

## **Interview with Stephan Nix, acting partner of AUTOMATION Dr. Nix GmbH & CO. Kg, Cologne**

Mr. Stephan Nix, leads the family company for the production of coating thickness measuring gauges in the 3rd. Generation. It responses to questions about the reorientation of the internationally active enterprise, business philosophy, quality mentality and innovations like the radio control probe, which is presented as world novelty on the EUROPEAN COATINGS SHOW 2007.

### **→ Tradition, Values and Vision.**

Mr. Nix, Automation Dr. Nix is a privately owned company with tradition. Can you tell us something about the history of your company?

Automation Dr. Nix ranks among the pioneers of the coating thickness measuring technique. My grandfather created the company in 1968. My father concentrated the business on the coating thickness measuring technique. I then took over the company after the sudden death of my father in 2003. Thus, the company now exists in the third generation.

### ***To be a pioneer means to be able to show "innovative developments". Are there examples of these innovations?***

From the onset AUTOMATION Dr. Nix contributed a substantial portion to the development of the coating thickness measuring technique and the market. The first gauge, which was ever launched world-wide, was the "micro test" - a pioneer development of my grandfather - Hans Nix. In 1979 AUTOMATION Dr. Nix surprised the market with a captivatingly simple to operate electronic coating thickness measuring instrument in the format of a vest pocket. In 1992 we developed an ingeniously simple measuring instrument, QNix® 1500, which becomes the standard with the automobile appraisals. Again in 2005, we developed a new modular measuring system QNix® 8500 that sets a new yardstick for practical, flexible employment and simplest operation. Last but not least, AUTOMATION Dr. Nix launches the world novelty QNix® sat for wireless transmission of measured value via radio. The only thumb size and 30 gram light radio control probe permits for free one hand taking of measurements at safety relevant, difficult to access points.

### ***Mr. Nix, you say, "you want to be the best". What is special with your company?***

Our valued customer- the user of our measuring instruments, are always at the center of all our thoughts. From the onset we attached great importance to high-quality hand measuring instruments as the customer will appreciate practicability,

Belegexemplare erbeten an:

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simplicity and safe handling. A substantial portion of our strategic anchor for quality and innovative technology is embedded in the fact that we develop and manufacture our products exclusively in Germany. As such, we have been able to launch the unique wireless radio control probe with the modular measuring system QNix 8500- a result of close co-operation with users from handicraft, industry and service. Let me emphasize on this - to gain brand recognition and win product confidence in over 40 countries, one should really belong to the best! We are certainly one of them.

***You are active in over 40 countries and acknowledge the intensity of competition in the industry. How do you understand your business, after you took over the company in 2003?***

In fact our business policy is based on the traditional values, among which - as mentioned - a special trust to our customers and the quality of our products and service performance. I have expanded the scope of sales and marketing in such a way to strengthen presence in on all 5 continents, thus better position the brand of our coating thickness gauges. And we can bring in the strengths of a family owned company: Financial independence, decision strength, speed, very good ideas and an unusually high motivation of all coworkers.

Our image brings togetherness in innovative strategic orientation with the proven traditional values of a family company, the solidarity to our customers, and a balance between consistent goal orientation and the care for our coworkers. This image is cultivated in everything we do. It is a bridge between what motivates each individual employee and what we want to achieve as a company. I introduced among other things, a success-oriented variable remuneration: Business thinking and acting of the coworkers is compensated for with a fair and transparent bonus system.

**→ To Innovation.**

***Mr. Nix, when you say "very good ideas" do you mean the focus on innovation? The competitors do not sleep. How can you really differentiate yourselves with your innovations?***

That is correct: Competition does not sleep. That is the reason why innovation is the best answer: We differentiate ourselves by the fact that since ever development and production occur under one roof and the users of our devices are part of the design and development process. A good example of such is our modular measuring system QNix ® 8500. It was developed in close co-operation with international users from handicraft, industry and service. That also applies for the development of the smallest, only thumb size, only 30 gram lightest coating thickness measuring device, QNix® sat.

Again, innovation is the only correct answer to the increasing offer of coating thickness gauges in the market and the changing space of competition. We do all it takes to learn from the market, the competitive environment and technology. People can always learn. That is why, for me, responsibility and creativity of our employees have an extraordinarily high value!

***You are launching a new measuring system in these days - the system QNix® 8500 with the unique radio control probe. What is special with this system?***

QNix® 8500 is a modular measuring system, which was developed for users in close co-operation with international users from industry, handicraft and service. This system belongs without doubt, to one of the best developments in the coating thickness measuring industry.

