

TREND REPORT

October 2018

21. – 23.5.2019
NÜRNBERG, GERMANY

An attractive market: Medtech suppliers benefit from growth

Medical devices contain many different individual component, including cables, connecting elements, sensors, actuators, radiation sources.... As digitalisation progresses, and medical devices become increasingly networked, more and more software is being used in the field of medical technology. A large part of the added value that this involves comes not from the manufacturers and distributors, but is achieved by specialised suppliers – future-oriented innovations, integration into QM systems prescribed by law, long-term component availability, and good market access are critical to success as a medical technology supplier. The sector promises good business with stable growth. The new trade fair meeting place, MedtecLIVE together with the MedTech Summit Congress, will bring together interested suppliers and manufacturers in Nuremberg to share ideas.

Benefiting from growth in the medical technology sector – that sounds like an attractive growth model for many electronics and component manufacturers. Anyone not discouraged by the regulatory requirements involved in his sector will find a growth market that has enjoyed stability for many years now. Hans-Peter Bursig, Managing Director of the Fachverband Elektromedizinische Technik (Electromedical Technology Association), part of ZVEI (Zentralverband Elektrotechnik- und Elektronikindustrie e.V., the German Electrical and Electronic Manufacturers' Association), sees the stimuli for growth as global: "The world market for medical technology will continue to grow at an average of five percent per annum in the coming years, driven by the positive economic development in many emerging economies and demographic change in the industrialised countries. Given that some 70 percent of German medical technology is exported, developments on the world market

Ideeller Träger
Honorary sponsor
Forum MedTech Pharma e. V.
Am Tullnaupark 8
90402 Nürnberg
Germany

Veranstalter
Organizer
MedtecLIVE GmbH
Messezentrum
90471 Nürnberg
Germany
medteclive.com

Geschäftsführer
Managing Director
Richard Krowoza

Registergericht
Registration Number
HRB 35124 Nürnberg

Durchführung im Auftrag
des Veranstalters
Realization on behalf of
the organizer
NürnbergMesse GmbH
Messezentrum
90471 Nürnberg
Germany
T +49 9 11 86 06-0
F +49 9 11 86 06-82 28
medteclive@nuernbergmesse.de

are more important for the growth of our industry than those on the German market. That means that medical technology will remain an appealing growth market in the future.”

See [here](#) for more on MedtecLIVE partner ZVEI Fachverband Elektromedizinische Technik.

Proximity to medical product manufacturers is key

Cable specialist Leoni Special Cables GmbH, one of the exhibitors at the new MedtecLIVE trade fair in Nuremberg and an experienced Medtech supplier, is equally confident about the future. “Medical technology sales in the 2017 financial year were positive, and enjoyed stronger growth than expected,” says Birte Wendeln of Leoni. “This trend is an ongoing part of current business developments.” Like Bursig, she has her eye on the global market: “In 2018, the focus will be on expanding the US medical market. The demand by OEMs is “local for local,” which is in line with the calls by the US administration. A sign of how our medical technology business will expand from here is the establishment of a local manufacturing facility for the North American region.” In this way, the company aims to position itself closer to the medical technology manufacturers, and also involve itself in the development of medical products at an earlier stage.

For further information about MedtecLIVE exhibitor Leoni, see [here](#).

Maintain dialogue

Early dialogue between manufacturers and suppliers makes the transfer of design and development work easier in cases where the ultimate goal is to implement development results in production. For Professor Christian Johner, owner of the consulting firm that bears his name, this design transfer is more than just a need imposed by ISO 13485 and requiring documented implementation. Rather, he encourages the notion of treating design transfer as something more than an isolated handover at the end of the development process: “Production must understand which development demands are essential in terms of ensuring the benefit of the product to the patient and minimising the risks to patients, users and third parties.” Johner offers some practical tips: “As a consequence, Production needs to be involved in numerous stages of the development process, e.g. at the very

point of specifying the product requirements. Design review meetings are one way of involving Production at an early stage.”

Holger Frank, CEO of Mechatronic AG, a development service firm specialising in the medical technology sector, believes a careful view of the entire innovation process is essential: “A well documented design transfer to Production and a transparent supply chain are key elements in working together with cooperation partners to take a development project to a successful conclusion.”

For further information about MedtecLIVE exhibitor Mechatronic AG, see [here](#).

Wendeln draws on an example from Leoni to show that this iterative process offers clear advantages for the manufacturer: it is important to ensure right at the product design stage that cables do not become kinked, for example. Sometimes, the demands in terms of cable specifications are too stringent – for example, a manufacturer may design a product capable of withstanding millions of automatic sequences, even though the device is intended to be operated manually. In such cases, it is possible to aim a little lower than the specifications to save costs. “And sometimes we will say on the basis of experience that the demands on a product will actually be higher than the manufacturer originally planned,” says Wendeln. In such cases, the specifications need to be adjusted upwards at an early stage.

Design transfer is therefore not a one-way street in which the supplier must simply implement the manufacturer’s instructions to the letter. In the best case, suppliers and OEMs will develop the product together: the suppliers can provide their specific knowledge and as much expertise as possible regarding how the medical product will subsequently be used in hospitals, practice or other care environment. This practical knowledge will be available to interested suppliers at the MedTech Summit and MedtecLIVE via presentations and discussion with manufacturers.

Contact for press and media

Jens Fuderholz, TBN Public Relations

Benno Wagner, Simon Kögel, NürnbergMesse GmbH

T +49 9 11 86 06-89 02
simon.koegel@nuernbergmesse.de

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