

## In discussion: Michael Stork, Hofmann Mess- und Auswuchttechnik GmbH & Co KG

Global Cement recently caught up with Michael Stork from fan balancing equipment producer Hofmann Mess- und Auswuchttechnik...



**Above:** Dipl. Ing. Michael Stork is Manager Business Unit Active Balancing Systems and Vibration Measuring Instruments at Hofmann Mess- und Auswuchttechnik. He has 25 years' experience in the fields of measurement and balancing.

**Global Cement (GC):** Please could you introduce Hofmann Mess- und Auswuchttechnik?

**Michael Stork (MS):** Hofmann was founded in 1996 and is based in Pfungstadt near Frankfurt, Germany, where it has its main office, production facilities and sales functions. The company has around 160 employees divided into several business units in order to cover the entire market for balancing machines and systems, including handheld devices.

The company also has a sales and production subsidiary in Lynchburg, Virginia, US, plus sales and service partners in Brazil, Spain, France, Mexico, China and the UK.

**GC:** How does Hofmann help the cement sector?

**MS:** Cement production is a very important area for Hofmann, indeed several of our process fan balancing systems have been specifically adapted for use in the industry. We can balance almost any rotating component using our know-how. One of the most

common requests is to equip process fans with our AB9000 balancing system, which is tailored to this task and easy to integrate.

Many customers have struggled with so-called build-ups and can't really get a handle on the changing imbalances. They can usually monitor the vibrations caused by the imbalance but to correct it they have to stop the fan and clean it, with associated downtime and loss of production.

However, with Hofmann's fully automatic balancing system, we can ensure that the fan runs more smoothly. The AB9000 system compensates for imbalances at operating speed. Thus the maintenance intervals are extended. The load on the bearings, foundation, frame structure, everything... is reduced. This ensures higher process stability and reliability.

**GC:** Where is the AB9000 most often used?

**MS:** The most common area to use an AB9000 in the cement sector is for preheater fans. They draw out humid, dusty and hot air from the kiln, the dust



**Right:** Hofmann Mess- und Auswuchttechnik's headquarters in Pfungstadt, close to Frankfurt, Germany.

sticks to the fan rotors and bakes on due to the high internal temperature. Then, larger parts fly off and an imbalance occurs. If the imbalance vibration is too high, the entire system has to be stopped to clean the fan. Almost every cement plant struggles with this problem. Our balancing system can correct this resulting imbalance fully automatically.

**GC: Can you provide a recent example?**

**MS:** We recently implemented the AB9000 system for a client on an ID fan at a Nigerian clinker plant where there had been really big problems with vibrations. The fan had to be stopped once a month to be cleaned. Since the implementation of the AB9000, the plant has been able to reduce the maintenance intervals to every 12 months. The plant makes around 347t/hr of clinker. With every cleaning stop, the plant loses a lot. The AB9000 reduces losses significantly.

**GC: How are cement client demands changing?**

**MS:** Through our in-house development department, we are constantly developing our products to react to the requirements of the market. Digitisation is an increasing factor and we are keeping ourselves up with the times. An important point for us and the customer with a view into the future is preventive online monitoring, which will also be supported by Hofmann.

**GC: Where are the most enquiries coming from in the world at present?**

**MS:** Hofmann operates all over the global cement sector and, to be honest, we haven't really noticed significant changes in the number of enquiries from specific regions. Of course we have a very large presence in Europe, but we have also distributed a lot of applications around the globe.

**GC: What is the next 'big thing' for Hofmann?**

**MS:** We are looking at further potential sectors for the AB9000, for example the pulp and paper industry, steel industry and chemical industry. So far we have sold very few systems in these industries and don't have many references. Over time we have learned that the problem with build ups is very widespread. From Hofmann's perspective, the problems do not differ in the different process



**Above:** Build-ups on ID fans are a common issue in cement plants. Hofmann's AB9000 fan balancing system can reduce the imbalances caused by build-ups, significantly reducing maintenance frequency.

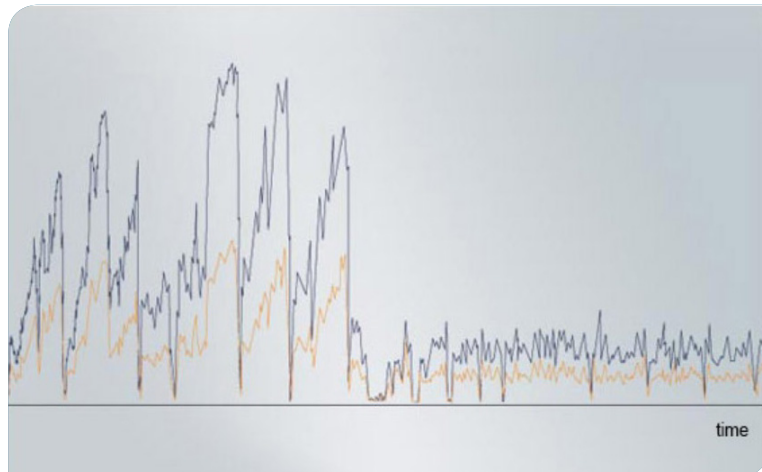
fields. However, we do not have many references other than in the cement industry, so this is a strong potential area for growth. We don't need to come up with a new product to serve these other sectors.

**GC: What major opportunities and threats are out there for Hofmann in the next few years?**

**MS:** We feel that our products are very convincing in every respect and the know-how we have built up will serve us very well going forward. We don't expect any competition in this field, so expanding our presence into other sectors is a huge opportunity for the company. The biggest threat is the possibility of a future economic slowdown around the world, the chances of which we cannot influence. Generally though, the company is very well positioned for the future.

**GC: Thank you for your time today.**

**MS:** You are very welcome indeed.



**Left:** The diagram shows the long-term behaviour of bearing vibrations of a ~12t fan impeller before and after the installation of an AB9000 system. The vibration amplitude of the floating bearing side (blue) and the fixed bearing side (orange) is shown over a period of nine months without AB9000 and with AB9000 respectively.



# Hofmann.

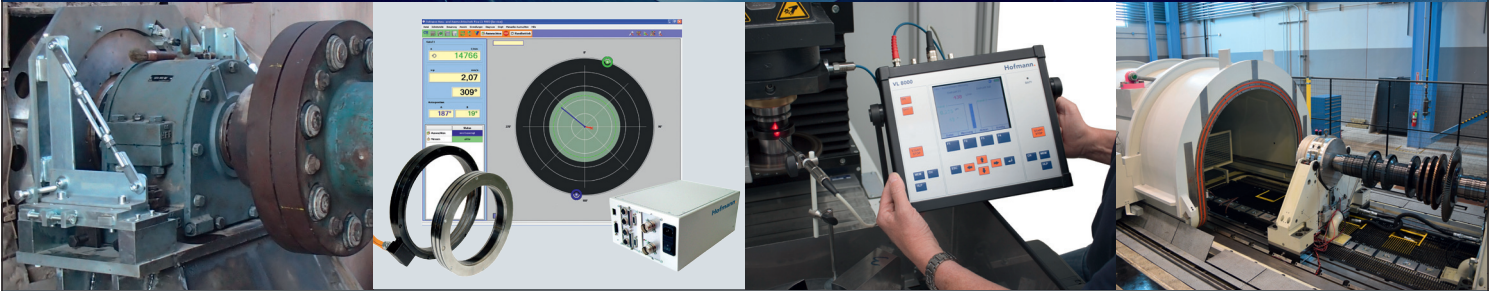
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