

“We want to live and breathe quality every day”

Quality is one of the foundations of the Oerlikon Manmade Fibers Solutions business unit’s commercial success. This is about far more than just yarn or adhering to technical dimensions. Speaking to Bernd Kachelmaier, Head of Quality Management, we discover what 100 percent quality means, what important role quality plays even during the development process and what customers say in the event of rare problems.



Mr. Kachelmaier, how does Oerlikon Manmade Fibers Solutions define quality?

We fundamentally define quality as the fulfillment of expectations. Primarily, it's about fulfilling our customers' expectations regarding the performance of our machines. We deliver 100 percent quality whenever we fulfill these expectations and achieve the corresponding level of expectation. And this is the pledge we make to our customers. Providing even greater fulfillment would be nice, but uneconomical. Which is why our quality philosophy is all about clear definitions and specifications – and adhering 100 percent to these. This relates to technology, but also to services, processes all the way through to meetings.

Do you not sometimes have to do more than just enough to achieve development progress?

Other criteria undoubtedly apply to innovations and new developments, where we can by all means overshoot the set target as well. In addition to quality, innovative power is a further strength of our company and a source of energy that drives us. To this end, we want to further develop the robustness of our systems and equipment in the future, among other things. Here, robustness means that a technology works well under the most diverse conditions, even if the surrounding influences are worse than specified.

Do quality requirements vary from country to country?

We can't generalize like that. It's more a case of there being differences between individual companies. However, we do have different machine designs depending on the requirements. It's really quite similar to automobiles. You can drive long distances in both compacts and luxury limousines. But the expectations in terms of comfort will be very different from the outset. With regards to the minimum safety requirements – in our case, machine safety – we make no compromises and we make no distinctions.

Quality based on four pillars

What is your quality management fundamentally based on?

Each business unit is organized and certified in accordance with an ISO 9001 quality management system. Here, our quality management is based on four pillars, with differing prioritization depending on the business unit. The first pillar is quality engineering, quality advance planning. This means that our quality employees work as a team with the construction and production staff from the product development stage all the way through to the start of production in order to identify and correct potential errors in these areas or to prevent them from occurring in the first place. The second pillar comprises our supplier qualification and development. We work with many suppliers due to our lower manufacturing depth. Regular audits are carried out with these suppliers and they have to comply with certain requirements. This is designed to ensure the parts they supply and their overall output and performance are of high quality. Over the past few years, the number of supplier audits has increased by between 300 and 400 percent. We regard many suppliers as strategic partners and support them in their further development.



And the two other pillars?

We call the third pillar Q-Operations. This is all about quality management and internal checking of bought-in and internally-manufactured products, initial samples and complaints. And this also includes internal audits and registering and calibrating measurement devices. We use highly-sophisticated technology to ensure quality down to the very smallest dimensions – for example, adaptive measuring instruments for surface examination and devices that measure using light sensors – automated and accurate to the micrometer. And pillar number four is called Q-Administration. This is like looking in the rear-view mirror – at key figures, at ensuring processes are up-to-date, at completed audits and at the implementation of measures. It is designed to establish and further develop processes, procedures and our ISO 9001 quality management system and monitor prescribed targets.

All employees complete the Qwins workshop

Quality awareness runs through the entire company. Are the staff specially trained for this?

Quality awareness has always been good, but in 2017 we took awareness to the next level with the 'Qwins' quality initiative and a series of workshops. All employees – from machine operators through to the CEO – have attended these workshops. Acting consciously, following the rules, jointly succeeding – these are things practiced in the workshops, also with a concrete quality improvement measure for course participants. New members of staff learn the contents within the context of their induction using e-learning programs, among other things. Qwins means: living and breathing quality – here, the name is also our culture!

Bernd Kachelmaier bases quality on four pillars: quality engineering, supplier qualification and development, quality operations and quality administration.



How important is this quality awareness? Could you give us an example of this, please?

80 percent of issues later arising from finished parts have nothing to do with the manufacturing process itself or the assembly. They can generally be traced back to the administration and are the result of change, communication and development processes. Maybe the construction changes were not adequately communicated, meaning that the supplier manufacturing the part was not aware of the change and was therefore unable to implement it. Or errors occur during operation that are discussed, but not passed on. Here, clear rules and conscious actions, as defined by Qwins, help.



The close cooperation between quality engineering, R&D, construction and production ensures a quality planning in advance.

Customers: “This is why we buy from you”

What happens when a customer approaches Oerlikon Manmade Fibers Solutions with a machine-related quality issue?

In principle, complaints are first recorded through our Customer Services using a ticketing system. Internally, there are clear processes for handling errors and initiating measures. In the event of issues, a Customer Services and Quality Management team becomes active in order – as an initial step – to find solutions for our customers as quickly as possible. In the subsequent step, it is decisive to find the cause of the error and initiate measures that will prevent the error occurring in the future. This is about systematically and continually learning from mistakes and errors. Furthermore, we offer remote support and training – for systems operation, for example. The fact that we are successful at this is confirmed by our customers. Many of them say: “If there are issues, they are also addressed and solved. At the end of the day, we can be assured that your machines will run – with superior yarn and product quality than that of the competition. This is why we buy from you.” The fact that these statements are relevant is also underlined by our full order books.



What warranty do you give on your machines?

The fundamental warranty is twelve months following commissioning, but no longer than 18 months after delivery. That is standard within our sector. However, this can differ in individual cases and depending on the situation and customer. In many cases, we do maintain long-standing customer relationships, something we will continue to do as well. For this, we live and breathe quality each and every day! »