



Press Release

22 June 2007

Gutekunst Stahlverformung is once again one of Germany's top innovators

Lothar Späth awards *Top 100* seal of approval to metal spring manufacturer from Pfalzgrafenweiler in south-west Germany

Pfalzgrafenweiler – Gutekunst Stahlverformung KG is one of the 100 most innovative small and medium-sized companies (SMEs) in Germany according to this year's nationwide *Top 100* corporate benchmarking competition. Now in its 15th year, the aim of this competition is to seek out outstanding examples of innovation management in Germany's SME sector. Lothar Späth, former state premier of Baden-Württemberg, will award this prestigious seal of approval to Gutekunst at an official ceremony at the Phönixhalle in Stuttgart on Friday evening.

As patron of the SME project he will be recognising Gutekunst's success in the five key categories of "Successful Innovations", "Climate of Innovation", "Innovative Processes and Organisation", "Innovation-friendly Senior Management" and "Innovations Marketing". This is the second consecutive time that Gutekunst has qualified for the *Top 100*. Its success is due to having the courage to be innovative, without which it would not have had such success in the market. Products and production processes are constantly refined, an independent, cross-departmental research and development team meets every two weeks to discuss new ideas and share information. The working environment in an organisation must also be conducive to new ideas, so teamwork, flat hierarchies and the principle of the "open office" are important elements. Additionally, motivation training, regular ergonomic inspections of the workplace and health and safety awareness days help to promote the general well-being of the 93-strong team. Bonuses and prizes for successfully implemented ideas also encourage employees to be creative. If there is any doubt that Gutekunst is on the right track, the figures speak for themselves: the proportion of revenue generated by products developed in the past three years is 75 per cent.

Top 100 seeks out and encourages small and medium-sized enterprises with outstanding innovative capabilities. The search is carried out by experts in innovation from the Vienna University of Economics and Business Administration, led by Professor Nikolaus Franke. A first questionnaire is used to record the innovative potential of entrants, then a second questionnaire is used to assess key aspects of their

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innovation management. Prof Franke summarises the results for each winning company in a comprehensive benchmarking report. "This means that the award has a practical use for us, as well as enhancing our image", enthused Sigrid and Hagen Gutekunst, members of the Gutekunst management team. "The SWOT analysis enables us to further optimise our innovation management on the basis of a sound scientific evaluation."

The *Top 100* project is organised by compamedia GmbH, Überlingen, Germany. All 100 companies are featured in the book "*Top 100 – the 100 most innovative companies in Germany's SME sector*" introduced by Lothar Späth. Further details about the companies are presented on the website at www.top100.de and they are provided with basic PR and press support. Furthermore, as *Top 100* award-winners they automatically belong to the network of top innovators and benefit from meetings and contacts with the other 99 finalists. Overall more than 280 companies entered the *Top 100* competition this year. The next round of this prestigious competition for SMEs begins in September 2007.

Patron, partners and coordination

The project's patron is Lothar Späth. Partners in the project are: Fraunhofer Society for the Promotion of Applied Research, the German Centre for Productivity and Innovation (RKW), the Association for Electrical, Electronic & Information Technologies (VDE) and the Association of German Engineers (VDI). The media partner is the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* newspaper. The project is coordinated by Professor Nikolaus Franke of the Institute for Entrepreneurship and Innovation at the Vienna University of Economics and Business Administration.

Organiser: compamedia GmbH

compamedia specialises in organising benchmarking projects for German medium-sized firms and in developing networks of such companies. It runs the "*Top 100 – the 100 most innovative companies in Germany's SME sector*" project as well as the employers' benchmarking award "*Top Job – Germany's 100 best SME employers*". Its most recent project is "*Ethics in Business – pioneers of ethical conduct*".

This text is available in digital format from masurat@compamedia.de; photographs of the awards ceremony will be available in the Press section of www.top100.de from Sunday, 24 June. Your contact can provide pictures of the prize-winning company.

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