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## Pepperl+Fuchs Training “From Practice For Practice”

**Pepperl+Fuchs GmbH, a medium-sized enterprise operating in the automation technology industry, has enjoyed continuous growth over the last few years. The number of employees passed the 3,800 mark in the fall of 2007 and could perhaps reach more than 4000 by the end of 2008.**

**The word “perhaps” must be emphasized here because, like many other German firms, the Mannheim-based company has a shortage of qualified engineers, technicians and skilled workers and is encountering problems in finding such employees. The Central Association of the German Electrical Industry (ZVEI) made the following comment in this respect: “Member companies estimate that the lack of specialists in the industry is leading to an unattained growth rate of between one and three percent.” Pepperl+Fuchs is not only aware of this situation, it wants to be proactive in helping to improve it.**

The public discussions regarding the "PISA Study" arouse emotions that lead people to associate the school system with the term “education crisis”. Is this the reason for the shortage of skilled employees? The answer is probably not that simple. It is clear that neither knowledge nor education can be reduced to the school years. What characterizes qualified employees? It is a fact that the curriculum vitae starts at school and leads to occupational practice via vocational training and/or academic studies. Whereas school is the general starting-point for the imparting of rudiments within the context of general education, vocational training, and academic studies provide rough technical orientation and form the transition to occupational practice. Knowledge – shaped by the chosen industry – becomes more specialized and is accumulated during occupational practice. Gaining knowledge and experience primarily means the willingness to adapt to new situations. Anyone who regards these challenges as his/her personal objective will become qualified almost automatically. Occupational practice is not a rigid structure, but reflects the individual demands of a particular position within the company. The situation of one’s own company is not only the

company's positioning in the market structure (competitiveness and innovation skills), but also the flexibility in being able to react as quickly as possible to customers' requests and competitive influences.

## **Qualification through lifelong learning**

Automation technology, in particular, comprises a mixture of young and modern technologies with a very high level of innovation. Anyone who has been working in the field of process automation for a longer period of time has only been able to learn newer technologies "on the job". Anyone over the age of 40 very likely became acquainted with field bus applications in process automation during his/her working life. The same is true of established topics such as explosion protection or functional safety. Although both these topics are not generally new ground, the last few years have seen rapid developments in both areas from legal and technological aspects: a situation that will become ever more dynamic during global harmonization. Only if people are willing to learn and take part in further education throughout their life will they be able to acquire technical skills that can keep pace with this development.

## **Lifelong learning is relevant to work**

In the chemical industry the qualification of employees depends to a large extent on how far methods and processes can be improved and optimized. This adaptability adds value to these companies. Even the rise in the costs of raw materials and energy can be leveraged through the qualification of employees and actually compensated in some areas. As soon as someone is prepared to learn something new, there is fortunately neither a 'critical age' nor a mental block which pose an obstacle to further qualification. On the contrary, it is natural that people learn from their experience and cope with constant change – in fact welcome change as a tool for their own advancement.

## **However, further training also means clearing hurdles**

Since someone learning is employed and a part of the workforce, advanced vocational training must also take account of these circumstances. It is not just enough to be willing to learn and decide to actively take action. The following questions must be clarified in advance:

- Where can I find the required knowledge or who can provide me with this knowledge?
- Does the program contain the practical relevance that I require?
- Is know-how really transferred?
- Is the imparted knowledge state-of-the-art?
- Do the classes that are offered justify the expenditure (time, costs, travelling expenses, etc.)?

- Does the training actually match my company's business?

A large number of employees are motivated and have the desire for personal further development. However, it is often very difficult to find the right programs.

## **Shortage of adequate programs**

Although there are a large number of sources on practically every topic, a search for a specific topic is not only time-consuming, but can also be extremely unsatisfactory in terms of the attained results. The same is true of seminars and training courses. If they cover several industries and are of a general nature, they often do not match the desired topic or do not offer the expected depth.

On balance, specialist knowledge in the form of training courses can mostly (and often only) be found within the specific industry. The industry bonus is clear. Trainers and students speak the same (technical) language and are familiar with the practices. They can, therefore, communicate without barriers and attain the learning goal within a very short space of time.

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## Gerhard Jung

Trainer for functional safety and explosion protection

The sovereignty of our customers is a major advantage.

As an employee in the Training Department of Pepperl+Fuchs, I want to emphasize the fact that the company's success is due to our customers. Our components and systems can only be used after our customers have successfully acquired orders and projects, and these products are finally installed during the implementation phase. We are all part of a giant cogwheel. We are very fortunate that our customers can operate on their markets with the greatest possible success. We therefore make great efforts to provide both our own employees and our customers' employees with job-related training. The more qualified the employees, the more competitive the companies. At the end of the day, everyone benefits from this.

Our training courses focus on our core competencies in the area of process automation: functional safety, explosion protection and signal conditioning during conventional signal transmission, remote I/O systems and field bus applications.

The duration of the seminar – as an occupation-accompanying training – can be adapted entirely within the context of the particular situation and the learning objective, and thus can range between a few hours and a full week. Simply contact us at:

[SIL@de.pepperl-fuchs.com](mailto:SIL@de.pepperl-fuchs.com) oder [ATEX@de.pepperl-fuchs.com](mailto:ATEX@de.pepperl-fuchs.com)



Fig.1: Competence benefits everyone. Pepperl+Fuchs training courses in the area of process automation.



Fig. 2: Gerhard Jung, born in 1956, began his career in the field of chemical engineering. With the background of ten year experience in the chemical industry, he came to Pepperl+Fuchs in 1986, responsible for the customer support in this segment of industry. Then, he was Marketing Manager for conventional wired intrinsically safe interfaces. Since 2006, he is Trainer for functional safety and explosion protection.