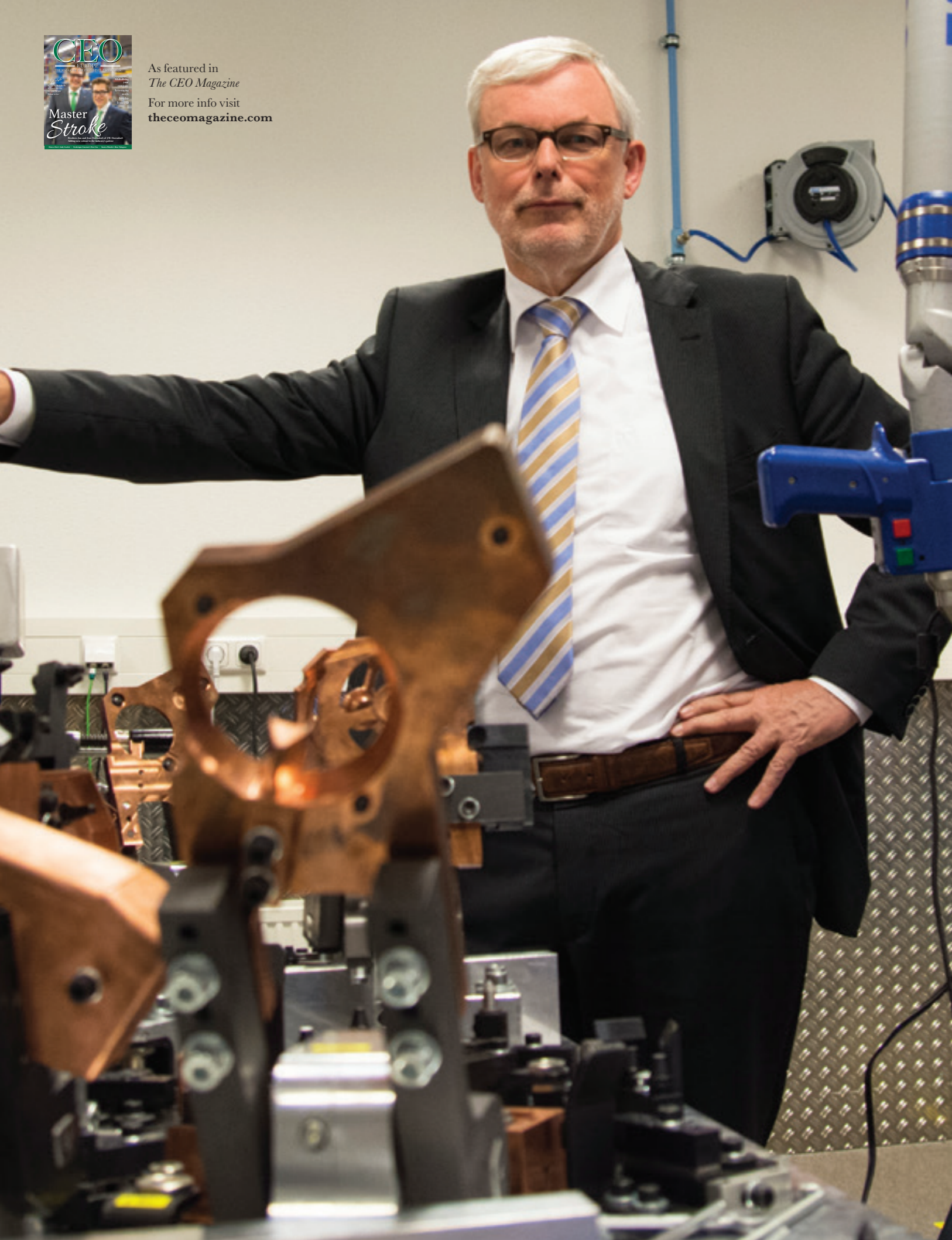




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The Technical EXPERTS

Using years of experience in welding, AWL-Techniek is increasing its global presence and providing one-stop solutions for customers around the world.

Images courtesy of AWL-Techniek

Starting as a mechanical technician building machines, Piet Mosterd, CEO of AWL-Techniek has a wealth of experience that he brings to his current position. In 1993, Aarding Weerstandslas went bankrupt and was bought out by AWL-Techniek, giving Piet an opportunity to become one of the shareholders in the organisation. Since then, he's been instrumental in leading the company through significant challenges and changes.

Throughout his tenure with the business, Piet has seen the company and the industry change quite dramatically. "Many things have changed. First of all, before the bankruptcy we were a company focusing on resistance welding. After the restart we changed our position in the market as a company making joining equipment, and then the total package. So not only resistance and arc welding, but

also laser welding and cold-forming joints. Over 20 years we've seen an enormous development in types of joining.

"Today we are a medium-sized company, operating with 450 employees worldwide.

