Customer-friendly user concepts are becoming increasingly important

Functioning rather than fiddling about

“Please unpack the packaging and Button 32 next to RSC67 interface. If there is problem, it must immediately to be changed.” No one could be in any doubt: the quote is taken from a set of operating instructions. And you can just imagine the poor user who has managed to get this device started – if at all – only after many hours of laborious trial and error. “Business is increasingly recognizing that usability is a key criterion for market success,” says usability expert Franz Koller of Wirtschaftswoche magazine.

In fact, the presumption amongst the experts is that many companies have for a long time underestimated the fundamental importance of customer-friendly user concepts. According to a recent survey, in the USA alone poor software and user concepts are responsible for causing production losses of 30 billion dollars. In Germany, four in every five accidents at work are attributable to operating errors, according to a study by Sirvaluse Consulting. And an investigation by the testing body TÜV Rheinland established that 20 per cent of working time on office computers is given over to resolving problems in using them. This is why the call being issued by Germany’s first Professor for Usability, Michael Burmeister, is unmistakable: “Technology needs to be easy to operate, comprehensible, and thus ultimately person-

News

TOYOTA: 2005 RECORD SALES IN EUROPE
2005 saw Toyota increasing its sales in Europe for the ninth year in succession. The Japanese car manufacturer sold a total of 964,205 vehicles under its Toyota and Lexus brands last year – a five per cent increase over 2004. Toyota has similarly posted a record result in terms of its European market share: the 2005 figure is up by 0.2 per cent, to 5.1 per cent.

CHINA’S ECONOMY IS BOOMING
Compared against 2004, China’s economy has grown by 9.9 per cent over the fourth quarter for 2005. Taking the 2005 figures for the whole year, the country has recorded a similar 9.9 per cent increase in GDP.

BRANKAMP EXHIBITING IN ASIA
The Asian economy is booming, and BRANKAMP is well set up to share in this boom with its agencies and trade fair exhibitions in Asia. The company will also be presenting its innovative ProcessMonitoring systems at the Sheet MetalForm China 2006 Exhibition & Conference from March 14-17 in Shanghai. During 2005, BRANKAMP exhibited at shows which included the Korea Metal Week and the International Machinery Equipment Exhibition in Shanghai.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH:
“More than the past, I am interested in the future, because I intend to spend the rest of my life there”.

Albert Einstein
News

FACTORYNET® PROJECT TO RECEIVE EU FUNDING
FactoryNet® – a concept which stands for greater efficiency in production through the networking of production. Further development of the innovative BRANKAMP concept is being promoted by the Land North Rhine-Westphalia using EU funds. “It is a truly exciting challenge,” says project manager Dr. Jörn Herold.

WIRE 2006: ALREADY SET TO BREAK RECORDS
Even now – one month before the exhibition starts – wire 2006 is breaking all records. 959 companies will be exhibiting their innovative new products from April 24-28 in Düsseldorf, in an exhibition space covering around 50,000 m2 – that is around 2,500 m2 more than two years ago. BRANKAMP is naturally taking part. The ProcessMonitoring specialist is exhibiting its products on Stand C58 in Hall 16.

FIGURE OF THE MONTH:
Days lost to strikes, compared internationally
Average days lost annually through strikes per 1,000 dependent workers for the period 1994-2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Days Lost</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iceland</td>
<td>554 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>234 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>119 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>97 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>73 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>42 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>41 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>24 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>9 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>4 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>3 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>1 day</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With 554 lost working days, Iceland is the clear leader when it comes to industrial disputes, with Spain in second place with 234 days. Germany workers are less volatile. In Germany disputes caused the loss of just 4 working days.

Portrait

The Man for the Far East

India, China, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan, Korea, the Philippines and the Asian part of Turkey – Gerd Köster works in those places where other people go on holiday. The 43-year old has been responsible for the BRANKAMP’s overseas agencies since 1996. “Within this, my main area is the Asia region,” says Köster. One thing is for certain – he constantly experiences new things as a result.

“The fascinating thing about my job is that I am constantly learning about new cultures and getting to know new people,” says Köster. For that reason, he observes that it is particularly important to him to be able to get on with different people. “Initially, Asian culture was completely new territory for me, but now I feel very much at home there. Fluent English is of course vitally important in getting along,” says Köster, who has been working for the ProcessMonitoring specialist since 1989.

The strength of the link between Gerd Köster and the Asian region is also reflected in his hobby. “If occasionally I am not flying halfway around the world for BRANKAMP, then I am a passionate biker.” You almost don’t need to ask what brand of bike he rides: Kawasaki.

