

# Branching out

JOACHIM KOSCHIER, GROUP MANAGING DIRECTOR OF BÖWE SYSTEC, DISCUSSES THE RECENT ACQUISITION OF OPTIMUS SORTERS AND THE POTENTIAL OF THE PARCEL SORTING MARKET

## What does Böwe Systec offer the postal sector?

Böwe Systec is an international corporation with an annual turnover of approximately €130m (US\$141m). The company has a 70-year history in supplying sorting, inserting and card mailing systems for the mail industry. With the acquisition of a 70% shareholding in Optimus Sorters, we can now also offer the latest parcel sorting solutions.

## Why was the decision taken to acquire Optimus?

In 2015, Böwe Systec embarked on a joint project with Optimus Sorters to install a large packet and parcel sorting system for Jersey Post's main distribution hub. Jersey Post already used Böwe Systec's mail sortation software and so we were responsible for integrating it with Optimus Sorters' new sorting technology.

It was the first time the two companies had worked together and there was a lot of mutual respect for one another. A combination of the two businesses seemed like a very good idea. It also made sense from a corporate perspective as Böwe Systec has expert software knowledge and a worldwide sales and service team of 850 people, and Optimus had an excellent sorting product. This was also Optimus Sorters' first postal project as the company had mainly focused on the logistics, e-commerce and retail sector up to that point.

The end solution for Jersey Post was a sorter that could handle small letters and packets

weighing anything from 20g (0.7oz) up to large parcels weighing 25kg (55 lb). The weighing and optical character recognition (OCR) solutions from Böwe Systec also meant the system could recognize handwritten and machine printed addresses as part of the inline sorting solution.

## What key projects have you undertaken in the last year?

Optimus delivered 15 sorting systems last year, mainly in the USA, and some with up to 300 chutes. Böwe Systec supplied 100 new systems of varying sizes, including inserting systems, plastic card systems and packet sorting systems. Our mail sorting business has also been steadily growing over the last 18 months and has helped us grow by 20% over that period. Optimus Sorters with its packet and parcel sorting solutions has grown threefold since 2013.

## How will this acquisition benefit the two companies?

Böwe Systec has been supplying mail sorting software in Europe for 20 years, enabling posts to incorporate statistics, item tracking and OCR technology. For the last six years, the company has been investing in making its software intuitive and easy to operate without training. Its Böwe Sort software, for instance, enables operators to easily access statistics and see any upcoming issues with trays before they jam or become full. Operators are able to easily switch between sort schemes, such as domestic and international sorts, to fully utilize the systems processing capability. This software can now be applied to the logistics, intra-logistics and e-commerce sectors through Optimus Sorters.

Böwe Systec also invests approximately 8% of its annual turnover in research and development, with 70 people globally dedicated to developing the company's software and hardware solutions. These resources, combined with the 850-strong sales and service team, will only serve to strengthen Optimus Sorters and grow its share in the e-commerce, logistics and postal markets. Whether clients are looking for mail or package sorting systems, the combined product suite of Böwe Systec and Optimus Sorters has it covered. ■

