The first subsidiary outside of Germany of the Ditzingen-based TRUMPF was in a modest fourth-floor apartment in Switzerland.

Fast forward 50 years — to the glass-encased high-rise office of TRUMPF Korea Co., Ltd. in Seoul’s Digital Media City complex — and you’ll see physical proof of the machine tool manufacturer’s global growth. In its 15th year, TRUMPF Korea has gone from 10 employees in 1997 to 150 today, with four offices nationwide. Revenue in the last fiscal year approached 100 million euros (USD 134.7 million). With strong demand for TRUMPF Korea’s technologies in Korea’s steel, semiconductor and other strong industries, the company’s performance here ranks among the global TRUMPF’s 10 most successful subsidiaries and among its top 3 Asian operations.

“The Korean market is, for TRUMPF, of growing importance,” said Friedrich Stockinger, president of TRUMPF Korea.

The company specializes in two main areas — as a supplier of technology for sheet metal processing, punching, laser-cutting and bending and as a manufacturer of laser sources. TRUMPF Korea makes both laser resonators that are a part of their sheet metal processing machines as well as lasers as a single product for various industrial applications. The company also handles two smaller divisions devoted to the electronics and medical businesses. TRUMPF’s generators are used in the production of flat panels, semiconductors and more.

The Korea unit of TRUMPF — pronounced “Troomph” — engages in sales, services, research and development (R&D) and regional training. Customers include pretty much all large companies that require steel or metal applications and hundreds of small- and medium-sized enterprises.

“We have a very strong team in technologies, which is covering R&D and application knowhow and all relevant consulting support for the customers,” said Stockinger.

The goal behind the company’s R&D is to understand the needs of its domestic customers better. In fact, this is TRUMPF’s investment strategy in general for Korea. With operations in more than 40 countries, the company has focused from the beginning on being close to the Korean market and to globally leading sectors including semiconductors, flat panels and steel. TRUMPF’s total investment in Korea reaches 10 million euros.

“[Korea] is a place where we learn what our customers need in the future. So to understand the need of Samsung in the future,” said Stockinger, citing one company as an example, “We have to be here.”

ONE OF THE ADVANTAGES FOR TRUMPF KOREA OF DOING BUSINESS IN KOREA IS THE FAST-PACED DOMESTIC ECONOMY, SAID STOCKINGER, AND HOW QUICK KOREA IS TO DISCERN AND MEET MARKET NEEDS.

TRUMPF Korea applied for a plot of land in Digital Media City, a high-tech complex for digital technologies, in 2003 with the City of Seoul. The company and its investment partners built what is now called the TRUTEC Building — the “TRU” is for the first half of “TRUMPF” — and moved in in 2007. The building’s tenants include other companies.

One of the advantages for TRUMPF Korea of doing business in Korea is the fast-paced domestic economy, said Stockinger, and how quick Korea is to discern and meet market needs.

“These days, besides quality and price/cost efficiency, and the standard of technology, there is one more component to be successful, which is time,” said the president. “And especially on that point, you can learn a lot from Korea.”

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Did you know?
- TRUMPF began in 1923 as a manufacturer of parts for dentistry and wood- and metalworking.
- The introduction of TRUMPF’s TRUMATIC 180 laser press in 1977 opened a new chapter in sheet metal processing for the company.
- TRUMPF products have made appearances in movies, including the German flick, “Anatomy 2.”