well-known companies in the automotive and aerospace industries, Siebenwurst supports its customers from the design model through to series production. Institutionalised process management optimises all processes with the aim of standardisation. In the lightweight construction sector, Siebenwurst is working on research and development together with several universities (TU Chemnitz, FAU Erlangen-Nuremberg, TU Dresden, RWTH Aachen, TU Kaiserslautern) in development and process technology for new mobility concepts. That Siebenwurst was the recipient of the "Tool Manufacturer of the Year 2009", "Tool Manufacturer of the Year 2012" and the "Top 100 - Innovator 2010" awards also shows that the company's commitment to process optimisation and innovative technologies has been deemed worthy of praise by the jury members responsible for these national award ceremonies. The company, which was founded in 1897 and has its headquarters in Dietfurt, in Germany's Upper Palatinate, today has 350 employees and is one of the region's most important employers and apprenticeship companies.

Media contact:

Kathrin Neubauer
Phone: +49 (0)8464 650-232
E-Mail: k.neubauer@siebenwurst.de

Christian Karl Siebenwurst Modell- und Formenbau GmbH & Co. KG
Industriestraße 31
92345 Dietfurt

Phone: +49 (0)8464 650-0 ▪ Fax: +49 (0)8464 1280 ▪ E-mail: info@siebenwurst.de