Insight

CUSTOMER MAGAZINE

19/2026

Innovative spirit as a factor for success

TRANSFORMING SPACES, PUSHING BOUNDARIES

New assignment, new perspective
How to reposition yourself in a demanding market

The CUBE at the centre of attention
How a customer enquiry turns into a new product series

An investment changes everything
A new approach to panel processing

HAMUEL REICHENBACHER
Members of the SCHERDELGroup

Foreword by Serhat Kabatas.

Trust that connects – innovation that moves

Dear customers, business partners and colleagues

My biggest surprise came from a customer I won‘t forget anytime soon: after several team calls in which we discussed all the details and requirements, we met in person for the very first time... and the customer simply signed the offer. No lengthy deliberation, no hesitation. On the other hand, I also deal with projects that demand a lot of time and effort, where decision-making sometimes takes years. This broad spectrum makes my job challenging, but also exciting and dynamic. And it shows me how crucial trust is – alongside with thorough preparation.

In our cover story, we take you to Switzerland to visit a staircase manufacturer that with impressive passion ventures into designs that others consider impossible. Their courage, creativity and excellent craftsmanship have been honored with numerous prestigious awards. Another company based in Switzerland is Pius Schuler AG, which manufactures large-format blockboard panels that not only offer impressive structural properties but also make a real aesthetic statement in timber construction and interior design.

Our Head of Design and Development provides an exciting glimpse behind the scenes. He takes us through the development phases of a specialised system and uses the CUBE roadmap to show how much time, expertise and teamwork go into such projects – and how important customer feedback is in each individual phase.

Furthermore, we give our newly appointed Head of Sales the opportunity to speak frankly and personally about his responsibilities and strategies. And our four new apprentices talk about their first impressions and their plans and wishes for the years ahead.

In other words, this issue is once again full of stories that show what we are driven by.

I hope you will enjoy reading this issue,

Serhat Kabatas
Area Sales Manager Austria & Switzerland
Reichenbacher Hamuel GmbH

Imprint

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New assignment, new perspective

And the question of how Reichenbacher Hamuel is repositioning itself in this demanding market

Changes are always a signal – both an internal and an external one. At Reichenbacher Hamuel, the choice of the new Head of Sales was very deliberately made from within the company's own ranks: a long-standing sales expert with international market experience, technical know-how and direct links to the company headquarters. In a challenging market environment, he now assumes the overall responsibility for the sales department.

An interview with Johannes Reiser about his new role as Head of Sales.

What changes, when you are no longer responsible just for markets and customers, but for the entire sales organisation?

New strategic approach
Before, I used to work on individual projects. Today, it is a matter of forming an overall strategy from many individual cases. That is the main difference. Instead of just asking which customer currently has a need, the focus is now on the bigger picture: which machine concepts are so strong that they can be widely marketed?

Taking action instead of reacting
The key objective is to shift the focus from simply responding to enquiries towards an active sales strategy. A highly sophisticated plant for timber construction was sold four times within two years. Such products must be "pushed" systematically. The market exists and we are competitive: then such a system MUST become a standard product for ALL salespeople. And vice versa, this also means letting go of areas where you are not seeing any success. Not every product or industry warrants our full sales efforts.

Strategy also means setting priorities
We are well positioned – customer-oriented wood, aluminium and plastic solutions or high-end machines such as the HSTM series. The challenge consists in structuring this broad spectrum: Where is it worthwhile to invest even greater effort? Where is it not? There is no way we can work with equal intensity on everything at the same time. We must channel our energy into areas where a market exists. Markets where there is almost a complete lack of investments tie up resources – without any realistic chance of success.

How can you build trust and provide clear guidance without disregarding tried-and-tested methods?

Tact and sensitivity are required
I am taking over a team with many experienced salespeople and I am aware that there may be friction. My approach: acceptance does not depend on titles, but on the impact you make. When my colleagues realise that my work makes it easier for them to sell machines, acceptance will come naturally. At the same time, I want to differentiate: some people need guidelines, others need maximum freedom. Guidance does not mean uniform treatment, but rather targeted support, sometimes even at the customer on site.

How does profound technical knowledge help to better harmonise customer requirements, market trends and internal priorities?

Leadership based on a technical foundation
As a mechanical engineer, I bring a profound technical background to the table – a distinct advantage in an era, where automation, interfaces, and system integration are becoming increasingly complex. In many cases, I know relatively early on, where things will become critical at a later stage. At the interfaces, in particular. This insight helps me make realistic promises – and ask the right questions internally before projects start heading in the wrong direction.

