

Interview with CTO Jürgen Valentin about the takeover of SISCAN technology

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Jürgen Valentin, CTO and future Board Spokesman at NanoFocus AG, with responsibility for the Technology and Business Development divisions, talks about NanoFocus AG's takeover of Siemens AG's SISCAN division.

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Mr. Valentin, what exactly is SISCAN?

SISCAN is a rapid visual surface measurement system based on confocal technology. We won't be continuing with the SISCAN brand name, but instead developing the technology further under a new name. We already use the confocal method in our existing systems μ surf and μ scan, but SISCAN offers us a tremendous opportunity to expand our possibilities. SISCAN is designed for speed. We're able to capture much more data in a much shorter space of time, some 1000x faster than with a conventional laser profilometer. SISCAN sensors can also continuously capture data on moving components, making them ideal for use in production.

How is NanoFocus integrating the new technology into its existing expertise?

SISCAN primarily means an extension to our technical possibilities as regards rapid inline production monitoring. This is in fact one of NanoFocus AG's key strategic goals: To provide industry with precision systems for 100% quality monitoring in ongoing production. SISCAN is the missing link for implementing such a zero-fault strategy in production.

What happens with existing equipment? How will SISCAN impact on NanoFocus' product portfolio?

It is an extension. μ surf and μ scan will remain matchless as far as nanometer-accurate precision is concerned. This equipment is essential for our customers in research, process development and production-accompanying process monitoring. With SISCAN, however, we are able to achieve extremely high measuring speeds for reliable product monitoring directly at the "conveyor belt". This is an important step.

Are there already specific applications for which NanoFocus is using SISCAN?

Yes, there are. We've been working for some time now on the development of applications for this technology. We already have a working product for the automobile sector. In this case, we use it to check the quality of gaskets, i.e. large-surface and rapid measurements with a high number of data points directly in production. We are also in the process of developing specific solutions based on SISCAN technology in other areas, for instance in the semiconductor sector. These systems enable us to perfectly satisfy the quality requirements for wafer production. In this context, it is also important that we already able to use the analysis software we have developed for SISCAN. SISCAN is therefore integrated into the NanoFocus portfolio of products.

What markets and what growth opportunities is NanoFocus looking to target with this takeover? What prospects does it offer for your company?

The route to inline process monitoring is crucial for us. The interest from industry is naturally tremendous in this sector. Our equipment represents the cutting edge of technology for three-dimensional surface monitoring in product development and production-accompanying monitoring. We will be increasingly bringing this NanoFocus standard directly into the production chain. I'm thinking in this instance primarily of the automobile industry, one in which we've enjoyed a high profile for many years. The electronics industry too and medical technology, however, are also indicating to us that they urgently need these systems too.

A step into the future then?

Yes. This acquisition fits well with our fundamental strategy. Especially at a time when many companies are doing less well, you need to seize opportunities. I believe that the technological sectors that NanoFocus AG operates in are among the most important growth drivers of the next few years: Quality assurance, energy efficiency and zero-fault strategies. And it's not just technologies like SISCAN that make me optimistic about NanoFocus. It's also our proximity to the cleantech trend and a general rethink in some sectors of industry. This is evident from the creation of a new quality competition that we and our customers can be right out in front of.