

THE THIRD GENERATION OF SUCCESS

The third generation of the Wolff family has taken the family business firmly on to the international stage. Amanda Saint discovered that ARMATUREN-WOLFF's innovative electrical valve system is set to take it to the next level of market expansion.



Hendrik, Rainer & Mathias WOLFF

What started in 1945 as a small family business in Hamburg, Germany, trading in sanitary equipment is, today, an international company supplying a wide range of valves and related equipment to the general ship-building industry, the offshore industry and the mega yacht sector. ARMATUREN-WOLFF is now run by the third generation of the family, brothers Hendrik and Mathias Wolff, who work together as co-Managing Directors.

Hendrik Wolff joined the family business in 2004 and before that the management team had been in place for a long time. He affirmed: "Especially since Mathias came on board in 2008, the company has in the last years become more dynamic and international."

Much more international – as 50 per cent of the company's business is now

export and 50 per cent in the EU. To meet the needs of its global customer base, ARMATUREN-WOLFF has a network of representatives in China, the US, Russia, Finland, India, Korea and Greece, as well as sales partnerships in Sri Lanka, Egypt and Singapore.

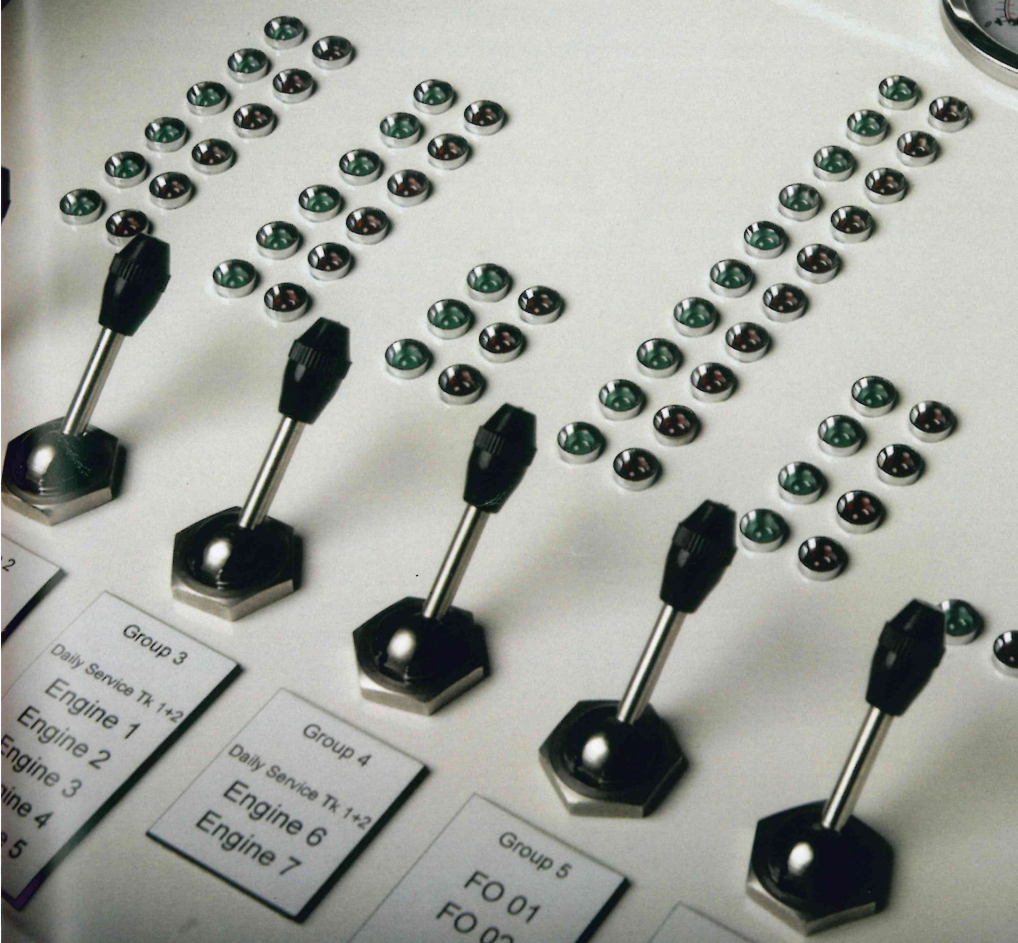
Electric Innovation

With a wide range of products, both from other manufacturers and in-house developments, ARMATUREN-WOLFF is developing a good brand reputation for its own innovative designs. One of its most recent innovations is an electric quick-closing valve system. "No other producers in the world are making them," Mr Wolff explained.

