

# MEET A CECIMO DELEGATE

Interview with Vincent Affolter, Managing Director, Affolter Group



## **1. WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE KEY BENEFITS OF BEING A CECIMO MEMBER?**

I represent a medium-sized family business that has been active in the manufacturing industry for over a century. Being a member of CECIMO gives me a better understanding of the state of this industry in Europe. To be able to look at its future challenges from a broader perspective. Finally, and very importantly, it allows me to forge links with other CECIMO members who share the same concerns and passion for the manufacturing industry.

## **2. AS DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION CONTINUES TO RESHAPE MANUFACTURING, HOW CAN COMPANIES EFFECTIVELY NAVIGATE THE CHALLENGES OF THE GREEN AND DIGITAL TRANSITIONS?**

Digitalisation and green technology have become buzz words. Politicians and the media are talking a lot about it, and pressure is being put on industrial companies in this way. This can be frustrating for entrepreneurs, because it can take a long time to implement a transformation in a product or process. And especially in a medium-sized company, the resources available are used for the tasks at hand.

The best way to navigate the green and digital transitions is to make these buzz words concrete at the level of the company, its employees and its customers. Where can we save energy? What consumes the most electricity in our machines, and how can we reduce this consumption? What processes take time to carry out manually, and how can we automate them? These are the kinds of questions that make the transitions concrete. They give us the energy to solve concrete problems that concern us. Making things concrete increases people's spontaneous involvement.

## **3. WHAT RECENT PRODUCT OR DEVELOPMENT STANDS OUT AS THE MOST REMARKABLE FOR YOUR COMPANY, AND WHY?**

We have developed a fully automated, self-controlled machining production line. The material enters at the start of the line, passes through several machining, washing and inspection cells, and at the end of the line, 100% good parts are produced with virtually no human intervention. This production line can operate at night and at weekends. The machined parts are used in very high-quality watch movements. The machining line corrects itself automatically by working in a closed loop between the measurement of the parts and the axes of the machining cells. A project like this requires a great deal of knowledge in mechanics, software and electricity, as well as in machining itself.

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#### **4. IN PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE, WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE MAJOR CHALLENGES THAT COMPANIES FACE IN RESKILLING AND UPSKILLING THEIR WORKFORCE TO MEET THE DEMANDS OF THE EVOLVING MANUFACTURING LANDSCAPE?**

The manufacturing industry employs many operators or technicians specialising in a technical field. Human beings normally like to be in their comfort zone and, if possible, do not want to face change. In many professions, digitalisation is changing the game, making it possible to achieve greater efficiency and precision with less effort. However, this means changing the way we work and acquiring new knowledge, sometimes far removed from the job we have learned. So, it's always the same challenge: to get people on board with the change and expand their comfort zone.

#### **5. WHICH SKILLS DO YOU BELIEVE WILL BE CRUCIAL FOR EMPLOYEES TO THRIVE IN THE FUTURE OF MANUFACTURING, PARTICULARLY AS INDUSTRIES INCREASINGLY EMBRACE DIGITAL TOOLS AND SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES?**

Creativity will be crucial for employees to thrive in the future of manufacturing. Employees will have to bring their creativity and critical thinking to their workplace, especially if most of the job is done by a machine that was taught by another machine.

