

"Innovation inspired by customers"

igus: 23 percent increase in turnover in 2004 - More than 50 new products and range extensions - "Triumph of the plastic plain bearing"

igus (Cologne), one of the world's leading manufacturers of energy supply systems including cables and all accessory components as well as a researcher, developer and producer of high-capacity polymer plain bearings, can look back on yet another successful business year. At a press conference at the Hanover Industrial Fair, the Managing Director Frank Blase, speaking together with executive and company founder Günter Blase, outlined the latest company development. In 2004 (the year igus celebrated its 40th



Picture PM1205-03: igus GmbH, Cologne

More than 20 years of polymer research: igus testing laboratory for plastic plain bearings

jubilee) the consolidated corporate turnover increased by 23 percent compared to the previous year to 171 million euro. A total of 27 product innovations and range extensions in the energy chain systems/cables sector and 24 in the area of plastic plain bearings were presented by the Cologne-based company (corporate mission: "plastics for longer life") at their exhibition stand in Hanover, which covered an area of more than 400 square metres. Infotainment was provided by two dancing and singing robots which presented numerous innovations based on the multi-axis cable supply system Triflex R.

Variant production in dialogue with customers

"The primary factor in our success," said Managing Director Frank Blase, "is the closeness to our customers." It is this close contact that enables igus to offer tailor-made variant production and breadth of products. igus launches between one and two thousand new articles every year - "the majority of these inspired by customer suggestions. This is a natural flow: starting at the customer, passing igus sales representatives, office sales support, technical design, test laboratory to finally arrive at production, with these latter mentioned all under one roof in Cologne."

Deliveries within 48 hours

"In 2004," continued Frank Blase "more than 65 percent of domestic orders - most of these customized - were dispatched to customers within 48 hours. And we want to improve this performance even further." To this end, igus provides a telephone service for taking orders for everything from harnessed supply chains to individual bushes from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. on weekdays and to midday on Saturdays without minimum order quantities being necessary. Frank Blase: "The work is interesting and fun. In using plastics to combat friction and wear we are occupying an extremely specialised area which has enormous potential for the future."

Hanover 2005: Robot innovations, FireWire cable, mini pedestal bearings

In the energy supply sector, igus presented, among other things, new accessories for robot cable guiding systems including a universal attachment set, a low-cost version also for multi-axis energy supply, a new ready-to-install energy supply system for shelf handling equipment and hall cranes, the first FireWire cable for energy chains (applications up to 400 Mbit/s transmission rate), harnessed FANUC

drive unit cables for energy chains and an Internet-based "Condition Monitoring" system for long travel distances in ports, for example. In the plastic bearing technology sector new products include a completely lubricant-free, extremely low-friction linear axis (without motor), a new high-temperature plain bearing for continuous duty at up to 260 degrees Celsius, a thermoplastic bush that can be beaded, a new particularly lightweight and compact mini pedestal bearing for high loads and a spherical cap without play or "rattle" which can be combined with a number of housings.

Plastic plain bearings: Awards presented to the winners of the 2nd "manus"

Meanwhile, at the igus exhibition stand prizes were awarded to the winners of the "manus - 2nd competition for plastic plain bearing applications" - with the event including laudatory speeches and a customer party. For the second time after 2003, the search was on for daring applications on the basis of lubricant-free plain and linear bearings. The igus joint initiative including an academic specialist jury has also taken place in the USA and Great Britain and is currently underway in Italy. There were three times as many entries this year as in 2003. First place, and 5,000 euro prize money, went to Manfred Worms from the company Tuboscope Vetco (Deutschland) GmbH in Celle. He uses high-performance polymer plain bearings on inspection equipment for drilling risers in the offshore sector ("45 kg lightweight against 9 t steel giant").

Investment in tests and research once again

"The gradual triumph of lubricant-free plastic plain bearings has made a major contribution to company growth," according to Frank Blase. "Accordingly, we invested in our test and research capacities once again in the year 2004." Last year, igus carried out around 5,000 tests in the area of polymer research alone, and developed more than 120 new plastic compounds. Work continued in 2004 on the Customer Service project which is to allow the calculation of the service lives of various materials via Internet.

