

Ambitions in Hamburg

The people in Hamburg are well-known for their levelheaded and conservative way of thinking. This attitude could actually hide their ambitious side from view. This can also be easily seen in the company max communication. As a satellite wholesaler, they are very well known but there is a lot more going behind their front doors!

max communication was founded by Thomas Gühlich in 1990. His brother had been operating a successful computer wholesaling business and this gave Thomas the incentive to start his own satellite wholesale business. He

Entrance to max communication's new building. The offices are to the left with the warehouse to the right.



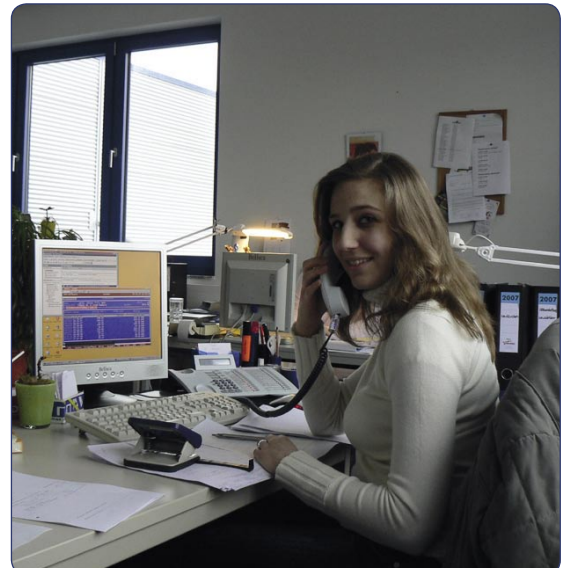
The two owners of max communication: Managing Director Dirk Wittenborg (left) and founder and Technical Director Thomas Gühlich (right).



Product Manager Frank Zimnik has reason to smile. He prophesizes that "In 2008 HDTV will take off: the Olympics and the European Football championships will take care of that. Naturally, max communication's Chess brand name will also have an HDTV receiver, perhaps even by the fall of this year."



Jens Kortekamp, Director Key Accounts (foreground) with Jörn Dreyer, Manager Key Account.



Callers to max communication will be greeted by the friendly voice of Sonja Scherdin.

traveled with a small truck to Italy and purchased satellite antennas there.

This small beginning with only a few employees has since grown at such a tempo that in 2004 it was necessary to expand the control of the company. Thomas Gühlich searched for a strategic partner and found Dirk Wittenborg, formerly connected with banking and consulting. In April 2006 he took over 50% of max communication. Since then Thomas Gühlich has been handling all affairs related to purchasing, logistics and warehousing while Dirk Wittenborg has been concerning himself with the financial, sales and strategic side of the business.

max communication serves satellite dealers. Jens Kortekamp, Director Key Accounts, came up with the slogan: "One face to the customer". This simply means that dealers really don't need any other suppliers since max communication would be able to deliver everything they need for their daily operation from standard products such as dishes, LNBs and receivers to smaller items such as antenna mast brackets and coax cable. Jens Kortekamp explains: "Today many dealers tend not to build up their own stock since this would require capital and also because existing stock has the potential to become outdated rather quickly." The Just-in-Time principle has also found its way to retail satellite dealers and this means that these dealers have to rely on immediate deliveries from wholesalers such as max communication without having to stock every product in large numbers themselves.

To help guarantee this, max communication moved to a new building in November 2006. In addition to the 1000 square-meter office space, plenty of room for even further expansion, the warehouse is 3000 square-meters large and is located in Rellingen's industrial park, northwest of Hamburg, next to the A23 autobahn. Marketing Manager Michael Sierakowitz explains: "Today 36 employees work for max communication, this includes 10

employees in sales, four in technical service as well as the Product Manager and Director Key Account."

Now the hidden ambitions will finally come to the surface. What exactly does a Director Key Accounts do? Jens Kortekamp tells us more: "At the moment, 70% of max communication's sales are domestic while 30% are exported to Europe. But we want to change that." His job is to build up relationships with wholesalers in European countries. "max communication has a unique way of working with other dealers. Constant quality as well as responsive service and price guarantees are extremely important." max communication sees an opportunity here to apply their experiences to other countries and to export their promise of quality. "There are no European-wide satellite wholesalers, only those that are national", explains Jens Kortekamp. Currently there is a gap in this marketplace that max communication wants to close.

Are there any other gaps? We posed this question to Frank Zimnik, product manager with many years of experience in the satellite industry. "max communication has built up their own brand names: Chess as a dealer brand name and Platinum as a budget and price-aggressive name", comments Frank Zimnik, "but there's more. We also offer high-end names such as Topfield for PVR's, plus we are also an official partner with ALPS for LNBs and Vantage for receivers." Where will all of this go? "As a European-wide dealer we would offer products based on region and/or country, such as, a receiver with Conax for the Scandinavian market or a CI unit for the Greek market." max communication has arranged with the manufacturers, most of which from China, to handle the adaptation of the units to their destination countries enabling them to deliver region-specific products.

The ultimate goal to deliver to destinations throughout Europe was underscored by Dirk Wittenborg, who told us, "In order to accom-



A look at the warehouse: pallets of satellite products

plish our expansion, we began to update our entire IT infrastructure after our move last November. Our plan is to launch our fully integrated business software project in March of this year. Our new shop system goes online in the third quarter of 2007: orders can be received and processed directly from the customers and starting with the fourth quarter the language modules will become active, first for English and French with other languages to follow."

By the time you read this, max communication will already have another building block activated to support European-wide distribution: the linking with Coface so that customers can be offered various purchase financing options. This means that customers can be billed for the products they order as long as they have a positive credit history.

These many different plans are surprisingly ambitious for a company that already sees itself as one of the three largest satellite wholesalers in Germany and may soon be the first true European-wide wholesaler. Good luck!



The service technicians are always busy answering customer service questions by phone or repairing defective receivers or multiswitches. From the left: Saim Taskiran, Rainer Flemming and Manfred Schmidt.



Mobile stock is automatically moved in order to make more room. Warehouse manager Hüseyin Kök with one of their satellite dishes.