Conventional quick-closing valve systems use pneumatic or hydraulic

power, but Mr Wolff firmly believes that electric is the future because of the benefits it delivers – the main one being ease of installation and maintenance. With conventional systems a network of steel pipes has to be installed and maintained as well, whereas the electrical version just has cables. "With often 600 metres or more of control lines needed, cables are much easier to work with," Mr Wolff commented.

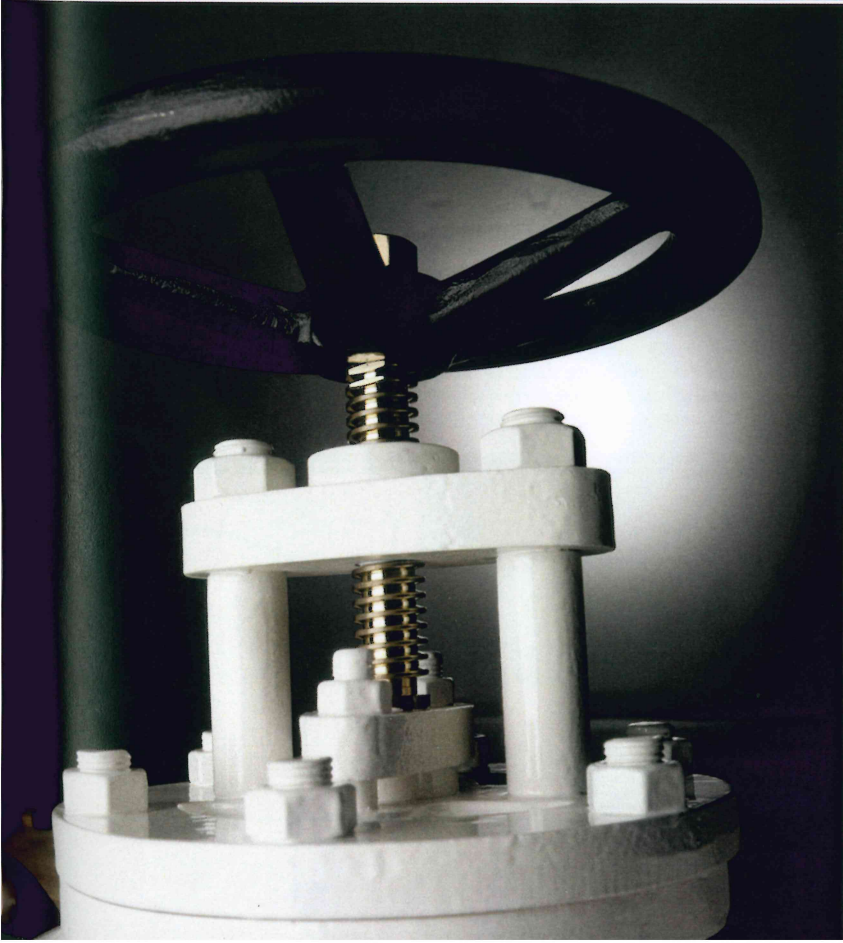
The new electrical system was tested and launched in 2008 and has been gaining recognition and becoming more successful ever since. The next version will be available soon, as the company has been working with a customer to develop it further. The project has focused on refining the features to make it even safer and higher-performing. ▀



Group 3
Daily Service Tk 1+2
Engine 1
Engine 2
Engine 3
Engine 4
Engine 5

Group 4
Daily Service Tk 1+2
Engine 6
Engine 7

Group 5
FO 01
FO 02





Although the electrical version will require a slightly higher initial investment, the long-term return will more than repay that. As well as being easier to systemise, testing has also been improved and any problems can be accurately pinpointed.

