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**Engineering Base as Enabler of Digitalization**

06/03/2020 | Author: [Anke Geipel-Kern](#)



Uwe Vogt, Director of Aucotec, "Only real parallelization of the core tasks creates effective leaps in efficiency despite growing complexity." (Source: Aucotec)

**A lot of development work has gone into the expansion of Engineering Base – and now Aucotec is reaping the rewards. Having often been pioneers, the developers at software designer Aucotec have pulled off a masterstroke with the revamp of the EB platform. The team around Uwe Vogt is seeing something of a boom in orders at the moment, but the Hanover company is keeping its feet firmly on the ground.**

At Aucotec, the world seems to have been spinning a little faster since Achema 2018. The previous financial year was marked by superlatives, and director Uwe Vogt is now on the road more than ever. The day before the interview, he was visiting a major technology group that is thinking about switching over to Engineering Base. And the move to the new Aucotec headquarters is imminent.

**PROCESS: Mr. Vogt, after almost eleven years on the board, what do you think is so special about Aucotec?**

**Uwe Vogt:** Although we've been on the market for more than 30 years, I think it's extraordinary how much Aucotec has changed in the last few years. To some extent it feels like an entirely new company. This courage to change and our pioneering spirit are also part of the company's DNA, and something I greatly appreciate. As an independent, owner-managed business, we have developed our own culture and have maintained it despite the strong growth in recent years.

**PROCESS: How does this culture play out?**

**Vogt:** We continue to cultivate a very flat hierarchy and direct communication. I still go straight for the phone, which means I get unembellished feedback from the projects. At the same time, we attach great importance to an open error culture. From this openness we generate a huge sense of responsibility among the entire staff, while simultaneously allowing a great deal of freedom.

**PROCESS: At the AGM in September 2019 you presented the results of the most successful financial year in Aucotec's 34-year history. What share of that does Engineering Base already account for?**

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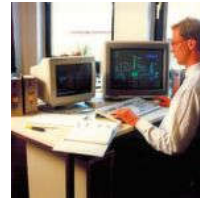
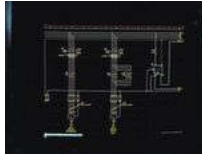
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Vogt: Last year we posted sales of 21.8 million euros, exceeding the result for the previous year by 13 percent. Our cooperative Engineering Base (EB) Plant platform is the primary reason for these very pleasing figures. We have invested a lot of energy and resources into its expansion, and that has paid off. Even its introduction at Achema in June 2018 attracted a great deal of interest in the market. Thanks to EB, we have since been able to win a number of projects: January 2019 was the most successful month in terms of sales in the more than 30 years the company has been in existence.

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#### **PROCESS: Why was it necessary to invest in the expansion of Engineering Base? Were Aucotec's sales too low?**

Vogt: On the contrary, since 2012 Engineering Base has really hit the mark. We had several years of strong growth in a row and established a number of subsidiaries, including in Korea and Sweden. Nevertheless, until 2018 EB was very heavily focused on electrical engineering, automation and instrumentation, and we had been getting involved in industries that have only minimal requirements on process design. That's what we wanted to change. It was clear to us that we could only meet the requirements of the whole of the process industry if we continued to develop Engineering Base so that we covered all the core disciplines in plant engineering, i.e. FEED, basic, operation and maintenance. The collaborative platform and the universal data model enable us to offer the most added value across the entire plant lifecycle with EB operators and planners.

#### **PROCESS: Please explain that in a little more detail.**

Vogt: Only real parallelization of the core tasks in engineering creates effective leaps in efficiency – despite growing complexity. With the new 2018 version, EB's universal data model offers a bandwidth of disciplines and hence a cooperative capability and consistency that in our view is the only one of its kind in the world. The platform has been configured for multiuser capability, parallelization of the processes involved and simultaneous engineering for 15 years already. In other words, exactly what is needed today.

#### **Aucotec Has Invested a lot of Money in Structures and Subsidiaries**

#### **PROCESS: You have already been able to win some large companies: a major contract from Equinor will keep you busy for many years. How will a business with 250 employees manage this?**

Vogt: Of course it will be a challenge getting to grips with partnering large companies. In order to be able to advise customers of that size, you need a certain critical mass and especially quality, as well as a structure. In the last few years we have invested a lot in know-how so that our experts can talk on equal terms. That's also the reason for the subsidiaries, because practically every larger company we speak to has operations around the world. We have significantly expanded this network of subsidiaries and partners, and are now benefiting from it. But we don't just take on any number of such projects at the same time.

#### **PROCESS: Potential customers are one thing, but you are now measuring yourselves against competitors who are many times larger.**

Vogt: It's true that we are now dealing with significantly bigger market players. We know, though, that with our development team of 60 and our support team we are just as globally positioned as our competitors, and can give a very good account of ourselves in relation to our

size. What I mean is that we see ourselves as being one of the market leaders – in the sector in which our platform is positioned.



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**PROCESS: One of Aucotec's main focuses is supporting plant operators on their path to digitalization. What can EB do better than other engineering tools?**

Vogt: EB's data-centered principle arose long before digitalization and Industry 4.0 emerged as catchwords. The important term to remember here is single source of truth. With its multilayer server architecture, Engineering Base now offers a central, interdisciplinary data source for mapping a complete digital twin of the plant. The open architecture enables us to include data in a variety of formats. And that is increasingly what is required in today's operator environment. It's not just about the engineering system, it's more about the question of how we integrate data that are located in other systems on a platform. And this is where the great benefit of Engineering Base for digitalization comes in, because it acts as an enabler for the plant model.

**PROCESS: What's next after the big launch of EB?**

Vogt: At the moment we're focusing less on the refinement of the program and more on the growth that it is triggering. There is now a momentum that we want to exploit. We're in the process of defining how rapidly we want to grow, where we draw our limits, what exactly we address, which partners we need. One of the major issues is new staff and their integration. These are the main tasks occupying us at present.

Mr. Vogt, thank you for talking to us.

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