

# HYBRID SORTER

Ready for the future: a specially developed, new-generation hybrid system based on proven push-tray technology can greatly simplify and speed up the sorting process



When PIN AG of Berlin went in search of the ‘sorting concept of the future’, it found the right partner in Böwe Systec and its innovative hybrid sorting technology. The result has been a unique sorting solution that simplifies and speeds up the sorting process at one of Europe’s largest private postal service providers.

PIN AG employs more than 1,300 people, with some 180 of them working in sorting. At its Berlin-Mahlsdorf center, 750,000 items can be processed daily, rising to over one million when demand surges. Böwe Systec’s Simex Letter, Criterion and IntelliStar systems for mixed mail sorting have been a feature of PIN’s halls for many years, but when the time came to replace the latter in 2016, PIN thought about what a new generation of machine might look like.

**Efficient process** Taking into account a complex market analysis of what PIN’s

customers were looking for, both now and in the future, Böwe Systec came up with a unique solution. Based on the horizontal OptiSorter, which was developed for packet and parcel sortation, and able to take a broad spectrum of letter post in the Berlin configuration, the Böwe Systec concept is referred to as the Hybrid Sorter.

The solution, which is designed to handle 14,000 items per hour, went into operation in October 2019. The Hybrid Sorter, which replaced five mixed mail sorters at PIN, is based on the OptiSorter’s proven push-tray technology and features two lines feeding items to two sorting tracks that are stacked one above the other. One of these infeeds is equipped with a high-speed automatic feeder for letters up to 32mm (1.3in) thick, while the other can be fed manually from five workplaces. This line is used for larger items that are up to 150mm (6in) high and weigh up to 2kg (4.4 lb). Thus, mailing volumes from up to six customers can be sorted simultaneously, saving customer changeover times.

Both feeding lines are fitted with cutting-edge OCR technology so that virtually all addresses can be read. Downstream, there is a weighing and format measurement station that calculates the postage and determines the sorting destination, followed by a label printer. Bernd Fricke, chief operating officer at PIN, notes, “The productivity of the machine is outstanding. We are able to measure, weigh and count every item in accordance with our customers’ wishes.”

**Minimized pre-sortation** What is really special about the whole sorting solution is that it has a diverter integrated into the feeding lines. It is able to route standard and compact letters out of the stream onto stacking belts if these items would be better processed by the company’s high-speed Simex Letter sorter. This means that much of the manual pre-sortation for these systems can be dispensed with. Sascha Breddin, management member and operations director at PIN, says, “We still need to separate out incoming items, but it’s now much simpler – and much faster.”

While hardware represents a vital component of Böwe Systec’s hybrid sorting solution, software is also an important part of the package. It allows easy machine operation and provides an ERP system interface, determines the complete processing and sorting logic and enables all Böwe Systec machines to be networked. “It’s a plus point that during sorting all of the machines can communicate with each other,” Fricke adds.

Five mixed mail sorters have now been replaced with just one system. Breddin concludes: “This opens up new possibilities for us.”

## KEY FACTS

- The Hybrid Sorter can handle up to 14,000 items per hour with just two feeding lines
- Advanced optical character recognition technology means that almost all addresses can be read
- The Hybrid Sorter removes the need for much of the manual pre-sorting

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