“The Last Three Percent Make all the Difference”

There are quite a few full-service providers. But for SIGMATEK, this means more than just being able to supply control systems, I/O, HMI, motion, and safety solutions from a single source. What matters most is understanding the machine as a whole, taking responsibility, and finding a solution even when the last three percent don’t fit into the standard framework. Hans Roman Seifert, SIGMATEK’s new CSO and CEO of its German daughter company, credibly embodies this approach. openautomation spoke with him about system expertise, customer focus, openness – and why a good salesperson should leave the meeting room as quickly as possible.

Roland Heinze



Bilder: Sigmatek

Hans Roman Seifert, CSO at SIGMATEK

Hans Roman Seifert has a pretty clear idea of how technical sales should not be handled. He has been with SIGMATEK for 34 years, and technology and application are at least as important to him as sales and sales strategy. The classic salesperson, who places a catalog on the customer’s desk, flips through a few pages, and, when faced with more difficult questions, promises to get back to them later, has a hard time winning him over.

“Our approach is to understand as quickly as possible what’s actually happening inside the machine,” emphasizes the CSO. “When things are going well, we don’t spend much time sitting around drinking coffee – instead, we head to the machine hall, take a look at the application, take measurements, and discuss with the customer where improvements can be made. For me, sales must create technical value and go far beyond simply selecting a suitable product from the catalog.” That sounds less like a traditional sales pitch and more like application consulting. Yet this is precisely where SIGMATEK sees a key part of its positioning.

One System – and the Infrastructure Behind It

The Salzburg-based family-owned company sees itself as a full-service provider for automation in machine and system engineering. Its portfolio ranges from controls and I/O systems to industrial PCs and HMIs, as well as motion, safety, communication, and the LASAL engineering platform.

For H. R. Seifert, however, this product range is only half the story. “We can cover a great range of solutions from a single source – from visualization to control intelligence and I/O, all the way to fieldbus systems. Added to this is integration with higher-level systems, for example via MQTT or OPC UA. The key part here is that we don’t just look at individual hardware products, but at the entire infrastructure surrounding the machine.”

Precisely because many components are developed in-house, the company can respond even when a customer requirement isn’t already available as a standard off-the-shelf solution. “Of course, we don’t have every possible solution ready to go right away either. But since we have the technology, software, and expertise right here in-house, we can respond much more quickly if a customer suddenly says, ‘We actually need something else right now,’” the manager explains.

The Famous Last Three Percent

Standardization is particularly important in complex serial machine manufacturing. At the same time, as the saying goes, the devil is in the details. H. R. Seifert describes this with a 97/3 rule: "If a customer solves 97% of their automation needs with our system and needs a custom solution for the remaining three percent, we can't just say, 'Please find another provider for that.' That last three percent usually isn't a big deal in terms of revenue or volume. But for the customer, it can be crucial – and in that case, we have to support them."

For the machine builder, this means fewer interfaces, fewer suppliers, and less coordination effort. Especially when it comes to a niche application, the machine builder might be just a minor customer to an additional supplier. SIGMATEK therefore sees it as its responsibility to create a robust solution in this area as well.

Supply Capability Is No Minor Issue

The supply chain crisis demonstrated just how important a company's in-house development and manufacturing capabilities can be. At the time, SIGMATEK undertook redesigns, maintained different hardware variants in parallel, and invested significant development resources to ensure it could continue supplying its customers.

"Delivery reliability is our top priority. If an automation provider can't deliver, the customer isn't just missing some random component—in the worst-case scenario, an entire machine or an entire production line comes to a standstill," emphasizes the head of sales. "You have to take this responsibility seriously."

In this regard, the company has deliberately avoided giving preference solely to large customers. Whether a customer has ten employees or is an international corporation is initially irrelevant to the specific problem at hand. "If a small business cannot deliver its machine because of a missing module, the damage to that customer is just as real," explains H. R. Seifert.

According to H. R. Seifert's recollection, during the most critical phase, no customer machine was left undelivered due to SIGMATEK's inability to fulfill an order. This was made possible in part by the company's extensive in-house expertise in electronics, operating systems, and software.

34 Years at SIGMATEK—and Now CSO

H. R. Seifert himself is a perfect example of this corporate philosophy. He has been with SIGMATEK for 34 years and has led the German daughter company since 2017. Now, as Chief Sales Officer, he is also responsible for international sales, marketing, application engineering, and support.

He believes it makes perfect sense that a long-time employee from within the company was chosen for this position: "When you've been with the company for so long, you don't just know the products and customers. You also know which structures work, where there are differences between countries, and where changes need to be made. This knowledge can't be acquired in just a few months."



The new-generation Web Panels are powerful, interactive, and high-quality, featuring a silver-anodized aluminum frame around the glass front.

Decisions Belong at the Customer's Table

The new CSO position is intended to strengthen international sales structures and organize them more efficiently. At the same time, SIGMATEK aims to bring decision-making closer to the customer.

"When a customer is sitting at the table and says they need a specific solution by December, they shouldn't hear: 'I have to run this by my team first and will get back to you next week.' If the conditions are right, I want to be able to make a definitive statement right there at the table—either we'll do it, or we won't," says H. R. Seifert.

This is an important factor, especially for medium-sized machinery manufacturers. It's not uncommon for the owners or management to be right there at the table, expecting reliable information. The expectations go well beyond product knowledge. H. R. Seifert has a background in applications himself. You can tell when he talks about drive design, I^2t limits, or the question of whether the next larger drive size is really necessary. He points out that sometimes it makes more sense to examine the application together and, for example, adjust acceleration values: "In the end, what counts is the overall design of

the machine. A single drive may be cheaper on paper." However, if no one is looking at the application as a whole and optimizing how the components interact, this price advantage is quickly offset."

