

by YANG QIUHONG

The Vollmer Group

Innovation

is the soul of the century-old business,

quality

is the basis of a global-based service

In 1909, Mr. Heinrich Vollmer created the Vollmer company in Biberach, Southern Germany, and got the first setting and sharpening band saw blades machinery patent in the world. Fast forward to 2009, where the Vollmer group has 60 different products, three production bases in Dornhan, Dinan in France and Taicang in China, 10 branches globally, including the UK, Italy, Spain, Brazil, USA, and Japan, a matured marketing network consisting of over 30 agencies, and 750 employees globally. In 2008, the Vollmer group reached a sales volume of approximately 105 million EUR.

Global celebrations to welcome the centennial anniversary

In the early spring of 2009, the Vollmer group began to celebrate its one-century anniversary. Celebrations started from the Indonesian office in January, Brazil in February, Germany in May, China in June, and then the group celebrated the 85th birthday of Miss Vollmer, who is part of the second generation of leaders of the group. The Vollmer companies all over the world have held various kinds of celebratory activities to welcome the centennial birthday of the company.

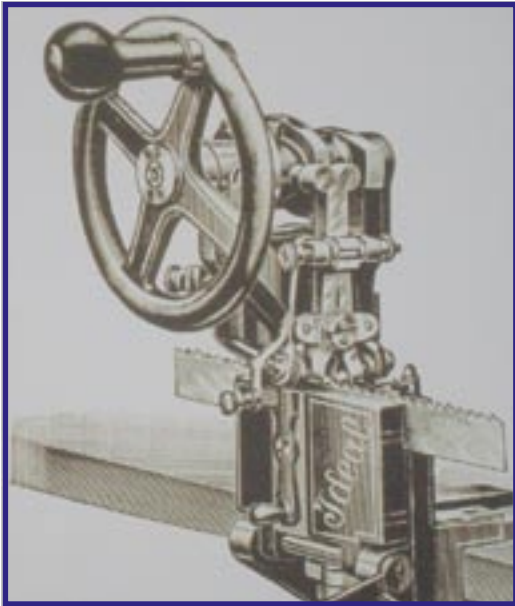
On May 15th, "Vollmer exhibition" opened in Biberach, Germany where the group's headquarters is located. The exhibition will last till September 27th. In Ligna Hannover 2009, Vollmer invited important clients to participate in its ceremonious one-century celebration. Between June 18th to 19th, Vollmer Machinery (TAICANG) Co.,Ltd. organised its third session of



Dr. Stefan Brand (extreme left), CEO of Vollmer, Mr. Erwin Geissler (left), General Manager of Vollmer Machinery (TAICANG) Co.,Ltd., Mr. Jürgen Hauger (right), Sales Director of Vollmer Machinery (TAICANG) Co.,Ltd.

technical seminars, and invited over 100 national clients and specialists from the industry to celebrate its one-century anniversary.

The Vollmer group specially chose seven different machines to be crafted into models and formed a set from these to give as gifts for the clients. The specially chosen machineries include the QM eco, CHD 270, CHC eco, CL 200, RC 100, CBF 300, and the GA 250, which are products from different development periods and different price sectors of Vollmer. This unique gift reflects the century of development in Vollmer, thus having



Innovation is the foundation and soul of the development of Vollmer. Even after a century, Vollmer people still delight in development and never get tired of it

a unique significance.

Insisting on innovation and enjoying an ever-flourishing business

For the past century, Vollmer has devoted itself in making its setting and sharpening band saw blades the sharpest ones, and focused on this concept through its continuous innovation, giving the Vollmer group

a global reputation as the specialist in producing and providing services for the tool-sharpening machinery. Powerful innovation capacities and superior product quality are decisive factors for the Vollmer products that leave Biberach to the international community.

After Mr. Heinrich Vollmer's development of the first design for setting and sharpening band saw blades, the Vollmer company has never ceased product research and innovation, continuously improving the machine's performance, improving the preciseness of saw production and providing better services for the clients.

In order to meet the increasing market demand for hard metal disk saws, Vollmer had actually begun developing special tool-sharpening machinery in 1952. Since 1988, Vollmer has successively succeeded in coming up with diamond-cutting tools for applications in the wood-cutting tools industry and new spark erosion machinery for application in the metal-working industry. Several of these products have already become some of the most important projects of Vollmer.

