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Press information

50 years of Mitutoyo in Europe: half a century of passion for metrology

The measuring instruments' manufacturer Mitutoyo has throughout its history been in the fore when it comes to top-quality handheld measuring tools, coordinate measuring machines, optical and vision measuring systems, hardness testers and form measuring instruments. Their automation and Industry 4.0 solutions count amongst the best throughout the world. Now the Japanese company celebrates its 50 years anniversary on the European market.

Neuss, March 2018. It was a long way from the humble beginnings of Mitutoyo on the European market to being one of the leading suppliers for all branches' quality assurance.

The past

Mitutoyo's history began with the establishment of a research center with the aim of producing Japan's first micrometers in Tokyo's Kamata district by company founder Yehan Numata in 1934.

Numata was born into a Buddhist priest's family. He was accepted into the University of California, Berkeley, where he majored in statistics and received a degree in economics.

In 1934 he rented a little office near Tokyo to produce a prototype micrometer. Numata built a calibration room with constant temperature and humidity. The production run of the first model was 100 units, but his quality control was so strict that he allowed only 17 of them to be sold.

In the years and decades to follow the micrometers vastly gained quality and accuracy. Plus, more handheld measuring instruments were added to the portfolio: Vernier and Dial Calipers, depth and inside micrometers, height gauges and many more. Mitutoyo instruments were not only successful domestically. Soon the first overseas department was founded in North America in 1963.

At the time, Yehan's son Yoshiteru visited the first two European dealers in Great Britain (Draper) and the Netherlands (Hoekstra) and already had plans to establish a European headquarter in Germany. In a second visit he met Bernd Schrader, the owner of Sartorius Nachf. who later became an exclusive agent in Germany, an equal partner (Sartorius Mitutoyo) and one of the most important distributors. In 1965 a Mr. Nakajima showed up in Schrader's office, bringing along a sliding caliper, a micrometer, an indicator and a height gauge made by Mitutoyo. Schrader and his team liked the quality of the instruments and saw a chance to introduce the instruments on the extremely conservative German market.

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In those days, Japanese products were somewhat exotic and the significantly different way in which they were presented on trade fairs called the domestic competitors into action. Some of them threatened the organisers of trade fairs with boycott if Mitutoyo was further allowed to present their products. With the converse effect: This made potential customers all the more interested in the new marque. And they would soon find out about the extraordinary product quality at fair prices.

Düsseldorf had been the first choice when it came to finding the right location for the new headquarter – finally established in 1968 under the name of "Sampoh". When the company was founded, it had the main task of making the brand name „Mitutoyo" well-known on the European market. The agency system was introduced, with one dealer in one country. In the Western European countries, the general agencies were installed. At the same time, Mitutoyo also opened up the Eastern European market. However, due to the political situation in the socialist countries, the feasibility of measures was very limited. Nevertheless, Mitutoyo participated in numerous industrial fairs, visited the state-run purchasing associations, etc. Furthermore, Mitutoyo presented their measuring instruments in demonstration vehicles, on customers' premises.

The late Sixties and early Seventies saw Mitutoyo's business in Europe gather pace rapidly, and soon the Düsseldorf headquarter reached its limits. A new office and warehouse building was erected in Neuss-Norf in 1974 – and part by part extended to its today's size.

Great Britain has since Mitutoyo's beginnings in Europe been a strong market, so in 1980 a subsidiary was established in Andover/England. Sales companies in Scandinavia and the Netherlands (1981), Belgium (1982), France (1986), Italy (1987) and Switzerland (1988) followed.

The collapse of the Warsaw Pact made Mitutoyo's business also easier in the former WP countries. Subsidiaries were established in Hungary (1997), Poland and the Czech Republic (2002) and later also in Russia and Romania (2011). The youngest sales company was founded in Austria in 2013.

In January 2010 Mitutoyo synchronised and strengthened the concerted pan-European activities by the establishment of a European headquarter. The location of Mitutoyo Europe GmbH in Neuss oversees all the activities of Mitutoyo's sales, service and production facilities throughout Europe and adjacent markets. A Mitutoyo Europe GmbH key objective is to promote coordination amongst its European group companies in order to optimise its sales and technical support services in the best interests of customer satisfaction.

Mitutoyo CTL Germany GmbH in Oberndorf, founded in 1983, focuses solely on developing ground-breakingly powerful and easy to use software for three-coordinate measurement technology. Jigging and loading systems, styli and thermal cabins are covered by KOMEK, a highly-specialised company acquired in 1997.

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The present

Today Mitutoyo in Europe is represented by 14 sales companies and general agents covering the adjacent markets. Under the strategic direction of Mitutoyo Europe GmbH there is a large production, sales and service network at the customers' disposal, with more than 85 offices in 33 European countries.

At their M³ Solution Centers Mitutoyo introduce their customers to the latest measurement technology and provide premium-quality solution engineering to support their business. The Mitutoyo Metrology Institutes are dedicated to providing technical education that enhances the customers' measurement evaluation technology. Mitutoyo has calibration laboratories that have obtained ISO/IEC 17025 certification, contributing to the development and maintenance of quality control and quality assurance systems for customers all over Europe.

Mitutoyo support their customers also with innovative bespoke or in-line measuring solutions and high-performance software and automated solutions for practically any measuring task.

The future

The future of precision measurements, as defined by Mitutoyo, lies in innovative software solutions that bring out the full potential of measuring hardware. The Internet of Things (IoT) connects a variety of machines to the network, enabling production processes to be continuously monitored in real time. On-site digitisation, automation and virtualisation boost work efficiency. It's the start of Industry 4.0, an industrial revolution making full use of IT. At Smart Factories, real-time data acquired via internet is used to maintain optimal operations of both, machines and personnel, cutting costs, and streamlining and optimising work.

Production processes that Mitutoyo envisions for the future will not involve partial optimisation on an individual factory basis, but will aim to boost production efficiency through integrated management and overall optimisation based on mutual exchanges of data between those in charge of design and quality control, and the factories. Innovative solutions like the Mitutoyo MeasurLink software create a database by connecting all measured data in the factory via the network. The administrator carries out centralized monitoring of information from all network data collection terminals.

It provides a powerful backup system in examining problems, by confirming and carrying out various statistical analyses on the results of measurements. It realizes integrated management allowing administrators, on-site people involved in manufacturing, and the inspection room to check any information any time they want.

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