Monitored by BRANKAMP

BRANKAMP – a word in your ear

The mobile phone market is expanding very rapidly, and with it the development of new mobile phone models. Each new generation is smaller, more compact and offers better performance than the previous one. Whereas in the past users had to hold up a device as heavy as a brick to their ear, today’s mobile phones are barely bigger than a credit card and light as a feather – in some cases, weighing under 100 grams. The development also means ever higher demands in the production of the individual parts: screws, displays and motherboards too all need to be significantly smaller, with no loss of quality. For that reason, various manufacturers are now relying on BRANKAMP ProcessMonitoring systems for this sensitive area of production.

Functioning rather than fiddling about

friendly; if it does this, it fulfils its task and becomes successful.”

User-friendliness as the key to success

“User-friendliness is one of the key aspects of our corporate success,” underlines Professor Klaus Brankamp, founder and managing director of the BRANKAMP Group. “Our ProcessMonitoring systems need to be quickly deployed in day-to-day production without elaborate training being required. With each new development, we have interdisciplinary teams working on this key issue.” The latest examples of this come with the transfer of the mobile phone user concept familiar to the operator to the BRANKAMP ProcessMonitoring systems, the innovative one-button operation or what is known as “quick-start” mode. “In achieving this, we have reduced complex engineering to a very simple user concept: plug in, press the button and start production.”

Need for action recognised

Leading companies such as SAP, Siemens, DaimlerChrysler and BMW have now also addressed this key issue. Experts such as product designers, information architects, psychologists or usability engineers are working to make the new technologies as easy to use as possible.
GT as control station

Everything on view

For process monitoring of individual machines, BRANKAMP is offering its proven CMS systems in a wide range of options. In combination with the GT-Terminal as a control station, individual systems become a network for controlling entire production flows.

The CM Systems are linked with an in-house CAN-bus and are brought together at the control station PC. There, data for each individual machine can be called up in text or graphic form. This includes current production status, or the machine’s stop-go diagram.

The advantages are self-evident: using the GT-Terminal as a control station, the production manager has an overview of all systems. Via the touch-screen, he can call off various process data such as production time or run-time behaviour.

The data is archived in the control station for 14 days and can be called up again at any time. Data storage over longer periods is possible without any difficulty via a software-side upgrade. Similarly, it is possible to retrofit existing CMS systems with a GT control station. Integration into a network of this type increases the value of the individual CMS system, because the ability to check at a glance means the production manager does not need to move around to each individual machine.

Theoretically, at the CAN-bus level it is possible to network up to 31 CMS systems and to run them via a single control station. In practice, an arrangement on this scale is normally not pursued. Where there are larger numbers of systems, several networks are installed and the control stations for these networks are in turn connected via ETHER-Net to the current network link.

Using the GT-Terminal as a network control station, BRANKAMP facilitates simple and efficient monitoring of entire production flows at a glance.
BRANKAMP CMS

Machining centres need machine protection

BRANKAMP has always considered itself a partner and problem-solver. Accordingly, it has developed the right solutions to suit different machining centres. This guarantees all customers high utility value for their ProcessMonitoring devices.

The BRANKAMP CMS Process-Monitoring system protects machining centres effectively against collisions and cost-intensive spindle damage. As a result, repair costs are reduced and machine run-times increased. Rapid changes in force are identified by special sensor equipment in 0.00165 seconds. The CMS immediately issues a signal which automatically stops the machine.

Often, human failure is the main reason for collisions. BRANKAMP CMS helps the operator even when setting-up the machining centre. The result of this is that the consequences of a collision, a programming error, set-up error or operating error are reduced to a minimum. At the same time, machine downtime is reduced.

User-friendliness

The rich diversity of languages

If employees with different mother tongues are working on the same machine, comprehension problems are often an obstacle to smooth working. The BRANKAMP GT/GT 100 takes account of this, with its options for language selection. This means that at all times the worker has the option of operating the device in his own language.

The advantages are self-evident: even during employee training, the module offers assistance. Thus, for example, the operator induction process can be carried out directly on the machine using the operator’s own language. Touch-screen operation is child’s play, guiding the user through the menu. The mask for switching languages is accessed via the “Expert” button in the main menu. If the “Language” button is selected there, the “Language Menu 1” mask appears, and the choice of specific language type can be made there using the arrow keys. If the system should happen to be set to a language which is unfamiliar to the operator, the problem can be quickly rectified thanks to the simple pictograms employed.