Traditional, dynamic and innovative.

Like that, SISTAG AG promoted its Wey products, made in Eschenbach, for 50 years. It is therefore time to look back, assess the current situation and examine future prospects.

In the 50’s of the last century, Joseph Wey (†) tested the ingenious Wey sealing system for knife gate valves at the Hans Sidler & Co. workshop. At the beginning of the 60’s, stricter regulations for water pollution control accelerated the development of wastewater treatment plants, and our company was established as a result. Hans Sidler and Hans Stalder decided to acquire all of Joseph Wey’s patent rights and founded SISTAG in 1964.

Meanwhile we are 50 years successful in business. The need to prove ourselves as the market’s top niche supplier of knife gate valves motivates us daily to guide our company into a prosperous future. Our new infrastructure, which architecturally reflects our corporate identity in distinctive black and red, is proof of our drive and a sign of our faith in the future. And, due to increasingly stringent pollution regulations, climate change, amended standards and new industrial applications, there is great potential for long-term company success.

Our faith for another prosperous 50 years at SISTAG is based on the fact that the next generation is already waiting in the wings. My son Samuel is currently earning his stripes as CEO of our US subsidiary.

Finally, I would like to express my thanks. First of all to you dear customers who put your trust in us. Through this partnership we are constantly motivated to perform at the highest level possible. Then I would like to thank our many employees all over the world for your consistently high commitment and loyalty to our company. And a big ‘thank you’ goes to the two founders of SISTAG: it is due to you that we can celebrate a proud anniversary today.

We promise you, our esteemed partners and customers, that SISTAG’s performance will continue to impress you in the future.

Kind regards

Hans-Jörg Sidler
Before our company was established, Joseph Wey, a paper engineer, was compelled to carry out his projects by using pulp & paper valves with inadequate sealing performance. So he got down to work and made countless drawings, based on the ingenious Wey sealing principle which were already in the 1950s turned into real products at the Hans Sidler & Co workshop. More stringent regulations for wastewater treatment plants subsequently prompted Hans Sidler and Hans Stalder (formerly Joseph Wey’s first employee) to acquire all of Joseph Wey’s patent rights, and so the SISTAG of today was created. The decision by the two founders shows both courage and pioneering spirit. Out of the mechanical workshop established by Johann Sidler in 1908 they formed a company which conquered the national pulp & paper and wastewater market with its Wey knife gate valves within a very short time. Thanks to high quality products and a reliable service, neighbouring countries also quickly became aware of the products.

**Out into the world**

With the signing of the first production licence agreement in 1966, SISTAG crossed borders for the first time. And, as the Wey sealing system was so successful, SISTAG kept on expanding. The patent application for the sealing system in Japan, Germany, France, Italy, Belgium, Austria, England, the USA, Canada and Australia marked the starting point, as it were, of the SISTAG journey around the world.

**What got the founders going**

Hans Sidler, born in 1925: “Thanks to our youthful enthusiasm, good communication skills, careful planning and realistic targets we had a very successful beginning. Production was hectic from the start, but we found it very exciting and interesting at the same time. We were prepared to take risks from the word go, expanded our production and office areas quickly and automated many manufacturing processes.”

Hans Stalder, born in 1930: “It was a turbulent start! We were finally able to come to a long-term agreement with the owner of the first patent of our today world-renowned Wey valve, as we were sure that only with this in place would we have any chance of success. We then forged ahead and turned our vision into reality with great energy, underpinned by a contractually perfect setup. We never thought that it would take off like it did, but in retrospect it is clear that we brought our products onto the market at exactly the right time and could therefore build a solid foundation for the SISTAG of today.”
At the start of the 1970s, other industries succumbed to the recession. We watched these events closely and at the same time asked ourselves how we might react if this happened to us too. Even then we took the view that safeguarding jobs was very important to us. Ours is not a hire-and-fire culture; after all, we have deep roots in the region along with our families and employees. Offering high-quality products at competitive prices was actually always a good formula for maintaining full employment. But in 1975/76, the recession caught up with us, too, and a 13 per cent decline in sales made things quite difficult. However, as we were still able to see and evaluate opportunities for the future after assessing the market, we thought outside the box and decided to restock during the slump so that we could deliver even faster in the future. By upgrading machines, renovating buildings and optimising operations we were able to do without short-time working and staff cuts. What we learnt was that even in difficult times it is worth making plans for the future and motivating employees by being confident and having a sense of social responsibility.

Success story

The development of wastewater treatment plants gained momentum again in 1979 and product innovations meant that SISTAG could benefit from this. With Wey features such as zero leakage, bi-directional tightness, a transverse seal that can be repacked under pressure and a jamming-free passage etc., we set ourselves well apart from the competition. This was all linked to a high level of customer satisfaction and people recommending us to others. At the same time we were also able to develop the company further and serve new segments of the market.

Orders decreased by 13 per cent due to the recession in the previous year. SISTAG does not introduce short-time working, however, and instead uses the available capacity to boost stock levels and optimise products.