Where are opportunities for growth noticeable and which sales channels need to be evaluated differently today?

Rough times for sales activities
The market environment is tense: low willingness to invest, strong price orientation, great competitive pressure. High-end solutions such as those offered by Reichenbacher Hamuel have a harder time at present. My answer are successful reference projects and clearly defined machine concepts. Our most powerful argument is when customers repeatedly purchase the same type of system. Instead of reinventing every project, we rely on proven solutions with demonstrable benefits.

Making success measurable
Visions, strategies, style of leadership – in the end, only one figure counts: the number of orders received. As Head of Sales, I am measured against this benchmark. And that is precisely, where the real challenge of my new position lies: no longer in selling machines myself, but in creating conditions under which the entire team can make successful sales.

Why is the close proximity to the development and service departments and to the company management an advantage for everyone?

Close proximity is a competitive advantage
The fact that I am working at the company headquarters was also an important criterion for my appointment as Head of Sales. Direct coordination is crucial in special machine construction, where nearly all solutions developed are customised. Our flexibility is our greatest strength. It necessitates the close cooperation of sales, design, automation and service. The Head of Sales must be able to get things done within the company – quickly, directly and without lengthy communication channels.

Innovative spirit as a factor for success

Transforming spaces, pushing boundaries.

Circular staircase in smoked oak with veneered balustrades, curved bottom view and profiled free-form handrail.

TREPPENBAU.CH

Can a pioneering entrepreneurial spirit actually be instilled in others? Can courage, curiosity and a delight in the extraordinary really be passed down from one generation to the next? The experience of our customer treppenbau.ch is a clear affirmation of this. After all, the team in Ganterschwil demonstrates every day how this spirit of innovation continues to thrive within the company.

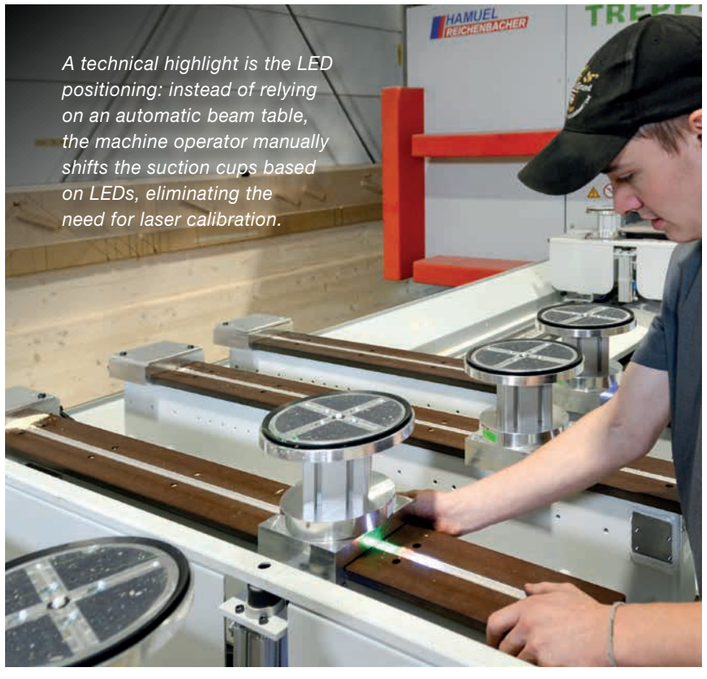
Dominik Kern, Deputy Production Manager, is a textbook example of this. He and his entire team constantly explore staircase designs that others would consider impossible. Their ambition is bearing fruit, as demonstrated at the 2024 Prix Lignum: the elliptical designer staircase for the House of Wood in Sursee received an award – an acknowledgement of their innovative work.

Since 1978, the company has been designing staircases that have an architectural impact on rooms. And especially over the last twenty years, it has consistently specialised in unusual staircases with complex geometries. They were quick to adopt CNC technology and to venture into demanding challenges such as circular, elliptical or floating staircase constructions, which others were hesitant to tackle. The specialists work with a lot of wood types, such as maple, beech, oak, ash, walnut and larch, as well as with metal, glass and stone. This results in folded staircases, saddle staircases, cantilevered and floating staircases, spiral staircases, designer staircases, modular staircases and stringer staircases in a wide variety of designs. Each staircase is unique, designed with the same passion as the very first one. None of this would have been possible without creativity, perseverance and a certain amount of risk-taking – a belief shared by Managing Directors Daniel Kern and Adrian Scherrer.

