



# A digital world

Stefan Weber, Managing Director of Windsourcing.com returns to PES to discuss the logistics of supplying spare parts and repair products as and when they are needed, wherever that may be. How big a role does digitization and automation play in making all the pieces of the puzzle fit?

**PES:** It is lovely to welcome you back to PES Wind Stefan. I trust you are well and business is good for you?

**Stefan Weber:** Thank you very much. We are also happy to talk to you again.

For us, the season started as early as January this year, whereas in previous years the first repair projects were not served until March. We did not see a decrease in orders or sales last year, as projects seem to have shifted regionally.

However, we feel that many projects were on hold due to Covid last year and that many of our customers wanted to pick up the pace and complete their projects as quickly as possible. Therefore, since the beginning of the year, we have been busy quoting, processing orders, and as always, continuously expanding our product line.

**PES:** 2021 has been quite a year so far hasn't

it, with lots of developments continuing to impact on the wind sector and, of course, the effects of the Covid pandemic still being felt. We're over half way through the year now, so looking back so far how have things been for Windsourcing?

**SW:** As already indicated, the first half of the year already went very well for us. We were able to increase the number of orders compared to the previous year and already reached the previous year's result at the end of June.

In February 2020, we launched our online store for customers from the EU and are really surprised how well it was accepted and used from the very beginning. The number of orders placed via the online store is rising continuously. Meanwhile, several orders are received daily via the online store, which we can transfer to our warehouse and ship with just a few clicks.

In addition to this development, we are also

receiving more and more inquiries from new customers via our website and the online product catalogue, which we can supply with spare parts and repair material. So, our main sales channel, the website and thus the online shop, is doing a good job.

Of course, our team in Hamburg is also busy. We take care of the day-to-day business, talk to customers, follow up on deliveries, etc., but we also work on strategic issues that constantly develop Windsourcing.com as a company, such as supplier development, further development of the product portfolio.

**PES:** Do you expect the outlook to remain similar to this for the rest of the year now?

**SW:** Yes, absolutely. We think the season will last as long as the weather allows. Since we supply customers for worldwide projects, this means that this year, for the first time, the season can go far into December for us.

**PES:** And then looking forward to 2022 and beyond; are there any particular trends you can predict that we might see, particularly in relation to your field of work?

**SW:** We think that logistics will play an even more important role in the future than it already does. We changed our logistics partner in the first quarter of this year to be even more competitive.

The process of sending orders and packing instructions to our warehouse is automated, which not only gives us time advantages, but also makes processes more traceable and even less prone to errors.

We have also adapted some processes in our online shop as well as in our internal ERP system to serve our customers even better.

A second trend we can observe in our 'spare parts distribution' area is even closer relationships with our customers. GEV Wind Power EU, for example, has named us a preferred supplier this year, and so have other customers.

This spurs us on to continue working hard to improve our business. When we talk about spare parts supply, we are talking about a holistic system that has to work. This starts with the cooperation with our supply partners and goes all the way to the delivery of the ordered goods to our customers.

**PES:** Is sustainability in the supply of spare parts being given the focus it deserves do you think and is this likely to develop further in the future?

**SW:** Yes, we can agree with that. Sustainability is an important topic in general and will also play an important role in spare parts supply. This starts with research and development as well as manufacturing of products and leads up to packaging and transport to the customer.

**PES:** How important is the continuous automation and digitalization of internal processes to ensuring that the logistics of your job all run smoothly?

**SW:** You might say that the end-to-end automation and digitization of internal and external processes is Windsourcing.com's DNA, alongside the product portfolio and supply network tailored to the wind industry.

By this we mean that since the company was founded, our goal has been to move away from traditional sales structures to digital sales channels. Our website is our main sales channel. We have tens of thousands of articles online, and we are constantly updating and editing their content. This is how customers around the world find us when they are looking for specific spare parts or repair materials for their wind turbines.

The digitization of internal processes such as quoting, order processing and transmission of shipping information to our warehouse is another important aspect that makes our

company and our work increasingly profitable.

The more tasks are standardized and automated, the more time we have for strategic issues such as supplier development, marketing, strategic purchasing and customer care.

**PES:** What changes would you like or expect to see here to make things even better when you're dealing with external partners such as logistic partners?

**SW:** As already mentioned, we have been working with a new logistics partner since March. This partner has already automated many processes internally. That was an important aspect for us. Another decisive point was that the new logistics partner is willing and able to connect its system to our ERP system via an interface, so that the transmission of shipping orders and item information is purely automatic.

Automation is also an important issue when it comes to adding new items to our portfolio. These item data must be provided to us digitally so that we can automatically upload them into our system. This also works very well with our supply partners.

All in all, we can state that the wind industry, just like all other industries and areas of public life, is moving towards further digitization and automation.

**PES:** What's next for the after sales market of the wind industry do you think?

**SW:** The market will of course continue to develop in view of the addition of wind turbines in recent years. In particular, the repair and maintenance of offshore wind turbines will become even more important.

The use of wind power, especially on the open sea, demands the highest standards of corrosion protection due to the mechanical as well as climatic conditions. A long and thus profitable service life of the turbines can only be achieved with conscientious maintenance. The turbines cannot simply be removed, especially on the high seas. All work has to be carried out on site in wind and weather - often by industrial climbers who can only handle heavy tools and materials to a limited extent. In addition, protective coatings must dry and cure quickly due to the weather.

Here, for example, manufacturers of spare parts and repair materials are also called upon to bring product developments to market that meet the special needs of service personnel on wind turbines.

One of our supply partners, Sika, has already developed a special product for corrosion protection in the onshore and offshore area, SikaCor® SW-1000 RepaCor, taking into account the special requirements. The coating dries four hours faster than conventional systems. The practical packaging in the form of mixing cartridges facilitates application and thus ensures



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absolute process reliability while minimizing waste. Windsourcing.com has been offering this product exclusively as a distributor for the after-sales market of the wind industry for years.

**PES:** And where does Windsourcing fit in with this? What's next for you that we can look forward to hearing more about next time we catch up?

**SW:** We believe that Windsourcing.com has been going in exactly the right direction since the company was founded. Today we see that digitalization, automation as well as holistic thinking and working, in partnerships with supply partners and customers, are the ingredients of successful and sustainable working.

For this reason, we think that Windsourcing.com fits very well into this market and its development due to its many years of experience, with a comprehensive product portfolio, coupled with the structure and processes of the company.

Also, in the next years Windsourcing.com will be an important and reliable supplier of spare parts and repair material for wind turbines onshore and offshore, worldwide

As always, we have interesting projects in the pipeline and are supplying more and more markets worldwide. For this reason, we will certainly have interesting things to talk about again next time.

**PES:** Will you be visiting HUSUM Wind in September?

**SW:** Yes, we will be there and we are really looking forward to it. We are especially looking forward to meeting customers and business partners in person again after such a long time. We will be on site with the entire team and are always available to make an appointment for a meeting during the fair.

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