Production of the VR knife gate valve range (ECO type with straight gate and circular flow passage) gets under way. SISTAG continues to develop in other areas and broadens its base.

Production of the TZ butterfly valves begins this year. The production licence for this product is taken over by SISTAG.

The computer age begins at SISTAG with the use of the Burroughs B800 computer system. We receive a major order from South Africa for around 500 knife gate valves for a gold mine.

Our knife gate valves are becoming increasingly well-known and popular. A large number of small and medium-size orders boost our output by a substantial 28 per cent.

Wey Valve International, the marketing and sales organisation, is established so that SISTAG can target individual markets and maintain a global presence.

This year SISTAG’s sales exceed the 10 million mark and a major contract from the biggest purification plant in Switzerland, the Werdhölzli wastewater treatment plant in Zurich, delights the management and all the employees.

The second generation joins the company in the person of Hans-Jörg Sidler, and a special project for DN 1200 high-temperature knife gate valves is successfully concluded.

A project from Norway causes quite a stir at SISTAG as we become a major contract for the offshore industry there.

Working 45 years in engineering
Fredy Baumli, which events from 1974–1983 do you have particularly fond memories of?

“Well, I was young and carefree. Shortly after my basic military training many things were at least as important to me as work! This is why I remember the many little fun office parties in the woods and how we marched through the workshop on ‘Fat Thursday’ with an in-house carnival band. Of course, a number of memorable events also happened at work and I fondly recall the collaboration with many renowned engineering consultancies. I also remember the 50” valves (1,270 mm) which we manufactured for the American market, at a time when 500 mm was quite something, and the earthquake-proof valves that we manufactured for the Leibstadt nuclear power plant.”

INTERVIEW

SISTAG generates sales of 10 million in the second decade.
Hans-Walter Strang, Burbach Grödig company, Austrian SISTAG representative since 1968

“At the start of the 1960s I got to know Hans Sidler, Hans Stalder und Joseph Wey. I was just as impressed with the product that they presented to me at that time as I was with them personally. We then succeeded in obtaining a licence for Germany, Austria and Holland and as a result we were able to build up the markets in these countries. In 1968 I was instructed to set up an office in Austria. In 1988, I acquired a 100 per cent stake in it. I successfully distribute Wey products in Austria to this day. Even though a great deal has changed in the last few years, my enthusiasm for the Wey products is undimmed, and the honest and fair cooperation with the managers still impresses me.”

Focus

In late 1986, a fire in a storage facility at the former Sandoz chemical company in Schweizerhalle caused one of the worst environmental disasters in Europe. Fire-fighting water, which had flown into the river Rhine over the course of a few weeks, killed a huge amount of fish. As a result, the Schweizerhalle-based chemical companies decided to act, and built a large multi-chamber basin and several smaller retention basins, as well as collecting tanks and fire-fighting water reservoirs. Our Wey products allowed us to make a major contribution to the future safety of human and nature.

Unbelievable but true: the fastest Wey knife gate valve, our SpeedWey HSI shuts in a near record time of 17 milliseconds.

In the company’s 20th year of existence technology makes itself felt and the IT system is upgraded and the latest generation is installed. We are now working on IBM computers.

The falling sales in North America prompt the management to thoroughly review the production licence for Wey knife gate valves.

The major fire in Schweizerhalle also boosts SISTAG. A number of orders are received for valves to be installed in fire-fighting water-retention basins in the chemical industry.

The US subsidiary Wey Valve Inc. is established in order to serve the North American market even better. In Switzerland, production begins on the Wey knife gate valve MF.

From the beginning, SISTAG has placed great emphasis on extensive apprentice training. To this end and the first CNC milling machine is put into operation in the apprentice training department.

SISTAG marks its 25th anniversary. Meanwhile SISTAG, based in Eschenbach, has processing 165 tons of cast parts and 132 tons of stainless steel on a total of 5,200 m².

SISTAG’s engineering department and technical office is upgraded: the 2D CAD system is introduced, thus further optimising work processes.

Social awareness and changing social demands prompt the SISTAG management to introduce the RBS employee participation system.

Hans-Jörg Sidler takes the position of managing director and repositions the company. The company is renamed SISTAG Absperrtechnik and receives a new corporate identity.

Ever more quality standards must be met if a company wants to remain successful, which is why intensive preparatory measures are being taken to obtain the planned ISO certification.
From the beginning right up to the present day, the demands on both staff and products at SISTAG have continuously grown. The challenges faced by SISTAG change along with the times, and so ongoing investments in personnel, infrastructure, production technology and process optimisation are vital in order to remain successful. Various aspects must be repeatedly considered and challenged to achieve this. For example, it is important to constantly increase flexibility, to be able to use same parts for several models, to streamline the range from time to time and to meet very short delivery deadlines, as today’s customers want their capital to be tied up for as short a time as possible. Our modern production systems are now in use 7 days a week, 24 hours a day, partly by unmanned ‘ghost’ shifts. Our motivated and committed employees are always willing to take special tasks, to participate in interdepartmental job rotation and to work overtime during times of capacity constraints. In combination with our very well-functioning international supplier network we will be able to meet the demands of the coming years.