From the left: Serhat Kabatas (Area Sales Manager, Reichenbacher Hamuel), Dominik Kern (Deputy Production Manager) in front of the VISION-ST.

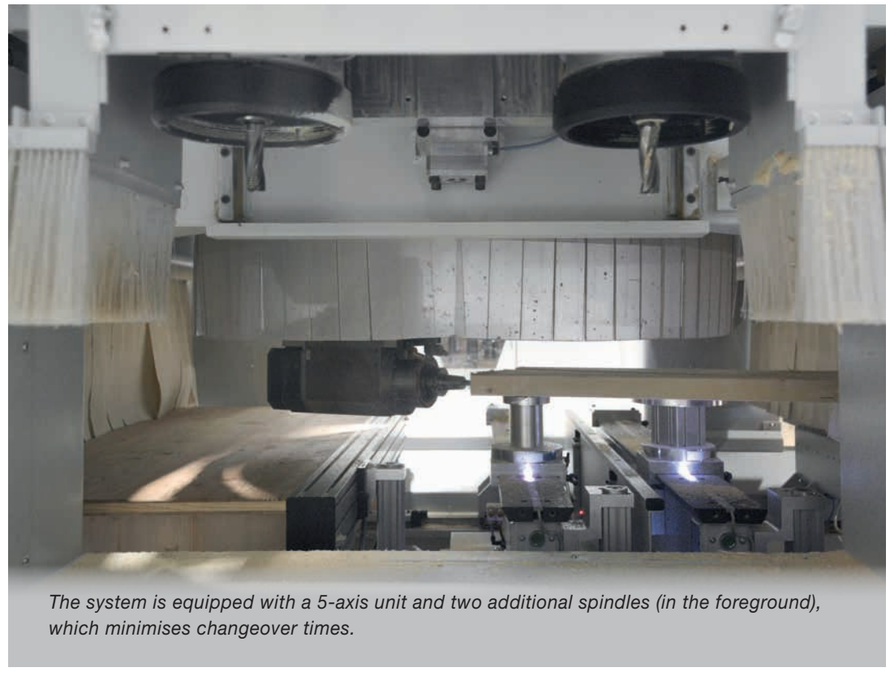
The first CNC system acquired from Reichenbacher Hamuel in 2009 has played a central part ever since. It had opened up new creative possibilities, but eventually reached its capacity limits. Particularly, when large orders were to be processed, things became tight – and some customer enquiries even had to be put on hold. Therefore, the management decided to invest in a second state-of-the-art 5-axis CNC system to overcome this bottleneck. “Today, both machines are working in parallel, which increases our flexibility, allows us to take on more orders, makes our processes more flexible and also increases our production reliability,” says Dominik Kern, adding: “It quickly became clear to us that we would once again opt for Reichenbacher. The reliability of their technology and the familiar operation mode were the deciding factors, and at the end of 2024 we were able to take delivery of the new VISION-ST 5-axis with manual beam table.“

”Under production aspects, the system‘s versatility is particularly impressive,“ Serhat Kabatas explains. Treppenbau.ch was looking for a compact, efficient CNC solution for flexible single-part production. The VISION-ST, with its special clamping technology, offers exactly this – plus the added benefit of industrial precision. The 5-axis technology and the table with 16 individually positionable base bodies, tubeless vacuum clamps, as well as post and step clamping devices, permit the machining of highly complex geometries and a wide variety of components, such as stringers or spiral steps – in a single clamping operation without the need for retooling. Working in parallel, additional milling motors shorten the cycle time and relieve the 5-axis unit, thereby reducing wear. And the generous travelling distances of 6,200 x 1,400 mm allow even large curved components to be machined. In everyday operation, this means higher precision, less effort and greater scope for challenging projects.



A technical highlight is the LED positioning: instead of relying on an automatic beam table, the machine operator manually shifts the suction cups based on LEDs, eliminating the need for laser calibration.

Thanks to the two CNC systems (in the foreground the new VISION-ST), the company is above all increasing its ability to implement complex designs and geometries that would virtually be impossible to achieve by hand.

