

With the help of Sofon, 'we can now always be the first'. Because quoting first 'also means setting the standard'.



Sven Kotteck, Solution Manager CPQ

In the fast lane

World market leader for optical systems

Berlin-based Scansonic offers systems solutions for laser and electric arc joining as well as laser hardening. Scansonic stands for innovation, perfection and reliable partnership in the field of material processing with solids lasers, diode lasers, fiber lasers and traditional electric-arc methods such as MIG/MAG, Plasma, Plasmatron®, ColdArc® and CMT.

Scansonic's modular processing heads for automatic laser welding and laser soldering of fine sheets represent the latest state of the art in manufacturing technology. Its integrated seam tracking solution in particular has made a name for the company in car body construction. Furthermore, with its adaptive platform for seam tracking, Scansonic offers its tried-and-tested technology for electric-arc welding and soldering.

The Scansonic Group's customers include companies like Audi and Volkswagen, BMW and Mercedes-Benz, Porsche and General Motors, Siemens, Bombardier, ThyssenKrupp, Kuka and Magna.

COMFORTABLE SOFTWARE SOLUTION FOR COMPLEX QUOTATIONS - SCANSONIC OUTPACES OTHER AUTOMOTIVE SUPPLIERS WITH SOFON

For joining and processing their car bodies, the car industry needs highly complex products within short periods of time. Suppliers looking for success in this sector therefore need to produce high-quality quotations very quickly. Not a simple task - but one that Scansonic MI GmbH easily masters thanks to the introduction of the Sofon software. Today, the automotive supplier from Berlin is in the fast lane.

First come, first served - a lesson some suppliers from the car industry learn the hard way. In the past, Scansonic occasionally lost out too because the range became available to the car industry later than that of competitors. Being late 'is quite clearly a crucial competitive disadvantage', explains Sven Kotteck, Solution Manager CPQ at Scansonic. With the help of Sofon, 'we can now always be the first'. Because quoting first 'also means setting the standard'.

ONLY HALF AN HOUR

Customers have been noticing how quickly Scansonic now creates its quotations. In the past, it could take seven to ten days. Today, half an hour after the request has been received, the customer has the quotation.

30 minutes for a quotation? Sounds incredible. Because after all a Scansonic system consists of several components that are themselves highly complex - all the more so once assembled. Several billion theoretical variants exist. New products further increase the number of variants. But such is the market: 'It requires flexible solutions, not rigid products,' emphasizes Sven Kotteck. And tailored precisely to the needs of the customer. However, Scansonic has successfully addressed the challenge.

INTEGRATE BOUNDARY CONDITIONS

The customer's boundary conditions play a key role in producing quotations. Any carelessness creates a risk of errors.



‘Today, everything is so much easier and faster,’ and ‘if only we’d had this software sooner’, everyone agrees.

The question about the suitable cable variant alone is demanding - an experience that Scansonic had in the past. Before Sofon, the common practice was to determine the necessary cables in accordance with the four-eyes principle. However, different combinations often arose depending on the experience of the employees, which then had to be validated in several runs.

CABLE WANTED - AND FOUND

It was time for a change, which proved successful with Sofon. ‘The software is programmed so that it identifies precisely where a cable is required, making it easy to determine the suitable cable,’ says Sven Kotteck. The two elements to be connected transmit their interface specifications which are then used to browse all the cables available at Scansonic and choose the corresponding cable. The user then chooses the cable length in line with the customer’s production layout. This ultimately results in cost savings for both Scansonic and the customer. Another effect: the always suitable quotation makes a professional impression on the customer.

Quotations are now not only drawn up without errors, but also faster. Prior to the Sofon era, the sales employee often had to coordinate with other Scansonic departments before a quotation could be sent to the customer. These included the key account manager, who was familiar with the customer’s arrangements and standards, the technical support department, which was familiar with the dependencies of the customer’s modules and boundary conditions, the product management as product experts, and the order management, who were aware of the delivery and payment terms. However most contacts are engaged in operational areas and not experts in the details of quotations, making it all very time consuming.

