

Everything from one source

For more than 80 years, R+FK Schulte KG has been producing a wide range of DIN/ISO washers, as well as a broad production range of special parts according to customers' specifications – all based on the company's policy of trust and reliability.

A key factor in R+FK's success is its high production quality – with all its products produced with a 'Made in Germany' guarantee. "Rather than 'Made in Germany' we like to say 'Made in Plettenberg,'" mentions Peter Schlütter, sales manager at R+FK Schulte, with a smile. "As a family-owned company we have been headquartered in Plettenberg since we were established in 1938 and we are very proud of our heritage. Our focus has always been on high-end stamping technology 'Made in Plettenberg' to ensure perfect results during each production process."

Today, the company has more than 140 employees and processes more than 30,000 tonnes of flat steel annually. Recently, R+FK Schulte has made several strategic investments to enable it to continue to provide customers with the reliability that it is renowned. "The last two years have been very positive and there have been a lot of developments at the company," explains Peter. "Our philosophy was to stay in the DIN and ISO markets with standards, as well as offer special parts, and this has been very successful for us. There has been an increase in demand for both standard and special parts, with customers taking advantage of the opportunity to buy from a trusted supplier. The split is now 50% standard parts and 50% special parts."

Peter continues: "Last time the magazine visited in 2015, we had just installed the 800 tonne press machine. It was definitely the right decision, with the new capacity and the possibility to stamp part thickness up to 12mm leading to lots of interest from customers."

R+FK Schulte is able to produce from a thickness range of 0.05mm – 12mm, with an outer diameter range of 3mm – 250mm, which is all produced on state of the art machinery. These parts can be based on drawings in small, medium and large-scale series. The company can also handle all materials suitable for stamping, including steel, high-alloy and spring steels, stainless steel, brass, aluminium, copper, as well as bi-metal bronze.

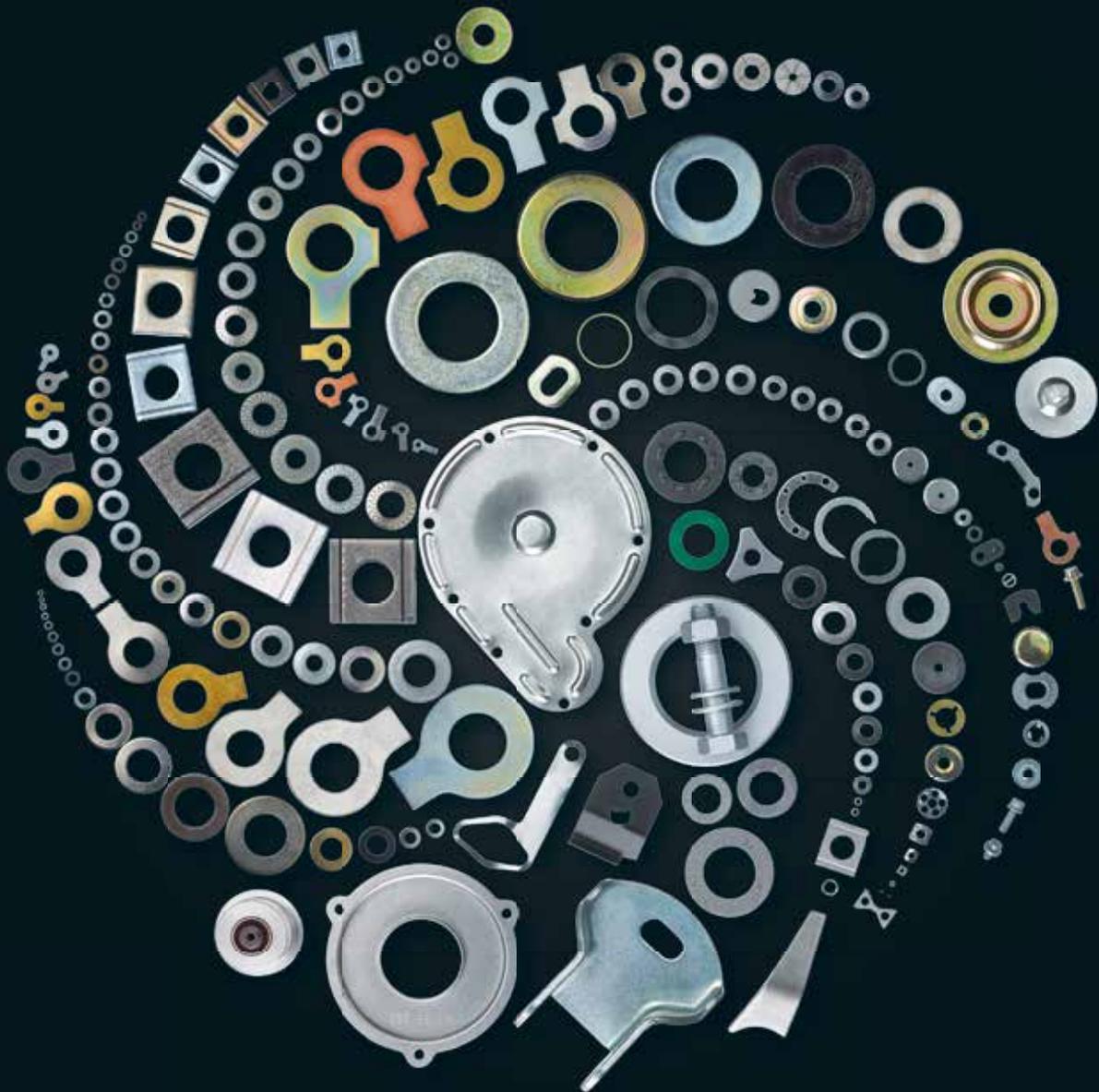
"The market is like a cake, the size always stays the same, it is just how big a slice you can get," says Peter. "Once you get a slice, you need to make sure you keep it. We have increased our business in northern Europe and in the neighbouring countries such as France, Switzerland and Poland. We supply mainly Europe, we do have some customers with operations globally, but we supply them through the European operations." →