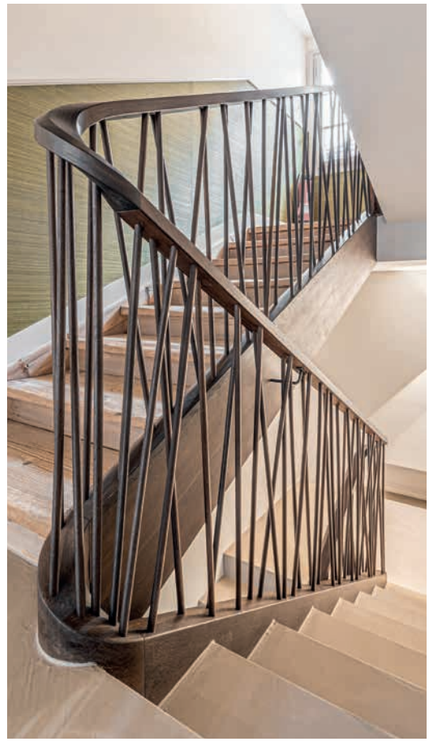


The system is equipped with a 5-axis unit and two additional spindles (in the foreground), which minimises changeover times.

LED positioning is a special feature of the new system. Instead of an automatic beam table, we use manual adjustment via LED, which eliminates the need for laser calibration: the entry of a code for the step results in the LEDs’ automatic adjustment. Moreover, we have integrated four additional suction cups into the table to position the step plates precisely on the suction cup. “We have decided on this flexible machine solution, as it is optimally tailored to our requirements in the diverse field of staircase construction,“ says Dominik Kern.

Thanks to the two CNC systems, we can take on more orders, fulfil individual requests and produce complex shapes that would be almost impossible to achieve manually. However, this changes quite a few things: ”We need more experts who are proficient in CNC processes and can use our specialised software,“ says Dominik Kern. Currently, up to seven planners are working with the staircase software, while three others are focusing exclusively on programming curved geometries. Only grinding and finishing work is still done by hand. The effect is clearly noticeable: higher throughput, better surface quality, faster processes. Every year, Treppenbau.ch manufactures around 500 staircases, 80 per cent of which are commissioned by carpenters, 15 per cent by architects and 5 per cent directly by private customers.

The specialists will continue to follow their strategy also in the future. Digitalisation, modern manufacturing, sustainable materials and responsible use of resources go hand in hand in Ganterschwil. The solar power system, an efficient heating and waste management, and the use of certified wood are all part of this commitment. However, the profession of staircase builder is changing: there is a shift away from purely manual work towards digitally supported processes. What remains the same, however, is the heart of the company: the passion for designing staircases that transform spaces and push the boundaries of what is possible.



Stair railing in smoked oak with stringers and curved handrails as well as irregularly spaced stakes.

The CUBE at the centre of attention

How a customer enquiry turns into a new product series.

At Reichenbacher Hamuel, new machines are not developed behind closed doors. Most of the time, it all starts with a very specific request from one of our clients. This is also the case with the new CUBE series – and that is precisely where its strength lies.

As we are a medium-sized manufacturer of specialised plants with no in-house research department, our development team deliberately focuses on working closely with users who know their processes inside out and can therefore provide crucial input.

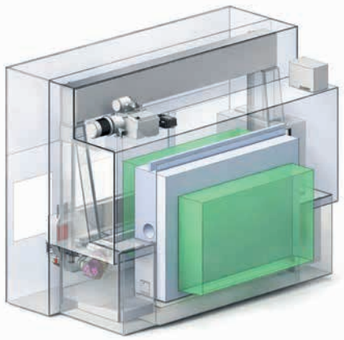
Interview with Dipl. Ing. (FH) Johannes Karl, Head of Design and Development

Working area 2,300 x 1,600 x 500 mm at a base area of 5,000 x 2,500 mm.

ROADMAP OUTLINING THE STEPS OF PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

What was the impetus for the development of the CUBE?

In this specific case, the enquiry came from the automotive supply industry. There, an existing robotic milling cell was to be replaced by a conventional milling machine, as the surface quality of the milled PU panoramic roof for an SUV was inadequate. While it would have been possible to repeat the process several times to improve the quality of the component, this would have meant that the required cycle time could no longer have been met.



Rough draft showing the functional elements for determining the space requirements for a given working area.

What specific requirements were under discussion?

They wanted higher precision and rigidity, the integration into an existing production line, as well as a very clearly defined working area.