COMPLEXITY NOW CONTROLLABLE

This is all history now. With Sofon, the situation has become a lot easier for Scansonic and its customers. ‘Today, everything is so much easier and faster,’ and ‘if only we’d had this software sooner’, everyone agrees. Using Sofon, the quotation process is lean and the complexity of the products can be controlled.

High growth rates

Scansonic MI, a company within the Scansonic Group, considers itself a premium provider and global market leader in optical systems. Its users include the car manufacturing, car component, energy technology and rail vehicle sectors.

Scansonic was established in Berlin in 2000. Scansonic MI followed in 2007 as part of today’s Scansonic Group. The Group’s global distribution network includes 13 distribution and service partners.

Scansonic Group sales grow annually by 20 percent and hit around EUR 45.5 million in 2017, targeting EUR 58 million in 2020. In parallel, the workforce has increased strongly - from 100 five years ago to 250 (last revised 2017), 42 percent of whom work for Scansonic MI.

Scansonic responded to its growth by relocating the company with its three sites to centralized premises in a commercial zone in Berlin-Marzahn.





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Because all the necessary data is integrated in Sofon, the software program acts as a knowledge management tool as well. It is no longer necessary to coordinate with other departments; there is now only one application tool for creating quotations. 'And with the logic in Sofon, an effective process has been established that queries the necessary requirements in a targeted manner and selects them accordingly,' says Sven Kotteck. Sofon only combines suitable elements. 'This makes it impossible to offer a product that does not match customer requirements.'

Furthermore, Sofon reduces the revision phase, because the sales employee no longer has to run through the complex process of assessing the changes in the quotation himself. Sofon does this automatically. Any changes required to the quotation can be implemented in a matter of seconds, so the customer can immediately see the effects on the price. Transparency is key in this.

NO IT DEGREE REQUIRED

Today, a sales employee can independently draw up a quotation - both commercially and technically. And this can be explained as follows: the logic of a product, the sequence of a quotation creation process, the algorithm for the system calculation and much more can be drawn up via Editor (Sofon Studio) within the Sofon software. By combining various elements, which are provided by Editor, a model is developed that virtually presents the reality. 'To operate Editor, it is not necessary to have a degree in IT. General programming skills suffice. The data analyzed by the model are largely from other systems, for example the ERP system or PDM system,' explains Sven Kotteck.

NOW ONLY RELEVANT DATA

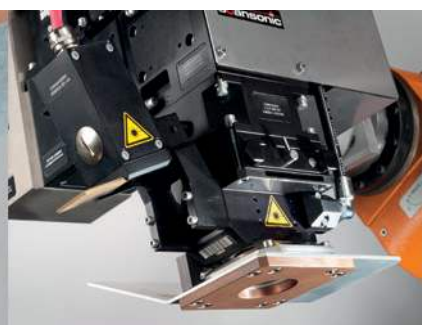
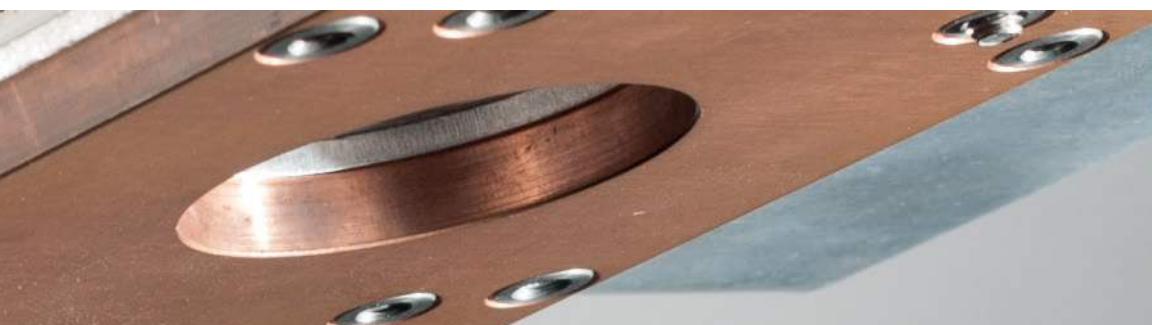
Speaking of virtual presentation: today, it is no longer necessary to save every quotation variant in the ERP system. The composition of the product is carried out by Sofon virtually outside the ERP system. Only when a customer orders a product is the relevant data also written to the ERP system.

