

Press Release

SCHWIND is one of the 100 most innovative medium-sized enterprises in Germany

Kleinostheim, Germany, July 2008

SCHWIND eye-tech-solutions GmbH & Co. KG is one of the 100 most innovative small and medium-sized companies (SMEs) in Germany. The company has been awarded a seal of approval in the 16th *Top 100* corporate benchmarking competition for its systematic, well thought out and successful innovation management. Lothar Späth, former state premier of Baden-Württemberg, presented this prestigious award to SCHWIND at an official ceremony in Düsseldorf on Friday, 4 July 2008.

As patron of the SME project he recognised SCHWIND's achievements in the five key categories of "Innovation-friendly Senior Management", "Climate of Innovation", "Innovative Processes and Organisation", "Innovations Marketing" and "Successful Innovations".

The company, which produces and sells medical lasers for correcting ametropia, generated revenue of about €24 million in 2007 and has won the award for the open, creative working atmosphere that permeates the company. A special kind of motivation encourages innovation to flourish among its 80-strong workforces who all have the opportunity to develop and patent their own ideas and to make a name for themselves as writers for scientific publications. SCHWIND also believes in working closely with users and reference doctors whose suggestions and ideas are taken up, examined and put into practice. This stimulating climate of innovation provides the foundations for the company's outstanding achievements

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in innovation, such as the six German and six international patents it has applied for in recent years. In 2007 it invested over €1.3 million new technologies and in enhancing existing products.

One of them was the SCHWIND AMARIS laser that was launched on the market in 2007. According to industry reports, SCHWIND has set a "new gold standard in refractive surgery". The special feature of the AMARIS is that it is the first laser in the world to combine all available technologies in one system. Its superior technology makes the surgical treatment of ametropia significantly quicker, safer and more precise.

To qualify for the award, the company had to undergo a stringent two-stage process devised by the Vienna University of Economics and Business Administration. Professor Nikolaus Franke assesses the innovative capabilities of the entrants and selects the top one hundred, which this year include 49 German market leaders and 17 global market leaders. The results in other categories also illustrate the exceptional position of the top 100 companies, as shown by a benchmarking survey undertaken by Vienna University. This reveals that the top 100 companies are twice as successful in terms of innovation as other SMEs in their peer group. In the past three years they generated 67 per cent of their profits from innovations and innovative improvements – compared with 35 per cent in the sample of similarly structured companies. 58 per cent of the top 100 companies provide "internal venture capital", i.e. money for employees to pursue their own innovative ideas – compared with just 2 per cent of the average SMEs questioned. "I was very impressed by this figure, but not surprised by it. After all,

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if you want to launch radically new products and to succeed with them, you have to be willing to take certain risks" says Professor Franke. With such tough competition, SCHWIND is even prouder of its place in the *Top 100* as managing director Rolf Schwind confirms "We are now one of the 100 most innovative SMEs in Germany, which proves to us that we are on the right track".

Mentor, partners and coordination

The project's patron is Lothar Späth. Partners in the project are: Fraunhofer Society for the Promotion of Applied Research, the German Centre for Productivity and Innovation (RKW), the Association for Electrical, Electronic & Information Technologies (VDE) and the Association of German Engineers (VDI). Its media partner is the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* newspaper. The project is coordinated by Professor Nikolaus Franke of the Institute for Entrepreneurship and Innovation at the Vienna University of Economics and Business Administration.

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