The idea of a horizontal axis of rotation came from the customer. How did you deal with that?

Initially, this was just an idea, not a fixed requirement. We work in a very customer-oriented manner and always seriously consider such suggestions, because the customers know their overall process and understand what is important. If this solution had proved to be technically or economically inappropriate, we would have proposed another one. In this case, the concept was a good fit – partly because we already had experience with similar approaches from previous projects.

How does the early concept phase proceed?

This early development phase is always characterised by feasibility. A rough CAD model is first created from known puzzle pieces, such as space requirements, feed rates, workpiece dimensions, material and spindle power. The designers' objective is to ascertain whether all requirements can be successfully reconciled.

Who is involved in this phase?

We always start with a small team: field service, internal sales and design department work together right from the start. In some cases, the team also includes a PLC specialist. A so-called schematic CAD block model is often sufficient to evaluate proportions, movements and space requirements.

CUSTOMER FEEDBACK AS PART OF THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

How soon will the customer be involved?

At a comparatively early stage. Once the concept has been approved internally, we present it to the customer – with a concise overview of the technical features and simplified CAD models. Thus, the customer can see how the system is structured and how it works. Feedback is extremely important at this stage. Once the direction is clear, the project planning phase begins and all assemblies are calculated individually. However, the real execution will only begin with the order placement, while otherwise the project would be rejected.

Are there also discussions or changes of direction?

Definitely. Not every customer requirement can be implemented in a technically or economically feasible manner. At the same time, a dialogue often results in better solutions than originally anticipated. Sometimes the customers end up with something different than what they had imagined – but with something more suitable. Persuasion is always part of the process, as is weighing up alternatives.

The compact machine design makes efficient use of every millimetre of floor space.

In doing so, are you already thinking beyond that one customer?

Absolutely. It would not be economically viable to develop a system for just one customer. We give early consideration to whether the machine is also suitable for other applications: other materials, larger working areas, other spindle capacities. Modularity and variability are part of the development work right from the start.

The horizontal axis of rotation of the table minimises the space required.

Why is this so crucial?

The development costs are borne by us as the machine manufacturer. Material and manufacturing expenses must be covered, but development is at our own risk. These costs can only be amortised if the machine is sold multiple times. Therefore, the machine must be technically versatile in order to be successful in the market.

THE CUBE: COMPACT, RIGID, PRECISE

What makes the CUBE so special from a technical point of view?

The central feature is the concept of a turntable with a horizontal axis of rotation. This permits a comparatively large working space at a small footprint. At the same time, a clearly defined safety zone is created in front of the machine. This improves space utilisation and facilitates the integration into existing lines.

What are the specific advantages?

High rigidity and precision, stable process quality at a specified cycle time, good accessibility during set-up and a very good ratio of machining area to footprint. This is a significant advantage, particularly in confined production environments.

Were there any tests before delivery?

Not in this case. The customer was already familiar with the quality of our systems and had great confidence in them. The situation is a different one for new processes – in such cases, we conduct targeted testing, also using defined customer components, in order to identify potential for optimisation.

How important was the cooperation with other sectors involved?

Very important. The coordination with the customer's clamping device department was particularly intensive. Interfaces, signals and processes must match perfectly for mechanics, automation and clamping technology to function smoothly.

TIMELINE – FROM IDEA TO COMMISSIONING

How long did the journey take?

The concept and quotation phase took around two to three months, the complex development work by the design department another two to three months. This was followed by approximately eight to nine months of construction time. In total, it took around 14 months until the system was commissioned at the customer's site.

The CUBE exemplifies a development that is "market-driven". It shows how a specific problem, close customer consultation and technical experience can result in a new machine solution. Not as a standalone, but as a well-designed platform for a wide range of applications.

"Ultimately, it's always about improving the customer process. The machine is a means to an end."

(Johannes Karl)

An investment changes everything

A new approach to panel processing.

At Pius Schuler AG in Rothenthurm, a new era began in 2024. The decision to use CNC technology for processing solid blockboard panels entirely in-house for the first time was more than just a technical milestone. It was a clear commitment to greater independence, quality and customer-orientation. However, it was also a special moment for us as the machine manufacturer, because the VISION-III-TTT enables this traditional Swiss company to modernise its processes and to make them fit for the future.