The Vollmer group annually puts eight percent of its marketing income to technical innovation and product research. Through the innovation of research institutes, the research period of new products at Vollmer has been shortened to 18 months, with the technology and software developed concurrently in the process. Over the past six years, Vollmer has successfully released 26 products into the market.

Dr. Brand said during an interview, "Exploration and development are the top priorities of Vollmer. Vollmer's objective is to keep good relationships with customers and provide them with professional technical support. We are innovating based on market needs, and we are making mutual progress and moving ahead together with our customers."

Apotheosis of outstanding quality

A common dilemma of international enterprises entering the Chinese market is the competitor who sells counterfeit products at low prices. As leading enterprises in the field of saw blade and tool sharpening, Vollmer is no exception.

However, Dr. Brand has declared that Vollmer should not worry itself too much, since counterfeiters can only imitate the shape of the pieces, and the superficial technologies modeled after Vollmer's end product. While the counterfeiters are just imitating, Vollmer is ceaselessly developing new technologies.

Nevertheless, to suppress counterfeiting from spreading into Asia, even into the whole world from China, it is still necessary for Vollmer to take certain prudent measures. Presently, Vollmer Taicang Co., Ltd. has been devoted to only three basic products. Equipments that require high technologies and high precisions are still produced at the headquarters in Germany. Vollmer has employed 80 experienced specialists to focus on technological research and new products development. Moreover, the new technological research will be introduced to more than 200 technology promoters around the world, who will in turn, introduce the technologies to clients internationally.

During the last 100 years, Vollmer has not only led in the wave of new products, but has also served as the apotheosis among enterprises of its own kind.

Its products have been universally known for their unique design, fine workmanship, simple operation, long service life and easy maintenance. To confront competitors with products of poor quality and low price, Mr. Geissler declares that the age of pursuing products of poor quality and low price is over, and China is now entering a new era. And that is why Vollmer is always so confident about its stability in the market.

Presence in China for favorable development

Vollmer Taicang Co., Ltd. is the third production plant and the eighth global sales and service branch of the Vollmer Group.

The Vollmer Group has customers all over the world, and the first Vollmer machine was introduced into China 25 years ago. As more and more of its international customers choose to open branch offices in China, the Vollmer Group inaugurated

Vollmer Taicang Co., Ltd. in Taicang City, Jiangsu Province, China in 2004, in the hope of providing better technical support and services for these customers.

In the past five years, Vollmer Taicang Co., Ltd. has been dedicated to providing Chinese users with quality diamond-tipped cutting tools, carbide saw gear grinding machines, high-speed steel saw gear grinding machines, band saw gear grinding machines, welding machines and other products. Among these products, the CHC and CHF series products for the mid-range market are the most popular in China, while the QM and QWD series are universally recognised by their state-of-the-art performance.

Although the financial crisis has had a great impact on many industries including the markets of the Vollmer Group, the potential in the Chinese market still speaks for itself.

In the past few months, Vollmer has increased its investment in China, where great improvement has been realised in productivity, after services, technical trainings and corporate facilities.

The gross sales of 105,000,000 EUR achieved by the



Workshop of Vollmer Taicang Co., Ltd.

Vollmer Group in 2008 were mainly from Europe and Asia, especially China, which contributed 10 percent. Vollmer Taicang Co., Ltd. has gradually become the hub of the Vollmer Group in China.

When asked about his opinion on the China branch, Dr. Brand said, "The Chinese market has gradually shown a growth rate of great significance and exhibits a bright prospect here. The branch establishment in China is critical for direct development in the local market and exploration of the Asian market. From Europe to Asia, this is our long-term strategy." **PFA**

*Interview Excerpt:***Future Perspectives of Vollmer****PFA: What is your understanding of Vollmer after you entered this company?**

Vollmer: Vollmer is a good, German middle class company, built with tremendous hard work, passion and plenty of self-sacrifice from its employees. Vollmer is a family business with a history of 100 years. That's something we're proud of and we intend to remain that way. A family-formed business can make decisions quickly and pragmatically, achieving speed in implementation.

PFA: Vollmer places a lot of emphasis on innovation. In the next 100 years, is there any specific plan in terms of new product development?

Vollmer: We actually have many ideas. Vollmer mainly produces hard alloy edge sharpening equipment and saw products. However, there are many potential markets to be developed, and we have many new ideas for tool development.