Hans-Jörg Sidler

“I grew up in the house with the original workshop, right next to the milling machine so to speak, so I got an insight into the business from an early age and was entrusted with tasks even before I qualified as a mechanical engineer. I did, of course, also hear many discussions about market requirements and personnel issues and learnt a great deal about social responsibility. Well-prepared and highly motivated, I was able to take on my father’s role in 1990 and run SISTAG together with Hans Stalder. From 1992, I assumed sole responsibility for the business and built up a strong management team around me. I am extremely grateful for the confidence shown in me by the company's two founders, for the freedom that they granted me and for the valuable advice I was always able to obtain.”

INTERVIEW

In the meantime, Wey product exports account for an amazing 70 per cent.
Records tumble and time passes more quickly – at SISTAG too. It is therefore important to plan the future of the business carefully and with due consideration. The signs of the times need to be recognised and it is just as essential to act with foresight and anticipate customer needs with regard to processes and applications as it is to come up with product innovations or to make anticyclical investments. SISTAG also sees itself in the future as a responsible, innovative family-run company. The third generation is already earning its stripes in the US subsidiary. We can therefore be certain that the values which we have adhered to since the very beginning will also be upheld in the future. Of course we want success, but it must always come with sound growth, as sustainability is more important to us than shareholder value at all costs. Job security will also continue to be extremely important in everything we do; we see our employees and the subsidiaries as part of the family, because we can only continue SISTAG’s success story together, with mutual trust.

Records set to be broken

The 150,000th VN knife gate valve is produced, the number of employees is higher than ever before, new capacities are being created, the record level of sales is equalled and steps for the future have been taken in a way that will enable us to tackle the next 50 years confidently, yet still responsibly and with great respect for our employees and the partners who accompany us on our journey.

2014

Manuel Schmidlin completed his apprenticeship as a poly-mechanic technician at SISTAG with honours and a grade of 5.6 in 2014.

“I decided to take my apprenticeship at SISTAG, because the training programme at this company is very well-regarded everywhere and because I very much enjoy working as a poly-mechanic. I think that this training is a good foundation for my future professional development. During my training I always received encouragement and support and I felt, and still feel, very much at home here because fellowship among employees is highly regarded and fostered. SISTAG supports this by arranging interesting annual excursions for apprentices and many other events for employees. I just find it really fun to work here, particularly because I face new challenges every day.”

The new 24-hour production system with a high-bay warehouse and processing centre doubles our capacity. A third parallel planning machine is now also in use. SISTAG makes a commitment to the future – due to a new construction project another CHF 6 million is invested in the Eschenbach production site. Major orders from Poland and China show that this is the right course of action.

SISTAG AG achieves another sales record of CHF 29.5 million and moves into the new office building. The new corporate identity is launched as part of the Big Bang event.

Manuel Schmidlin
Samuel Sidler represents the third generation at SISTAG. He is currently managing the US subsidiary and preparing to join the SISTAG management team. Why does he want this and why is he doing it? You can read his personal reply here: “When you come from a family of entrepreneurs with a successful father, grandfather and great-grandfather, of course you want to claim this success for yourself too. However, I know that success always comes with duties and responsibilities, and I want to take these on in the sense and spirit of my predecessors. As my father did before me, I also want to take advantage, for the benefit of SISTAG, of the opportunities that are opened up by managing a global company and keep our success story going. Continuing to preserve our tradition and vision is a great source of motivation for me, so I will also stick to the values that have made SISTAG big: customer satisfaction, trust in our employees, a desire to innovate and quality without compromise, plus a great deal of real Swiss spirit. These values will continue to unlock great development potential for SISTAG on the international market. Recognising and exploiting this potential is my personal challenge, as well as securing our locations in Switzerland, the USA and Germany.”

Looking into the future

**North America (USA/Canada)**
We want to break into the wastewater market here with the new Wey knife gate valve VM and further extend our lead in the oilsands processing sector. We see new environmental requirements in the process industry as a great opportunity for Wey products.

**Switzerland/Western Europe**
We want to supply custom solutions for complex industrial processes and alternative biogas energy for European plant builders. We have identified expansion opportunities in our home market of Switzerland, particularly in the power sector and steel hydraulic constructions.

**Far East/China**
We can supply and equip upcoming manufacturers of semi-finished products for the pharmaceutical and petrochemical industries in this area. The mining industry in various countries of this region offers great potential.

**Latin America**
We want to achieve a sustained market-opening in the mineral and mining applications sector. We see this as a possible way of gaining a long-term foothold from Mexico to Argentina.

**India/Southeast Asia**
In this region, we can support security of supply in the energy and food industries with Wey knife gate valves. Our solutions also provide a high level of operational safety in the steel industry and the production of fertiliser.
...in the future.