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**"Digitalisation requires agility and close customer contact"**

**From a manufacturer of components to a provider of systems and network solutions**

Numerous automation experts have shifted in the last few years from component manufacturers to solution providers. In order to visualise its own development in this direction, steute has changed its company name. Managing Director Marc Stanesby explains why this change was necessary and why customers can only profit from this increased skills set.

**Mr. Stanesby, steute has changed its name to steute Technologies. What is the reason for this change?**

**Marc Stanesby:** We have been developing switchgear for over 50 years – and will continue to do so. But switching devices are becoming increasingly intelligent, and they are also increasingly being



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integrated in networks and platforms, which steute now also develops and provides. At the same time, the number of our projects involving engineering tasks is growing steadily. Our old company name therefore no longer seemed appropriate for the comprehensive range of services and products which we are now able to offer our customers. This is why we changed it.

**Can you give us an example of the networks you mentioned?**

**Marc Stanesby:** For applications in industry and intralogistics we have developed our own sWave.NET wireless network, which begins by remotely connecting switching devices, sensors and actuators at the shop floor level. The signals are then bundled at Access Points and passed on to the superordinate customer IT infrastructure via a simple-to-configure middleware. This facilitates an uninterrupted flow of data from the shop floor to the planning and management levels, an important prerequisite for digitalisation in the production process.

**And where are such networks currently being used?**

**Marc Stanesby:** Our initial focus was on intralogistics, specifically E-Kanban systems and the control of AGV fleets. Here our wireless network solution offers specific advantages, such as very low power consumption and high availability.

**Regarding wireless – do you also use wireless systems for machine safety?**

**Marc Stanesby:** Yes, that is correct. Our sWave-safe wireless system complies with the standards in the machine safety guidelines and also with the relevant product standards, for example for emergency stop switchgear. This system is particularly suited to safety foot switches because elimination of the cable means greater freedom of movement for users without tripping hazards. In addition, the lifetime and the

availability of the safety switch increase because cables are susceptible to wear and tear.

**Do you have any news for us regarding safety products?**

**Marc Stanesby:** Yes. Just a few days ago we began serial production of our completely new ZS 92 switchgear series, developed for the safe monitoring of bulk goods conveyors. This product family includes emergency pull-wire switches with wire lengths up to 200 m and belt alignment switches – developed together as an overall concept to make installation easier. There are many variants available, for example for applications in dust explosive zones, and also a version with an integrated safety bus module.

**Is this new switchgear series proof that, despite the new company name and your future focus on systems and engineering, customers will still have a partner at their side for individual components such as emergency pull-wire switches or safety foot controls?**

**Marc Stanesby:** Without a doubt: yes, it is. Individual components will remain part of our business concept, not least because we have spent decades building up our competence and reputation in this field. We shall continue to develop our "hardware", in other words our switches, sensors and controls, alongside network solutions and our growing competence in engineering and project planning.

**This increase in engineering and individual project planning must also mean an increase in staff...**

**Marc Stanesby:** That is correct. But some structural changes have also been necessary. In conjunction with systems solutions, customers expect individual concepts, consulting and aftersales support. This type of interaction is not usual in the components business and also not required. Here we have already made good progress, working with some renowned customers on complex projects, for example in the automotive industry.

**With your new company name you are demonstrating that steute is changing – but with regard to integrated production, whole branches**

of industry are also changing. How do you deal with this as a medium-sized specialist? Do you see any threats to your business concept?

**Marc Stanesby:** The fact is: the entire industry is changing, and it is changing fast. Old business models and production concepts are being called into question. But instead of seeing this as a threat, we prefer to see it as an opportunity, as a challenge we can meet head on - for example by changing from a components manufacturer to a systems provider, as reflected in our new name. We are also very optimistic because agility and close customer contact are crucial factors for success in changing times, and both of these have been in our company DNA for decades.

Images: steute Technologies GmbH & Co. KG