Energy chains: Antarctic and the Tropics

The concept for the second igus product group energy supply systems and cables is quite similar. "Instead of entering strategic alliances we are concentrating on the development and testing of all components ourselves," said Frank Blase, explaining one reason for the company's continued rapid growth. Energy chains and cables are tested in outside facilities on over 100 metres of travel distance, other tests include the noise chamber and climate chamber (temperature and humidity allow simulation of arctic and tropical climate conditions). More than 60 tests in the cables and energy chains sector run simultaneously at igus. Customers will shortly be able to take advantage of a new service and calculate service lives of cables via the Internet and depending on the application involved.

"ReadyChain" factory expanded

Completely harnessed energy supply systems have been being manufactured at the Cologne igus factory for eight years now. In 2004, igus expanded its so-called "ReadyChain" factory once again. More than 60 specialists and workers produce and fit up to 500 completely harnessed systems a week. Frank Blase: "More and more users are relying on ready-harnessed energy chains for machine and system automation." Application areas especially include assembly and handling technology, conveyer and storage technology as well as mechanical engineering, here machine tools in particular. "The ready-to-install systems are then delivered directly to the machines and have global warranty," Blase added. User-specific complete solutions allow customers not only to benefit from igus' component know-how, but also to save on storage costs and significantly reduce assembly expenditure.

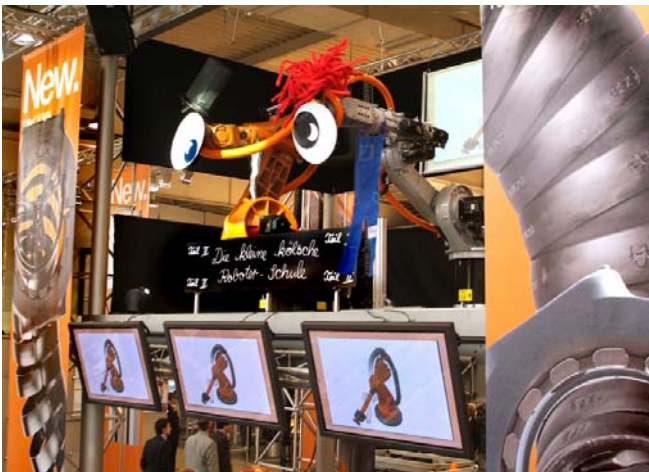
New branch in Hungary

The new branch in Hungary opened this year was the 25th igus branch to be founded world-wide. igus has more than 50 support centres all over the world so that all customers can be reached within a matter of hours if necessary. igus is also affected by products from international competitors, of course, mainly copies from countries such as China, Taiwan and South Korea. On the other hand, the igus

branches in these Asian countries are undergoing particularly strong development. Thus, for example, igus supplies the largest crane builder in the world in Shanghai with ready-to-install energy chain systems made in Cologne, and LCD manufacturing lines in South Korea with quiet E6 energy chains and dust-free DryLin linear bearings.



Picture PM1205-04: igus GmbH, Cologne
Energy chains, cables, hoses, plug-in connectors, division, connecting elements, add-on parts - igus expanded its "ReadyChain" factory in 2004.



Picture PM1205-01: igus GmbH, Cologne
At its Hanover exhibition stand igus one of the attractions was the presentation of numerous innovations based on the multi-axis cable supply system Triflex R.



Bild PM1205-05: ExtraEnergy e.V., Kirchheim/Teck
World-record breaking drive through Europe: The hydrogen-powered HYSUN3000 with joint heads and plain bearings made of plastic. Three times as many applications as in 2003 were entered for the "manus - 2nd competition for plastic plain bearings". At the Hanover Fair, prizes were awarded in public to the winners, with the ceremony combined with a customer party.



Picture PM1205-02: igus GmbH, Cologne
"Tailor-made variant production, inspired by our customers' ideas" - igus Managing Director, Frank Blase.

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