Branding and Business Development

Now that the system is installed in many vessels, the focus for ARMATUREN-WOLFF is growing brand awareness. It is looking to grow its market share further

in several regions of the world, so is attending trade shows globally as well as developing new partnerships with dealers and representatives.

Mr Mathias Wolff was also invited to take part in a panel discussion at an event in Panama in February to talk about aspects for choice of equipment in the light of changed environmental regulations and the benefits they deliver to meet the new requirements.

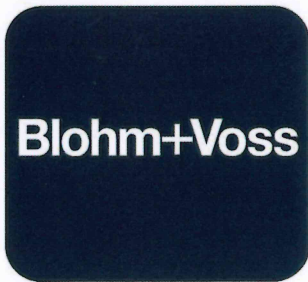
Despite its economic troubles Greece is also a big market for the company and it is continuously highly involved in shipbuilding projects. "Greece is one of our main targets as it has the largest fleets and shipbuilding companies there that are still strong and still building," said Mr Wolff.

Its home country is still an important region and besides the conventional areas of shipbuilding and offshore, in the last decade ARMATUREN-WOLFF has also become increasingly involved in Germany's mega-yacht sector. It has worked on number of large projects deliv-

ering very demanding technical products, and is doing so at the moment as well. One of the most remarkable recent projects is an electrically remote-controlled valve chest for a series of specific seismic survey vessels, for which ARMATUREN-WOLFF has become a partner in development and supply for its customer in Japan.

"All of the customers and suppliers we work with in every region we look to establish long-term partnerships with. These are technically-demanding products, so we have to act in an advisory capacity and it's important that there is trust and a commitment to ongoing relationships," added Mr Wolff.

This approach to business is inherent in the company's core values of honesty, reliability, technical competence and flexibility - which generates loyalty from both staff and customers. "We always adapt to our customers' needs and although we are not a large company we have always been a reliable partner," Mr Wolff stressed.

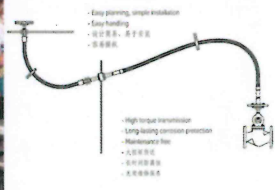
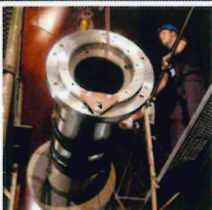


Blohm + Voss Industries (Shanghai)

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Blohm & Voss has cooperation with ARMATUREN-WOLFF more than 20 years. ARMATUREN-WOLFF quick-closing valves and flexible rods quick closing valves systems are worldwide in service on board of ships as well as in land-based industries. With its long experience in the development and production of these products, ARMATUREN-WOLFF counts among the leading manufactures around the world. High quality is essential for these safety-relevant components. As with all products from ARMATUREN-WOLFF, the manufacturing processes in Hamburg follows strict quality and testing standards. Type Approvals and certifications by nearly all major classification societies confirm reliability and quality.



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Corporate Responsibility

As the company looks forward to growing its market penetration with the electrical quick-valve system, health, safety and environmental responsibility is also high on its agenda. It takes its role as an employer very seriously and is committed to providing a safe working environment for the staff and designing products that enable customers to address energy-efficiency too.

Mr Wolff said: "Staying abreast of ever-changing environmental regulations is a challenge, but we can work as a partner with our customers to find economical and environmentally-sustainable solutions. We have the knowledge and experience to ensure they get the right solutions."

Working with customers right from the start of the development process is key, and ARMATUREN-WOLFF also works with environmental technology designers to identify where it can expand its portfolio with complementary products. As it seeks to expand its range, the company is also striving to cut its manufacturing costs by actively developing new partners in low-cost regions that can deliver the same quality products.

As Mr Wolff looks ahead he is philosophical about the future and said that he always focuses on what opportunities change brings rather than what disappears. He quoted Helen Keller: "When one door to happiness closes, another opens; but often we look so long at the closed door that we do not see the one which has been opened for us."

With his ambitious plans for the company's future it seems that Mr Wolff has his eye firmly on all the doors that are open. "We see possibilities not problems," he concluded. ■