"The biggest change has occurred in laser welding. In 1997, I was asked by one of my customers, "When are you going to start laser welding?" Our company had just started and we had just begun the automation of arc welding, so our focus was on arc welding at that moment, and on some cold-forming joints. Volkswagen was one of the driving companies at that time and really pushing their suppliers towards the direction of laser welding, but implementation of a laser-welding process takes time.

"We started thinking about laser welding in 2002. We were ready with the marketing issues in 2003,

and we started in 2004. After that, only 10 to 15 per cent of our turnover was laser-welding-related. In 2010, the breakthrough came, and since that time, we've been pinpointed as the company that is the laser-welding expert. When you want a laser-welding specialist, you have to be at AWL in Holland."

AWL believes reliability is key for success and repeat business. "One of the main things is that we make reliable welding equipment, which means when you've done the start-up and the commissioning, the machines are working day by day without difficulties. I think we manage that in a perfect way.

"There are not many companies that have such a broad portfolio of joining techniques so that customers can buy the whole package for a product at one address. Otherwise, you'll buy a resistance-welding machine at company A, the arc welder at company B, and the laser-welding >

"Our big advantage nowadays is that our customers can buy the whole package with us—one-stop shopping—meaning project managers or buyers only need to be at one place, and they can experience their progress at one spot during the project realisation at AWL."

- Piet Mosterd



machine at company C. Our big advantage nowadays is that our customers can buy the whole package with us—one-stop shopping—meaning project managers or buyers only need to be at one place, and they can experience their progress at one spot during the project realisation at AWL.

“We see that it is very helpful for our customers to do business in a quick way when they have less time, where they reduce their project management, product development and production process. AWL is an engineering company, so we can help them to choose the right configuration for production, and doing that in a professional way; we call this ‘concept finding.’ The concept finding way is very effective for a company that doesn’t buy complex equipment on a regular

basis. Based on the customers’ needs, we can advise them different possible solutions.”

Piet believes in the people at AWL, which is why the company invests a great deal in its education and training. “Machine building is teamwork, which means that the whole team must understand what we do, and we must also be able to rely on their skills and their professionalism. Our customers get machines and equipment and they expect to be able to weld perfectly every time. How do we manage that? We organise that this is always done, day by day, week by week, year by year. That means that education and training and know-how is transferred to others and is the most critical aspect of what we are doing in our type of business, but we manage this.

“Everything has to do with talent management. When we focus on developing the company, it has to do with the talent of the organisation—our DNA. So that is very important, and you have to be strict on that issue, which means that the talents are often hidden in people, and the real force of the company comes from developing those unseen skills in people, and that’s one of the reasons why we are successful. We put a lot of effort in education and training and know-how.

“Many entrepreneurs are not willing to invest heavily in employees, because it takes a long time. When you work at AWL, you need two years of experience and training using the DNA of AWL. To build this kind of experience is important for us. But every day we are investing both money and time

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- Piet Mosterd

in people, young and old, to keep them on a level we need today and tomorrow. Also, the people in our facilities in the Czech Republic and China are treated in the same way and trained intensively.

“AWL has expanded its operations into the emerging market of China to assist our customers’ needs to deliver our world-class welding equipment. When we were asked to come to China, we were really worried about it. We are a small company, and in 2009 we made our first tour through China. We were really pushed in 2010 because our customers really needed a company like AWL in China, which mostly had to do with laser welding, because the company that I’m talking about wasn’t able to buy the right laser-welding equipment locally. They bought some equipment in China, and modified it by themselves to make it work. But, at that time, we were really pushed to go to China. We decided that when we found the right person that could start the development, we would go for it.

“We found the right people, with the necessary skills, so we had clear vision that he was one of the people who would be able to make up the first camp in China.

“It was September 2013 when we started in China and we started the business procedure with the necessary licences. It’s really complex to get the business started up in order to realise a WFOE [Wholly Foreign-Owned Enterprise]. In May last year we succeeded. We got these business licences; it took two years to reach this goal. In the meantime, we formed a team of technicians and engineers that we trained in the Netherlands. We got the first order in the beginning of 2013 from a German company, and in August it was delivered, supplied and commissioned. By September we could start in our own facility with the next job. We got to make a series of welding fixtures.

“We see companies popping up who need our assistance and who need our know-how. We see



alignment for the ordering intake, and we are pleased with this development because it is more than [we] expected.”

Piet sees a positive future for AWL with increasing growth across several markets. “On every stage that we present in China, Europe, and the US, we will see growth that will not end. The demand for robotics and automation is still growing, especially in Europe, because of the benefits that automated production brings along.

“In the production of automotive parts, European manufacturers are capable of handling the competition, because of the level of automation and the rapid technology of the welding processes. We have a lot of know-how here in Europe to handle that. For China, it’s a positive development because their quality standards must get higher with all the upcoming European car makers in China. They push the Chinese market to a higher level. Because of that, we see that the quality of the production equipment and process equipment is becoming more like the style of the western world, and that’s positive. With all these different companies coming to China, we can follow in their slipstream, and that’s a reason for us to grow in China.”



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