

The secret to success: be visionary every day!

25 years of Optisense – an interview with managing director
Dr Jens Heymans



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Optisense turns twenty-five and is in its prime, stating that it is the market leader in non-contact coating thickness measurement.

25 years of Optisense – a long time in a technologically challenging market. What is your key to success?

Heymans: What makes us stand out, next to our multitude of innovations, is our capability to deal with new technical challenges in a flexible way. The secret to our success is: be visionary every day! Another key factor is our long-standing customer relationships. We have more than 85 percent of existing customers, who we have accompanied on their course for many years. The same goes for our team: many colleagues have been on board for a long time.

In your view, what were the milestones and most impressive moments of the last 25 years?

Heymans: Oh, there are quite a number of milestones: starting with our foundation as a spin-off of the Fraunhofer Optics Center in 1998. Just one year

later, we launched the first photothermal coating thickness sensor for an industrial robotics application. Shortly afterwards, the first major car manufacturers approached us, such as Audi. Next, the patented PaintChecker Mobile LED handheld measurement device went into series production. Then in 2016, OptiSense entered the Chinese automotive market. Two years later, our industrial controller was developed that

measures the coating thickness at up to eight points simultaneously.

In 2020, we launched our Service-Suite – a comprehensive, cost-effective and proactive support package that ensures smooth and safe operation of the coating thickness measurement systems. An important aspect of the suite is predictive maintenance. It ensures reliable measurement data as a foundation for reporting systems. This enables clients to save costs by optimizing maintenance intervals and improving planning efficiency.

How have challenges developed in recent years?

Heymans: If you work for global players and hidden champions, you cannot slack off – you have to think ahead. Accordingly, we acted early on to meet the needs of automation and miniaturization. Our sensors fit into any production environ-



ment meanwhile, no matter how tight it is. Today, quality control is largely based on fast, automated inline measurement, and this requires the development of appropriate high-performance measuring systems more than ever.

Does this also have an impact on the team and workflow?

Heymans: We have a good combination of young and experienced employees. Developments in the market call for a different way of thinking and approaching things. Developing ideas and implementing them go together more quickly than in the past, and testing for suitability can be carried out in an earlier phase. Nothing is set in stone; we want to develop ideas and try them out.

Looking back, we can say that the great commitment of our employees has made us stronger as a company than ever before. We have grown by an average of 26 percent over the last three years, and never before have we had such a broad base in terms of the markets we cover. Ultimately, the entire company has to reinvent itself over and over again. We want to stay an attractive employer where it is fun to work in a team, and to drive innovations in coating thickness measurement.

Which future trends are most relevant for OptiSense and your customers?

Heymans: From my point of view, the continuous increase in efficiency through automation will keep us very busy. Increasing speed and precision in the line needs sensors whose specifications are many times higher than today. We continue to work on topics such as analytics, platforms and IIoT: analytics, i.e. data analysis, is regarded as the foundation of modern management and is one of the most important skills for running a coating company successfully. But only a fraction of companies fully evaluate the data they collect. The result of the correlation analysis in particular can provide important insights for an optimized and really smooth coating process.

The IIoT will certainly have an increasing impact on the coating industry. Networking of sensors, products and equipment as well as the complete evaluation of collected data creates new opportunities.

How will you celebrate your anniversary?

Heymans: To celebrate our 25th anniversary, we are launching a strictly limited product design. This limited edition will emphasize the premium concept of our brand down to the smallest detail. We will highlight the unique look of our PaintChecker Mobile 25 Years with a very special polished surface finish.

An innovation is that our customers and prospects can decide online on the final look of the mobile PaintChecker model. For this purpose we conducted a survey via LinkedIn, Instagram and on our homepage. And everyone taking part could win one of the top prizes with a total value of over 5,000 euros.

What do you wish for yourself and your team in the future?

Heymans: I would like our whole team to keep their amazing motivation! For the future, I hope that my team and I will

keep a keen interest in new things and, of course, continue to work on exciting projects for our great customers. If work is fun and everyone is excited about the job, Optisense will continue to be on the right track.

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