With a simple probe change, users can non-destructively measure different coating thicknesses on steel, iron and non-ferrous metals, transfer and evaluate measured values and carry out user-specific documentation. The uniqueness with this system QNix® 8500 is the possibility to handle each measuring task in highly flexible way.

Also the world-new radio control probe - part of this system - is an example of extraordinary versatility and adaptability. It is typified by completely new application characteristics, which our valued customers can use for their advantage. Only thumb size, it permits measurements within the narrowest, safety relevant places. No cable disturbs the measurements. The measured values are transferred wirelessly by radio.

***Can you give us an example of a special application advantage of your radio control probe?***

Sure. –The radio control probe opens completely new areas of application for coating thickness measurement – for the simple reason that it is only thumb size and weighs only 30 gram. In this regard, users can measure corrosion protection coatings on bridges or safety critical places and with only one hand - where the thumb fits. Also an evidently higher security for the user is reached with this problem-free one hand measurement possibility.

Particularly with the measurement of wide stretching surfaces or in heights, standing on a ladder, the radio control probe has the fathomless advantage due to its diminutive weight and the wireless data transmission. With it, the fatigue danger is minimized and substantial sources of error and safety risks are eliminated. Despite the high flexibility, simplest handling - which ensures quality, security and the precision in taking measurements is still guaranteed.

***And still another special advantage:***

The body gauge QNix® 8500 to which the measured values are wirelessly transferred from the radio control probe serves as memory, indicator and accumulator loading station. The body gauge can be carried in the jacket pocket or be fastened with sleeve and bracelet on the arm. In this way - if desired, the current measured value are always comfortably read off, without a disturbing measuring device. The measured values can also be stored in the body gauge and then, transferred to an Excel sheet for tailored evaluation.

Thus, our system QNix 8500 in combination with the unique radio control probe QNix® sat creates a "new freedom of measuring" in the real sense of the words.

***With the Modular measuring system QNix 8500, you promise your users a "new freedom of measuring". Are you alone in the market with this slogan?***

Just have a glance at the market: Who offers a modular measuring system including a radio control probe to transmit measured wirelessly? We are first and the only. And we are proud about it because it enriches the application possibilities and offers our users considerable safety-relevant advantages! We are convinced that the radio control probe gives completely new impulses to measuring technique.

**→ To Quality, Innovation, - Made in Germany.**

***Mr. Nix, what does the quality promise "Made in Germany" impact on your customers? Does it function at all? And does that not limit your competitive ability?***

First, it means that we develop and produce our products exclusively in Germany. And we shall hold on this. It means also that our customers should take this obligation as real advantage. In order to express it differently: We are in Cologne at home, but however a global player. We co-operate with our partners and users all around the global. It is only with the proximity to the customers that innovation of this kind is achievable. The connection of quality and innovation requires our understanding for development, manufacturing, assembly and examination "in one hand". We want to perform our task with "German thoroughness", detail oriented while understanding exactly what we promise our customers! Especially our customers abroad trust in the quality promise "QNix Made in Germany"! Again, we do not want to be the cheapest, but the best. Who so ever can exist in over 40 countries and also withstand the price competition, must be competitive. With innovation. And with quality.

**→ To quality and service.**

You write in your brochure "Service is still means customer service". Can you describe this philosophy to my understanding?

We at AUTOMATION Dr. Nix interpret and understand the term service as part of our quality promise - as we are servants for customers and call it also as such. Our customers should notice that we are "servants for them". Quality results or passes from the detail. Therefore, we must consider all aspects that create value for our customers. The needs of the customer are a priority to each of our employees. Everyone ensures that the users of our gauges and systems can work efficiently and successfully. This is the justification our 3-Year-Quality guarantee.

***Your slogan "quality by Excellence" sounds like nothing serious? What is behind this?***

"Quality by Excellence" briefly summarizes our achievement promise in the form of an internal appeal, expressing the meaning of "Quality by Nix": Indeed we want more than quality, as usually understood and predetermined as a standard. In a special manner, we want to make our contribution to extraordinary product and services, expressing quality while creating value of our customers. We understand quality by Excellence to be – exceptional and clearly identifiable quality. And this way, we provoke ourselves to perform more: "Good is not good enough - we want to be the best"

**Further information and photos at [www.q-nix.de](http://www.q-nix.de)**

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