



Jörg Moses, Managing Director of the machine building company in Lebach, presenting a just completed welding system.

Photo: Andreas Engel

## **Lebach company is driving automation technology forward**

**Thanks to the machine-building company SVQ, forklift parts no longer have to be welded by hand**

By Lothar Warscheid.

Lebach. Automation of production is now penetrating into areas where much work is still being done by hand. One example is the production of forklift trucks. So far, the frame, the central part with the fender bulges for the front wheels and the cab were largely welded by hand and connected to the counterweight at the rear of the truck.

But that seems to be over now. "We were the first to develop and complete an automated production line for a major supplier of forklift trucks," says Jörg Moses, Managing Director of the Lebach-based company SVQ, which has secured this order. "The customer launched an ideas competition two years ago with the goal of replacing the manual with automated production," says Moses. "We have prevailed against a dozen competitors and got the order half a year ago." Currently, the clamping fixtures, in which the body parts are fixed for processing, as well as the transport and welding robots are being shipped to the customer's plant.

In contrast to a car body "the sheets are a lot thicker and they are not spot-welded, but inextricably linked by arc welding," explains the SVQ CEO. "Nobody will get them apart anymore." The now completed production line is designed for heavy load vehicles that can

handle up to 3.5 tonnes. However, follow-up projects are already being prepared for the same international group - namely production lines for forklifts with more than five tonnes load and for those with less than 3.5 tonnes load.

SVQ is one of several companies within the Global Retool Group. This group was founded by about 15 years in Erkrath near Dusseldorf by the engineer Andreas Quak, who is still owner and CEO of the group. Twelve years ago, the group moved to Lebach, bought the vacant hall of the bankrupt mechanical engineering company Michels and took over the company Mavor, fixture supplier in Saarwellingen, which had slipped into bankruptcy in 2007. The main business and the root of the group is the rebuilding and overhauling of used machine tools (English: Retool) especially for the automotive industry and its suppliers. Also the move of machines to other factories and the relocation of entire plants are part of the range of services. This is the core business of the daughter company Wema Vogtland Technology (Plauen).

In addition, the product range of the Lebach-based SVQ includes the setting up of fixtures and welding stations for car exhaust systems. "These cannot be compared with an exhaust system from earlier years," says Moses. "In the meantime, these are the small chemical plants in which catalysts and filters are installed which filter out soot particles, fine dust or nitrogen oxides from the exhaust gases or - as with diesel - spray in urea." Accordingly, high demands are placed on the production lines.

Also belonging to the group is the brand Siepmann, which was relocated from Solingen to the Saar. It specializes in the fully automatic grinding and polishing systems for knives, scissors or hand tools.

Twelve years ago, when the Global Retool Group moved to Lebach ", we felt a bit lost in the 8,000-square-meter Michels Hall," recalls the MD of SVQ. In the meantime it is well filled, and in Sulzbach-Neuweiler a second hall of 3,000 square meters has been rented.

Altogether, the group of companies employs 500 people, 200 of them in Saarland. Outside Germany, there are locations in Luxembourg, Italy, Slovakia, the USA and China. The turnover is about 100 million euros.

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