

Transition brings about a turnaround

Niederhofer, a family-owned company, is a full-service provider manufacturing construction components made of PVC-U, wood and aluminium. Since switching to Winkhaus window technology, the company has been working with much greater flexibility and efficiency. This was no act of blind faith The entrance doors from the Vilshofen plant have been equipped with security door locking systems from the traditional manufacturer for many years. With 87 employees, Niederhofer manufactures high-quality windows, front doors, conservatories, roller shutters, solar and insect protection elements on a 20,000 m2 site.

Its annual turnover is over 10 million euros. Ordered goods are delivered to the desired address by own truck within three to five days. A glazing robot is also on hand to help install large shop window panes on site, for example. Around six hundred specialist dealers in southern Germany and Austria benefit from the company's extensive range of services. Regional sourcing and short delivery routes are part of Niederhofer's sustainable concept.

This is another reason why the project business is no problem. "Our focus is always on the customers with their individual projects," says Managing Director Tobias Gottwald. Quality and flexibility are important. This is why Niederhofer subjected their entire window production process to a critical review and came to the conclusion that a few things had to change. The company invested around 2.5 million euros. The 41-year-old brought his employees on board with the planning. Machines from different manufacturers were painstakingly compared. The company also looked at the window fitting systems used.

Well-established partnership

Contact with Winkhaus was already good. "We have a reliable partner in Winkhaus. And we recognised that the window fittings from Telgte suit us better. They open up a wide spectrum and enable many individual configurations," says Gottwald.

With activPilot Concept and Select, the company is now optimally positioned and able to meet a wide range of customer requirements. This is crucial, since

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the windows made by Niederhofer go to individualists. They provide security and convenience in private homes or commercial buildings. All of the common materials are in demand: wood, PVC-U, aluminium and wood-aluminium combinations. "We expect that demand for wood will increase even more in our region in the future," Gottwald expects.

Tailored IT solutions

The biggest challenge during the production changeover to Winkhaus was presented by data processing. "After all, the data is the 'brain' of production," reports Frank Türsch, Winkhaus Area Sales Manager Southern Germany/Switzerland. Together with sales representatives Stefan Weiß and Michael Meissner, he oversaw the project.

Winkhaus began processing Niederhofer's master data around seven months before the deadline. To do this, the IT experts worked closely with Melanie Bernwinkler, who is responsible for IT and marketing at the window company. Many tailored solutions were created by teamwork.

On site, the changeover took almost another week to complete. Winkhaus employees were on hand for four weeks to answer questions or solve problems right away. This also ensured that the data transferred at the start of the project could be adapted to meet Niederhofer's individual requests at short notice. The almost total replacement of the production facilities also entailed some unforeseeable tasks.

Component elements visualized

The results are gratifying: "At the push of a button, our sales staff can call up each window element as an image with all its technical details," Bernwinkler describes. "And even in the now predominantly paperless production process, the graphic representations help with the assembly of the fitting systems, for example." Each element that passes through the production process is labelled with a barcode. This is scanned at the individual stations. In this way, employees and machines can see which work steps come next. Humans remain an important factor in Niederhofer's state-of-the-art production facilities. "We made a conscious decision to do so because we place very demanding requirements on the quality of our work," says the 32-year-old. Employees need a trained eye at many stations in the U-shaped production line. They can intervene at any time if anything is wrong.

With the switch to window fittings from Winkhaus, a new era has begun at Niederhofer. “The advantages are clearly noticeable,” confirms Gottwald. “We would make the same decision again, any time.” He now considers the company to be well-equipped for future development. He expects a growing price competition, “but not so much in the area of innovative individual solutions, but rather in the standard elements segment.”