In timber construction and interior design, customers rely on precisely machined panels that can be installed without any further effort. Until 2024, the final production step – the joinery of the Schuler blockboard panels – had to be outsourced to external partners. This was an organisationally complex undertaking, limited flexibility and extended delivery times. The decision to introduce in-house CNC machining has fundamentally changed the situation: panel processing, added value creation and quality control are now entirely within the company's responsibility.

Pius Schuler AG manufactures sustainable wood products and tailor-made system solutions for modern timber construction. Their focus is on large-format blockboard panels made from Swiss wood, which are impressive both structurally and aesthetically and are valued in timber construction and interior design. Panel dimensions of up to 9,000 x 3,000 mm and thicknesses from 19 to 280 mm permit applications in demanding timber and carpentry work.

Panel dimensions up to 9,000 x 3,000 mm and thicknesses from 19 to 280 mm are processed on the VISION-III-TTT CNC system from Reichenbacher Hamuel.

Their speciality: Schuler uses the lateral boards to produce blockboard with rift-cut surfaces that impresses with exceptional stability, low shrinkage and minimal cracking. "We deliver surface quality at the level of a traditional manufactory. And, on request, we also process our customers' wood – even from their own forests," explains Pascal Kuster, Chairman of the Management Board.

This investment marked a significant step forward for a company that had been working without CNC technology in the blockboard sector for decades. The door division team had acquired 36 years of CNC experience, while the blockboard division team started from the scratch and quickly developed a new passion: the autonomous creation of optimum milling strategies. "First, we had to understand what such a machine is capable of and how we have to structure the processes. The biggest challenge was the planning of all process steps and the development of the optimum machining sequences," says Roger Bühler, Head of the Blockboard Department. Since the existing CNC system in the door sector is working reliably and space is limited, Reichenbacher has once again become the supplier of choice. "Our systems are compact, individually customisable and equipped with a special safety concept. That's exactly what fits the situation with Pius Schuler," explains Serhat Kabatas.

Comprehensive basic programming of NC-HOPS by software manufacturer direkt cnc-systeme. With the additional module betterNEST, raw parts can be nested together depending on the fibre direction and quality.

Thus, in 2024, they began to systematically explore the new technology; they experimented, questioned, and corrected. The initial milling strategies may not always have been perfect, but the results were impressive thanks to their high precision. And within short, production was running smoothly. The basis was formed by the familiar 3D CAD software cadwork, where the customer‘s planning data is transferred to the CAM programme NC-HOPS via a BTLX interface. The supplementary module betterNEST ensures that raw parts are efficiently nested together according to quality and fibre orientation – an important contribution to material savings. The 3D model for machine simulation is also particularly valuable: ”It allows us to test complex processes virtually and programme them collision-free. This creates enormous process reliability,“ Roger Bühler emphasises.

The processing steps are tailored entirely to the customers’ requirements: from simple trimming to complete panel processing, everything is possible in a single pass without re-clamping. This includes edge milling with chamfer and mitre cuts, drilling, hole and groove cut-outs, as well as angle and bevel cuts: and a tolerance of ± 0.5 mm is suddenly standard. The large tool changer can accommodate a wide variety of milling cutters, drills and heavy tools. This allows not only panel thicknesses from 19 to 280 mm to be processed, but also complex geometries such as free forms or acoustic drill holes. An additional pick-up space for large saw blades (450 / 700 mm) ensures maximum flexibility.

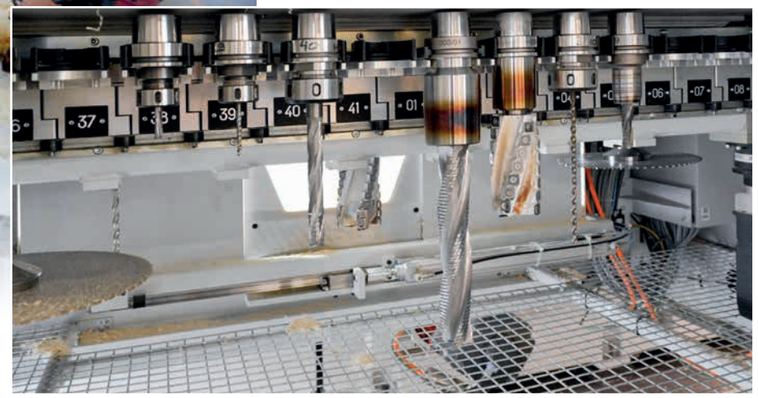
The machine does not only provide precision, but also noticeably changes the entire organisation of Pius Schuler AG: less transport effort, shorter distances, faster processes and significantly greater independence. To us as a machine manufacturer, this is the moment when such an investment shows its true value: when technology simplifies processes, opens up new opportunities and enables a company to offer customers higher quality in less time.