This is exactly where SIGMATEK's sales expertise comes into play: not just knowing what our own product can do, but understanding what the machine builder wants to achieve with it.

Engineering Gets an AI Assistant

Openness and integration also play an important role in engineering. With LASAL, SIGMATEK has been pursuing an object-oriented approach for about a quarter of a century. The software objects are encapsulated and flexibly interconnected. This is intended not only to help programmers, but also to make interrelationships understandable to design engineers and service technicians.

H. R. Seifert sees this very structure as a good foundation for AI-generated code. "When functions are neatly encapsulated and their interfaces are clearly defined, AI can be used in a very targeted way. I don't think much of simply telling an AI, 'Write me the entire machine.' If an error occurs later and no one can figure out how the code is structured, we haven't gained anything."

It makes more sense to apply AI to clearly defined tasks. A PID regulator is a simple example of this: AI can generate the code within a defined object. If a problem arises later, it remains clear where to look for the cause. H. R. Seifert: "Then I know: The problem comes from this object. I might still have to analyze a few hundred lines of code, but I won't have to search through an entire machine program. It is precisely this manageability that will be crucial when using AI."

To complement this, SIGMATEK is introducing the new Assistant. The AI-based knowledge platform is directly integrated into LASAL and can also be accessed via a web browser. It draws on SIGMATEK-specific hardware and software documentation, as well as libraries containing classes and functions. Using Agentic RAG, relevant information is retrieved from the knowledge base and presented in an understandable format with the help of a large language model. If the Assistant cannot find a reliable answer, it is designed to communicate this openly rather than generating unverified information.

More Power for Visualization

There are also new additions to the HMI portfolio. The NewGen web panels of the xx20 series are available in four widescreen sizes ranging from 10.1 inches to 21.5 inches, each as a built-in panel or a swing arm version. Quad-core Intel processors, 4 GB of DDR4 RAM, 128 GB of storage, and a streamlined operating system are designed to enable smooth page loading, particularly for HTML5-based visualizations.

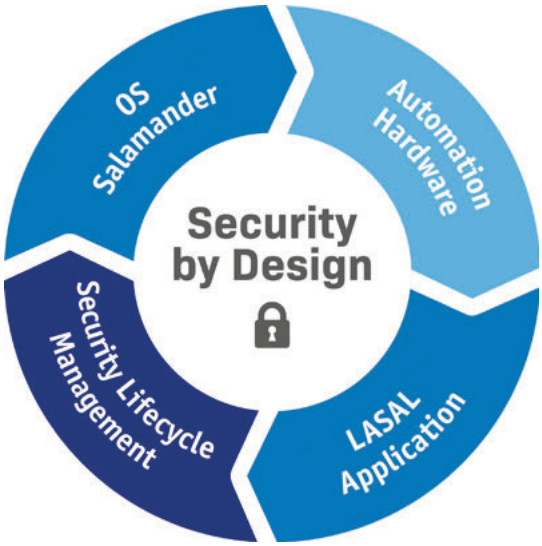
In addition to increased performance and CRA compliance, SIGMATEK is pursuing yet another goal: the systematic consolidation of its platforms. "If you have ten different operating panels with ten different processor generations in the field, every component end-of-life announcement means additional maintenance effort," explains H.R. Seifert. "We therefore want to rely more heavily on common platforms and reduce the number of variants. Over the years, we've learned that standardization beats variety when it comes to keeping systems manageable in the long term.

Fewer different processors, boards, and mechanical designs mean lower development and maintenance costs while also supporting long-term availability – a particularly important factor in series machine manufacturing."

New Generation of Controls

SIGMATEK will also be introducing a new generation of controls at SPS 2026. The new generation of the compact S-DIAS CPUs was developed to meet the growing demands placed on controls: higher performance, flexible connectivity, and compliance with the new Machinery Directive, the NIS 2 Directive, and the Cyber Resilience Act (CRA).

The new generation of CPUs follows the "security by design" approach and relies on state-of-the-art, hardware-based, CRA-compliant processor technology with security modules and the proven platform concept.



At SIGMATEK, "Security by Design" encompasses hardware, the operating system, applications, and security lifecycle management –including SBOM, security updates, and processes for addressing security vulnerabilities.

The ultra-compact, cost-effective CP 401 DIN rail module offers sufficient computing power for a wide range of automation applications. For demanding control, regulation, and motion tasks, the double-width CP 511 with its powerful Edge3-Technology multi-core CPU is a good choice. For special requirements, the CP 800 series offers a CRA-compliant high-performance CPU unit with an Intel Atom quad-core processor. Combined with the lean, Linux-based real-time operating system Salamander 4 – which also meets "security-by-design" standards – SIGMATEK provides a future-proof control platform.

When the Gears Fit Together

Perhaps an image by H. R. Seifert describes SIGMATEK's strategy better than any portfolio overview. He likes it "when the gears fit together and it works." This refers not only to control systems, I/O, safety, drives, and software. It also encompasses development, application engineering, support, and sales. Especially when it comes to sophisticated production machines, the customer shouldn't have to coordinate multiple component suppliers; instead, they should have a partner who understands the big picture and, when necessary, takes responsibility for the unusual details.

www.sigmatek-automation.com



The new generation of control systems was developed to cope with increased demands for performance and cybersecurity.



The AI-based knowledge platform Assistant is directly integrated into the LASAL development environment and can also be accessed via a web browser.