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1. Technical forum: optimising costs in fastening technology A plea for more cooperation

Strategic cost reduction improves product quality – the requirements profile for suppliers' management quality will increase – Making networks controllable

(Forchtenberg). To reduce costs, the manufacturer – supplier system chain will have to work together much harder in future. That was the conclusion of the first technical forum to discuss cost optimisation in the fastening industry, held at Schwäbisch Hall on 23rd and 24th November. Using the example of professional fastening technology it was demonstrated how technology, product assortment policies, and supplier management all have a sustained effect on the cost structure – and on the other hand, how it is possible to control this without necessarily losing quality. In the course of this development suppliers will be required to apply intelligent management to the process chain.

In his opening presentation, Reinhard Barth, Product Development Manager at Arnold Umformtechnik GmbH, who hosted the workshop, demonstrated that for some time it has no longer been possible to expect further potential for savings from the product itself, but that savings can be identified throughout the entire process chain. Roland Bopp of DaimlerChrysler substantiated the hypothesis that if all the cost drivers are taken into account, quality improvements in the end product will inevitably follow. The crucial factor is the size of the non-variable parts ratio. Only this allows a widely standardised assortment, eliminating cost-intensive as-

sembly errors and reworking. Manufacturing larger order quantities automatically cuts the cost of the component and thus compensates for the cost of opting for the more expensive fastener version. This intelligent assortment policy by manufacturers will require management quality from suppliers. Ultimately the idea of a "one-stop shop" will reduce a manufacturer's administrative costs by many times. Presenting the "Total Fastener Project Management" concept, Arnold Marketing and Product Manager, Matthias Bürkert demonstrated a pioneering approach to meeting these requirements in the future. The successful supplier of the future will form part of the system chain from Development to Logistics, and must be able to offer the corresponding services over and above the product itself. According to Matthias Bürkert, "the aim is to control the networks".

The fundamental components of these networks are the Logistics components. Lear, the car seat manufacturer based at Besigheim, and Lila – the logistics specialist, showed how a Supply Chain might look in future. Five years ago the two companies began an excellent cooperation in the "longest duplex" in the world, almost completely eliminating any communication friction loss. And with huge success. Lear proves that innovative concepts can ensure that Germany can be an attractive manufacturing location.

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Your contact:

Arnold Umformtechnik GmbH & Co. KG
Michael Pult, Dipl. – Betriebswirt (FH)
Marketing and Communications
Manager
Tel.: 0049-(0)7947-821-170
Fax: 0049-(0)7947-821-111
Mail: michael.pult@arnold-
umformtechnik.de
www.arnold-umformtechnik.de