Roger Bühler
(Head of the Blockboard Department)

Pascal Kuster
(Chairman of the Executive Board)

Pius Schuler AG
Holzindustrie

Pius Schuler AG manufactures large-format Schuler blockboard panels, a solid wood product made from Swiss wood.



The tool changer (41-places) offers space for a wide range of milling cutters, drills and heavy tools.

The use of large saw blades (450 / 700 mm) increases flexibility.

And suddenly you find yourself “in working life”

The new apprentices – between curiosity, getting their bearings and the feeling of having arrived in the working world.

At Reichenbacher Hamuel, success is determined not only by the technological quality of the machines, but also by the expertise of the people who develop, build and maintain these machines. Where there is no off-the-shelf solution, well-trained specialists are an important factor.

In Germany, for many young people dual education is the first step towards an independent working life – and for companies, it provides the basis for passing on knowledge and values in a way that lasts. You not only learn a profession, but also work culture, reliability and responsibility.

Four apprentices, who joined the company in September 2025, describe how they felt during their first days.

Mia

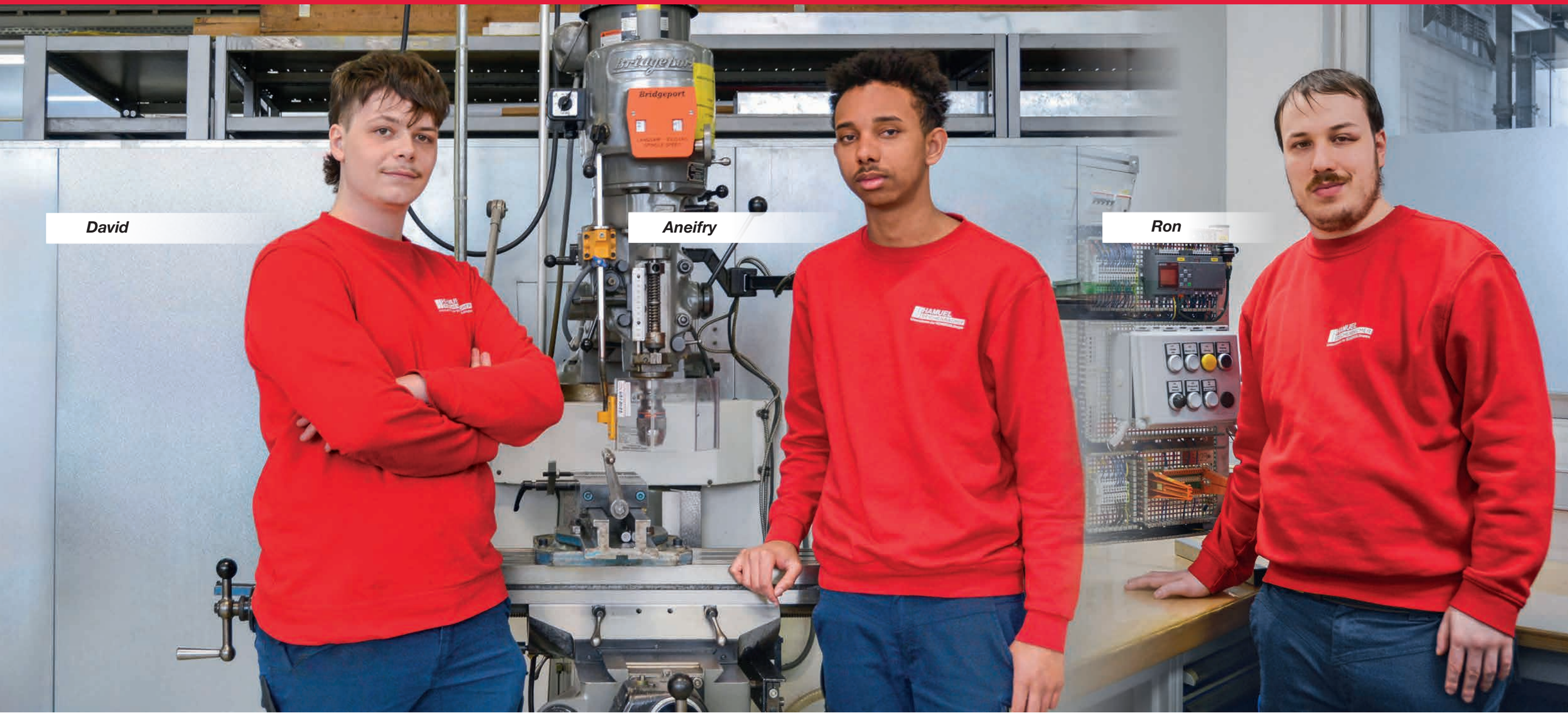
“In the beginning, I didn‘t really know what I wanted to become – so I was all the more delighted when I was accepted for the apprenticeship.”