R+FK Schulte has been headquartered in Plettenberg since 1938

Many different products for many different applications –
but something you can always rely on:

OUR SOLID CUSTOMIZED SERVICE



Made in Plettenberg, Germany – Guaranteed.

R+FK SCHULTE KG

rfks

Stamped parts
Washers
Screw locking devices



R+FK Schulte has the knowledge of the tools to ensure quality and reliability of the products

Along with the reliability and quality of the products, R+FK Schulte is committed to creating a close relationship with customers and ensuring there is trust between both parties. "Keeping a close relationship with customers is something everyone talks about, but it is another thing to deliver it," mentions Peter. "Whilst we are always looking to attract new customers, we are also very conscious that we need to continue to deliver a reliable service to our existing customers. Being able to deliver your products when you say you will is essential. Price is obviously an important factor, but reliability and service is just as

→ Other recent investments by the company include a new 160 tonne stamping machine to help with capacity; a new bag/box packing line that has helped optimise the warehouse and made the packing process more efficient; an additional optical sorting machine for 100% control and to meet customers' demands for 50ppm; as well as investment in the tool shop to enable the company to continue to produce its own tooling and machinery.

"When we talk about 'Made in Plettenberg' we do not only talk about the parts we produce, but also the tooling we use for the machines, which are made in-house," points out Peter. "We have always had our own tool shop since we were founded in 1938 and we will continue to have one for the future. You need to have a lot of knowledge of the tools to ensure quality and reliability of the products. Also, it means the control of the whole process is in our own hands, which is very important."

Another advantage of the tool shop is R+FK Schulte can react quickly to customers' questions and requests. "Our knowledge and experience means we can answer customers' question precisely and we can also support customers' with drawings, by suggesting ideas and potential tolerances for producing the part," adds Peter. "Being flexible is vital if you are going to attract and keep customers. Our tool shop means we can be innovative and work on new tools and technologies to stamp parts that five years ago wasn't possible. If you can help a customer change from a turned part to a stamped part they can make significant cost reductions. The number of customers coming to us and asking for stamped parts instead of turned, cold forged or hot forged is definitely increasing."

For R+FK Schulte its daily challenge is the constant development of its technology expertise – this is how the company succeeds in handling even the most complex orders and to fulfil each demand. "For DIN and standard parts it is very difficult to say your products are a better quality than your competitors, because they should all meet a set standard," states Peter. "However, sometimes the required standards, whether it be dimensions, surface treatments, etc, are not always met by some companies. That is why at R+FK Schulte we always guarantee the right quality to the standards – 100% every time."

By using an active quality management system R+FK Schulte can also continuously improve the quality of production processes and end products – enabling it to achieve the highest possible customer satisfaction. The company also follows the specifications of DIN EN ISO 9001:2009, DIN EN ISO 14001:2009, as well as ISO/TS 16949:2009.

important. We won't offer a short delivery time just to win an order. Sometimes our leads are longer than usual, but we make our customers aware of the situation."

Peter continues: "Every company will at some point have a delay or a problem in production. When it happens to us we try and inform the customer ahead of the delivery date, so they have a chance to react. This kind of service level is very easy, but not every company does it. They don't want to admit to potential problems, but taking responsibility for it and trying to resolve the issue is a real service. Whether it is positive or negative information it is important you keep in contact with your customers. It is better than no information."

A recent example of R+FK's close communication with its customers involved the changes in material prices. "The raw material price changes at the beginning of the year had a big impact, especially for us as a stamping company where almost 50% of the material is scrap due to the production processes," explains Peter. "We realised there could be a potential bottleneck within the supply chain, so we were proactive and spoke to our customers and informed them about this risk and they appreciated the foresight. We made customers aware of the potential price increases and that delivery times could potentially be impacted due to less material being available – especially the material for high strength washers. We spoke to our customers and agreed frame contracts, where they let us know their needs for the whole year, so we could ensure we had the right stock of material."

Peter concludes: "We will continue our strategy to grow and offer a reliable service to customers. Whilst at the same time looking at our production processes and delivery service to see where we can optimise the overall process. We will also keep the close relationship we have with our customers and make sure they are always aware of the current situation, whether positive or negative. That is the only way to keep your customers' trust. That is 'Made in Plettenberg'... that is R+FK Schulte." +

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