Benefit: no unnecessary master data clogs up the system or takes up employees' time because they no longer need to consider whether this master data is still relevant.

CUSTOMER-DRIVEN QUOTATIONS

Misunderstandings are also relegated to the past. For example, different employees will no longer create different solutions with the same background situation because 'the central database means that the same inquiries always result in the same answers.'

And this is good for customers as well: today's quotations are more customer-driven and less production-focused. From a production perspective, the system elements were listed in great detail but not what features had been ordered by the customer. 'It's a bit like buying a car and not being given a list of the fitting features such as ABS and a sliding roof, but a list of components, so four wheels, a steering wheel, four seats, an accelerator pedal, a plastic petrol tank, etc.





‘Now that coordination is no longer necessary, errors are avoided because the Sofon solution is available everywhere and at all times.’

With the customer's perspective, we can now write the features of our quotations precisely, which we offer to customers or which the customer requests from us,” explains Sven Kotteck enthusiastically.

SOFON PROMOTES SCANSONIC GROWTH

Today, Scansonic is rightly proud of its yearly growth of 20 percent. As recently as 2014, 80 percent of the sales were generated in Europe. However the market is becoming increasingly saturating. For that reason, countries outside of Europe are now becoming the focus. Scansonic therefore aims to generate a large share of its sales via sales partners beyond this continent. With Sofon, Scansonic can really gather pace as a component supplier of the car industry.

Time-consuming coordination, however, would stop the global expansion. One example: a sales partner from China needs a quotation quickly so that its Chinese customer buys from them rather than the competition. ‘Given the time difference to the head office in Berlin, there's only a small time window to directly coordinate a quotation technically and commercially,’ says Sven Kotteck.

With the Sofon solution, however, the dealerships and partners are able to independently draw up quotations and order them from Scansonic. Nobody needs to know laser optics inside out to draw up a quotation, for example. Now that coordination is no longer necessary, errors are avoided because the Sofon solution is available everywhere and at all times. As such, ‘Sofon promotes the growth of Scansonic,’ summarizes Sven Kotteck.

FAST AND COMMITTED WORK

Despite all the benefits, a system change is naturally cumbersome and hurdles must be overcome. ‘The collaboration with Sofon was initially a bit difficult,’ remembers Sven Kotteck. But this was mainly because Scansonic did not yet have the corresponding know-how ‘to act on a level playing field with Sofon’.

The committed use of the Sofon project team, however, meant that suitable measures were quickly taken to achieve the joint objective. ‘The Sofon employees responsible for Scansonic were always available and could support us with their fast and very committed work during the implementation process. The collaboration and communication are also open, pleasant and transparent after the end of the project.’

SELF-AWARENESS

Scansonic relied on self-awareness in the implementation of Sofon. For a while, there were two quotation processes, old and new, so that employees could make a direct comparison. Obviously, the ‘old hands’ of sales found the change harder than others. They initially stuck to the tried-and-tested principle. But the growing complexity of the products and the zero fault rate of the quotations ultimately convinced them.

In figures: 100 percent of the sales employees of the sales partners use Sofon ‘and are highly satisfied’. Instead of the four weeks which used to be required for employee training sessions, a one-day session is enough to get to know Sofon.

‘VERY GOOD EXPERIENCE’

But more sales employees will soon be working with Sofon. Following in the footsteps of Scansonic MI GmbH, the software will also be implemented by other subsidiaries of the Scansonic Group in the coming years. And, as Sven Kotteck says, there's a good reason for that: ‘We have very good experience with Sofon.’ The Berlin-based company can therefore continue to accelerate...

