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1. EXPERT INTERVIEW

with Prof. Dr.-Ing. Graduate Industrial Engineer Jörg Niemann

Challenges „Digitalization“

Düsseldorf, 02. March 2015 – Our era is characterized by changes. That´s why modern enterprises now do have - in order to be successful and competitive - something like an obligation for transformation.

Prof. Dr. Jörg Niemann of FH Düsseldorf believes, above all, in the revolutionary force of digitization.

"Prof. Niemann, which changes do have to face modern enterprises today?"

Prof. Dr. Niemann: „ In Western industrialized countries, the compulsion for rationalization and restructuring in the business sector, which is associated with globalization, leads to a migration of easier production and services to other countries. Nowadays small and medium enterprises need to be able to derive early opportunities for new products and businesses from global trends to achieve a long-term success.“

„What are the trends that currently affect the European market?"

Prof. Dr. Niemann: „Above all there is the mega trend towards individualization, which is nourished by the desire of people for uniqueness and differentiation that poses new challenges for companies. It leads to a comeback of the customized products. On the corporate side, this demand mainly leads to higher production and delivery costs. In any case, production and consumption move closer together, and the customer takes an active part in the value chain.“

„What are the challenges companies have to face due to the trend?"

Prof. Dr. Niemann: „On one hand, such a claim has an impact on the collection of target group data. Now and even more in the future, companies are forced to

incorporate the wishes of their customers, respectively to know the preferences of their target group exactly, and to derive new services and products. On the long term the individualizing of products leads to decentralization. The number of partner increases and thus the complexity of processes. Therefore, in the future the success of a company will depend on the optimal control of processes. This brings us to another important topic: the digital representation of networks."

„What do you mean by the trend topic digitization?"

Prof. Dr. Niemann: „To manage the increasing complexity of processes in the future, an automatic provision of data is becoming more and more important. In doing so, electronic systems network to "ambient intelligence", and adjust independently and appropriately to the individual user." In addition, today it is important that there is a change not only in value added structures, but in particular in "value added product characteristics." That is to say, the client sees the benefit of a product not only by its physical properties, but increasingly also based on the potential for digital connectivity and individualization. Thus, those as "add-on" marketed product features will gain decisive importance regarding the purchase decision. This change concerning the product evaluation by the customer has to be anchored in the minds of the employees, because internally, this often means a shifting of the previous emphasis on individual departments."

„How can you face these subjects today as a company?"

Prof. Dr. Niemann: „Companies need to include these changes into their business plans. Besides the technical development of innovative features to personalize the products, the implementation of changes and the integration into an IT environment plays an important role. The required change of "mind sets" in the minds of employees has emerged to be one particular critical success factor."

Expert Portrait

Prof. Dr.-Ing.-Wirt.-Ing. Jörg Niemann



Jörg Niemann is a professor of industrial engineering at the University of Applied Science Dusseldorf with a focus on production. Since July 2012 he is head of the Research Centre „Life Cycle Excellence“ (FLiX).

Furthermore, Jörg Niemann is member of the board at the Institute of Product Development and Innovation (FMDauto) at the University of Applied Science in Dusseldorf, as well as member of the scientific advisory board of the NUK (New Entrepreneurship Rhineland e.V.). During his activities at the Institute of Industrial Manufacturing and Management (IFF) and at the Fraunhofer Institute for Manufacturing Engineering and Automation (IPA)

Prof. Niemann was engaged with the topic “Life Cycle Management”. He worked on the topics of life cycle oriented evaluation and optimization of the economic benefits of investment. This innovative approach became known as “Life Cycle Controlling”. Whilst working on this topic he used simulation tools for a dynamic valuation and optimization of capital goods and production systems. After his PhD, he joined the ABB Automation GmbH, where he worked as a group manager on “Life Cycle Services”. Two service products that have been developed by Prof. Niemann, were awarded within the Group and received property rights. In 2012 he became Professor of Industrial Engineering, oriented on production.

