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## A logical changeover

### From a provider of components to a provider of systems and network solutions

Digitalisation means that manufacturers of components are expanding their portfolio to provide their customers with systems and network solutions, which usually entails increased engineering effort. For steute, this changeover is clearly reflected in its new company name. In an interview with GIT SICHERHEIT, Managing Director Marc Stanesby explains the reasons behind the changeover.



« We see the rapid changes in technology as an incentive to grow with our customers. »

*steute Managing Director Marc Stanesby*

**GIT SICHERHEIT: Mr. Stanesby, steute is changing its name to steute Technologies. Why?**

**Marc Stanesby:** We have been developing and manufacturing switchgear for over 50 years and will continue to do so. However,

switching devices are becoming increasingly intelligent and they are now frequently integrated in networks and platforms, also developed and provided by us. In addition, the number of projects we take on which involve engineering tasks is growing all the time. For all of these reasons, and for the comprehensive range of services we now provide, our old company name no longer seemed appropriate. This is why we decided to change it.



### Can you give us an example of one of the networks you mentioned?

**Marc Stanesby:** For industrial and intralogistics applications we developed our sWave.NET wireless network, which connects switches, sensors and other actuators at the shopfloor level by remote control. The signals are bundled at so-called Access Points and passed on to the superordinate IT infrastructure of the customer via an easily configurable middleware. In this way data flow is uninterrupted from the shopfloor to the planning and management levels, an important prerequisite for digitalisation in the factory.

### Where have such networks already been implemented?

**Marc Stanesby:** Our first focus has been on intralogistics, specifically for the control of E-Kanban systems and AGVs. Here our radio network solution has specific

advantages, for example very low energy consumption and high availability.

### You mentioned radio before. Do you also use remote control systems for machine safety?

**Marc Stanesby:** Yes, that is correct. Our sWave-safe wireless system meets all the relevant standards in the machine directive, as well as the product standards for e.g. emergency stop devices. We often implement this system in conjunction with safety foot switches because eliminating the cable means far more freedom of movement for machine operators. In addition, the lifespan and the availability of the safety switch are increased because a cable is always susceptible to wear and tear.

### Where are the main application fields for these wireless switches?

**Marc Stanesby:** Our cabled safety foot switches have traditionally held a strong market position for bending and forming



*With its ZS 92 series of emergency pull wire switches, steute is presenting a completely new safety switchgear development*

machines for sheet metalworking. For this application field we have also developed special switching inserts which facilitate non-jerking actuation of the press brakes. We shall be presenting a new foot switch at the Euroblech 2018 in Hannover, and our broad customer base means that it is only logical that here first wireless applications for safety-related switching are the focus. But the platform and engineering idea is also taking hold in the field of safety technology. We are currently collaborating with customers on several projects in which safe wireless systems are adapted to very specific safety tasks.

### **Can you give us any details?**

**Marc Stanesby:** Unfortunately not because these projects are currently confidential. What I can say is that they involve not only stationary, but also moving machines. Here very short tripping and response times, as well as highly reliable signal transmission, even under adverse conditions, all speak for our safe wireless system. The safety switches themselves are extremely robust because of our special development and manufacturing skills in this area thanks to our business unit "Extreme". Many product series in our machine safety range are

based on switches and sensors for Extreme applications.

### **Are there any new products in your safety range?**

**Marc Stanesby:** Yes. Just a few days ago, our completely new ZS 92 switchgear series went into serial production, developed for the safe monitoring of conveyor belts for bulk goods. This product series comprises pull-wire switches up to 200 m in length and belt alignment switches – developed together as an overall concept to make installation much easier. A number of variants are available, for example for applications in dust explosive zones, as well as versions with an integrated safety bus module.

**Let us return to our original point – your new company name and the changeover from Schaltgeräte to Technologies. Can steute customers be certain that, despite the new name, they will still be able to buy individual components, such as pull-wire switches or safety foot switches?**

**Marc Stanesby:** Of course. This will always remain part of our business model. Our reputation and experience have been carefully built up in precisely this area over several decades. Just look at the new ZS 92 series mentioned earlier. We shall continue to develop our "hardware", that is switches, sensors and other actuators, with as much attention as we are now also paying to networks, engineering and skilled project work.

**If you have started to provide more engineering and more skilled project work, then you must also be expanding your staff...**





*steute Managing Director Marc Stanesby (l.) and Carsten Both (Head of Industrial Product Development) with the new ZS 92 S emergency pull-wire switch*

**Marc Stanesby:** That is correct, and expansion is a continual process. But we have also had to adapt our structure. For systems solutions customers expect individual concepts, consulting, aftersales support... This kind of customer contact is not usual in the components business and it is also unnecessary. But our restructuring process is well underway, and we are already working on complex projects with some famous names, for example in the automotive industry.

**Your new company name reflects the fact that steute is changing. In fact, the entire industry and thus also your customers, are undergoing radical change. This can be seen in the many projects addressing the Internet of Things and digitalisation. How do you handle this as a medium-sized**

**specialist? Do you feel that your business model is under threat?**

**Marc Stanesby:** The fact of the matter is: the industry is currently changing at a breakneck speed, with previous business models and production concepts being called into question. We do not see this as a threat, however, but as a chance and a challenge. We are meeting this challenge head-on, for example by changing from a provider of components to a provider of systems, as reflected in our new name. We are very optimistic because in times of change flexibility and customer focus are crucial to success, and both of these factors have been embedded in the steute DNA for decades.

**Thank you for talking to us!**

Images: steute Technologies GmbH & Co. KG