In the various markets, developed in different periods and different areas, we face many new demands. In China, Vollmer has developed new technologies applicable for the Asian market. Of course, we will introduce new machines at the appropriate time.

PFA: What are Vollmer's market development plans?

Vollmer: In addition to developing new technologies, developing new markets is a priority for us. Here, two key points are to be noted. First of all, the Asian market and, second, the Central European market. In Asia, China represents a focal point in our strategy and this will be supplemented with activities in India. Central Europe will be consistently developed with a branch of our own in Austria and a trade representative in Moscow.

PFA: What do you think are the trends of machine tools development and how will Vollmer keep pace with the times?

Vollmer: At present and in the future, the responsible use of energy and materials is going to play an increasingly central role. Our aim is to save resources and observe the highest quality standards at the same time. With our product development principles – adaptable systems, minimal space requirements, long lifespan among others – we are always trying to find the optimal interplay between quality, resource utilization and cost. **PFA**

100TH ANNIVERSARY

On June 18 -19, 2009, Vollmer (Taicang) Machinery Co., Ltd. held its third technical seminar and celebrated the centennial anniversary of the Vollmer Group. Dr. Stefan Brand, CEO of the Group who made a special trip from Germany to Taicang, shared the history of a century's development of Vollmer with more than 100 Chinese customers and partners, and discussed the future development trends of the industry.

This technical conference was hosted by Mr. Erwin Geissler, General Manager of Vollmer (Taicang) Machinery Co., Ltd., who first expressed his sincere thanks to visitors, some of whom came from afar, to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Vollmer.

He then briefly introduced a few speakers, following which, Dr. Brand, CEO of the Vollmer Group, delivered a speech entitled "Vollmer - Present and Prospect", describing in detail the progress of the enterprise which has maintained its position as a leader in the tool production and grinding industry for the past one hundred years, and its future development goals and planning.

Building upon its strengths, the seminar has grown from humble beginnings, where the supply of raw materials was adopted as a new topic, and where representatives of the associations of tool processing in China and Germany were

100TH ANNIVERSARY

invited for the first time.

The first speaker, Professor Xu Shuzi, Deputy Marketing Director of China Machine Tool & Tool Builders' Association, conveyed the greetings of Mr. Wu Bolin, Secretary General of the CMTBA and his congratulations on the centennial celebration of the Vollmer Group.

Mr. Qian Xihan from VDMA's Shanghai representative office focused on the introduction of VDMA (German Engineering Federation), and the development of the status quo and future trends of the German machinery industry.

Mr. Frank, Sales Manager of the Far East region from Ceratizit, an important supplier of raw materials for Vollmer, introduced in detail the application of hard alloy technology, the problems that might arise during the application process, as well as the solutions to those problems.

Dr. Ma Lianxiang, director of marketing from Leitz Tooling Systems (Nanjing) Co., Ltd, explained the development of woodworking tools in cutting materials, and shared the experiences of Leitz on meeting the customers' demands.

Professor He Ning, from Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics, delivered a speech entitled "Machining Process Database and Expert System".

In the display hall just beside the Vollmer Auditorium, a variety of Vollmer machines were neatly arranged and shown to the visitors. The machines displayed on the two-day seminar included the CNC PCD blade electric corrosion machine tool (QM eco), the hard alloy circular saw blade tooth grinding machine (FS2A), the hard alloy circular saw blade tooth tip surface grinding machine (CHU), and the CNC carbide tooth circular saw blade grinding machine (CHF eco) to name a few.

Vollmer (Taicang) Machinery Co., Ltd. prepared a special gift for each guest - "Henry, the Vollmer Beaver" - produced by Steiff company. Mr. Geissler explained that the reason a beaver was chosen as a gift was because Vollmer and the beaver have much in common: The beaver has sharp teeth while Vollmer has sharp saws; the beaver is used as a decorative coat of arms for the city of Biberach,

where the headquarter of Vollmer is located; there are beavers all over the world and Vollmer is a global company.

On the evening of the 17th, Vollmer (Taicang) Machinery Co., Ltd. arranged for a grand dinner for all guests. At the banquet, the guests shared the birthday cake prepared for the 100 anniversary of Vollmer. On the afternoon of the 19th, the Vollmer company organised a four-hour product demonstration, a successful conclusion to the seminar. **PFA**