2. PRESS RELEASE

From Ballast to Competitive Advantage

The Complexity of Supply Chain Networks Requires Company-Specific Solutions

Moers, 02. March 2015 – The whole world talks about data security, but what about the availability of data sets? In particular, the increasing complexity of business processes and supply networks makes it increasingly difficult to represent processes easy to understand and clearly. At the latest, if the direct competitor manages to secure a competitive advantage by a better use of data, a company gets under pressure. Prof. Dr. Niemann, Professor of Industrial Engineering and Business Management at the University of Applied Science in Dusseldorf, explains the situation: „ For entrepreneurs, it is especially important to find a customized solution that takes into account the particular corporate structure. Because every supply chain is different and has its own specific requirements.”

Due to the increasing international networking of companies, larger and more complex datasets are collected. However, the data are worthless as long as a company has no possibility to analyze them and to derive decision-making aids from them. "The analysis and the visualization of data sets supports the improvement of business processes and competitive business models," Prof. Dr. Niemann explains.

Intelligent Tools for Data Visualization

To evaluate the quantities of data, companies need to have big-data-analysis tool. Special attention is put on the visualization of process data. However, for an adequate access to the relevant process interfaces, there are often no suitable tools available. The specialist explains: "No two business processes are identical.

To find a suitable presentation of the necessary data, companies often have to develop their own solutions.”

New Development for Data Interfaces

The first step of the analysis process is in principle data collection and allocation. Information from different corporate divisions are often in different formats, such as Excel- or TXT-files. If companies want to feed these different formats in one program, the data must first go through a process of standardization. How such a solution might look like, has just been shown by a medium-sized company in North Rhine-Westphalia. To meet the challenge of standardizing different formats, the development team of i-tec GmbH has developed a data integrator. This innovative solution separates data and makes them available for processing and visualization.

Useful Visualization via APP

Another interface between data analysis and corporate life results from the final provision of the analytical result for the individual employee. A specific business application supports real-time availability of the obtained data anytime, anywhere. Often, this type of application is used in decision processes, risk-management as well as in potential analysis. Prof. Niemann adds: „If data sets are presented in a simplified form, for a company they develop from unused ballast to a competitive advantage.”

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3. FACTSHEETS: **Lean Supply Chain Management**

Challenge:

Every day, people need products and services quickly and individually. To meet this demand, companies have to work more flexible and cost-optimized. The arising challenges are complex and multilayered. In times of "global economy" **cost reduction, customer satisfaction**, speed and **high quality** come to the fore. These demands can only be mastered with stable and standardized processes. From the point of view of total cost of ownership (TCO), value flows have to be considered integrally and have to be coordinated.

Our Solution:

The lean approach scrutinizes, while changing the existing structures. A successful supply chain management aims to manage the existing or newly designed structures optimally. A suitable combination of both approaches result in a very powerful lever for EBIT improvement and profitable growth.

To achieve their objectives, i-tec GmbH relies on established and proven methods and standards, such as:

- SCOR model
- KAIZEN
- value stream analysis
- material flow analysis
- process mapping - and simulation
- driver tree analysis

Smart Service Strategy

Challenge:

The area "service" is increasingly becoming a supporting pillar within a company. The focus on this important segment ensures sustainable success.

Due to the increasing competitive pressure in the product business, the development of new products and services is the key to revenue growth.

A holistic service concept, including financial, technical and operative parameters, is an integral part of a successful business strategy.

Our Solution:

i-tec GmbH has developed a modular system, which enables the targeted development of new business models.

Essential components of our modular system for business model are:

- market analysis und benchmarking
- analysis of target groups
- portfolio analysis
- development of new services and products
- value benefit analysis
- business case / investment consideration
- opportunity and risk assessment

4. COMPANY INFORMATION

i-tec GmbH is an privately owned and globally oriented consulting company. The major focus is on the transformation of service- and supply chain processes, with the scope of a sustainable increase in efficiency and value. Above all, successful development and implementation of innovative service strategies characterizes i-tec GmbH.

For more information, please visit www.i-tec-consulting.com.

Contact:

i-tec GmbH

Lea Büren

Landwehrstraße 1

47441 Moers, Germany

Phone: +49 (0) 2841 - 888 86 - 21

Fax: +49 (0) 2841 - 888 86 - 29

E-Mail: l.bueren@i-tec-consulting.com

Web: www.i-tec-consulting.com