This is how future industrial clerk Mia Schmölz describes her first moment with her apprenticeship contract. She became aware of the company through the platform Coburger Talente /Coburg Talents and through an acquaintance. The feeling she got during the interview was particularly important to her: “I felt comfortable here right away, which wasn‘t the case with other companies. Everyone was open and friendly, and I immediately had the impression that they took me seriously.”

The interview was followed by an assessment test: in addition to English language tasks, it covered mathematics, general knowledge and questions about the company. The test was easily manageable with an intermediate school leaving certificate – and a success for Mia, as only one trainee for the position of an industrial clerk is hired each year.

In her first few months, Mia has already got to know several departments, including the stockroom, reception and work preparation. She has particularly fond memories of her start at the stockroom: “Everything was explained to me, I was asked what I was good at and what I enjoyed doing, and then I was given tasks to do straight away.” What she finds particularly exciting about this apprenticeship is that it offers so many different opportunities: from human resources to purchasing and sales to customer service. “I want to learn to become more self-assured, speak more freely and be more confident when dealing with customers – even in difficult situations. Not everyone is always in a good mood. Nevertheless, I always want to remain friendly and professional.“

A permanent instructor accompanies her throughout her entire apprenticeship, and colleagues also help with professional questions – including those from vocational school. “If I don‘t understand something, I can always ask.” Would she recommend Reichenbacher Hamuel to others? “Absolutely. The colleagues are helpful and you’re never left to deal with things on your own here.”



Three industrial apprentices – three different paths

The transition from school to working life is a big change for many people – as Aneifry Diaz (mechatronics technician), David Bauer (mechatronics technician) and Ron Gärtner (electronics technician) discovered. Aneifry came straight from school, David had done a year of work experience and Ron had even started studying IT, but then decided to do an apprenticeship: “I rather wanted to do something practical.” Something new for all of them: the working day starts between 6 and 6:30 a.m. “That‘s earlier than at school – but we also finish work at 3 p.m.,“ emphasises Aneifry. And David admits: “I had to get used to that at first.“

What made them choose these professions? David knew one thing for sure: what mattered most to him was technology and working with his hands. Ron, on the other hand, is attracted to electrical engineering and automation: “I am fascinated by creative solutions, how electrical circuits work and how machines are controlled using programmes.” And why did you want to work for Reichenbacher Hamuel? For David and Ron, particularly the people they knew from their internships were the deciding factor. “The instructors, Rüdiger Fischer and Frank Welsch, have a lot of expert knowledge and explain everything thoroughly, which is excellent,” David states. Ron adds: “You can just tell that you’re dealing with experienced people.”

Aneifry was a rookie and, after the initial interview, had to take an assessment test involving maths problems and logical thinking; the other two didn‘t have to, because “they already knew our abilities,” Ron explains with a smile.

Above all, Ron wants to become skilled in working with electronics: “I want to be able to repair things at home later on and understand how automation works – that‘s why I like to be introduced to LOGO! programming during my apprenticeship.“ As future mechatronics technicians, Aneifry and David gain knowledge in both, metalworking and electrical engineering: drilling, milling, wiring, building electrical circuits and assembling machines.

In their first year, they are still in the training workshop, but they are already given many practical tasks; in addition, all three regularly attend block lessons at vocational school.

Would you recommend the apprenticeship to others? All three answer with a clear yes. “A friend of mine is unhappy with his training elsewhere – I immediately advised him to apply here,” says Aneifry. And Ron remarks, “My little brother even wants to do his school internship here.” What comes next? Ron is actually thinking about studying later on. Aneifry and David remain relaxed: “First, we’ll finish our training properly – then we’ll see what happens next.”

REICHENBACHER

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