

Integrating Systems and Customers Alike

Four years ago, Rockson Automation was a newly created name in the marine technology community. Today, this small developer and manufacturer of German-crafted integrated control and monitoring systems is competing with industry giants. “These global players may be able to offer huge packages, but our flexibility, our ability and our customer focused support gives us our edge,” Sales and Project Manager, Harald Reger explained to Daniel Barnes.

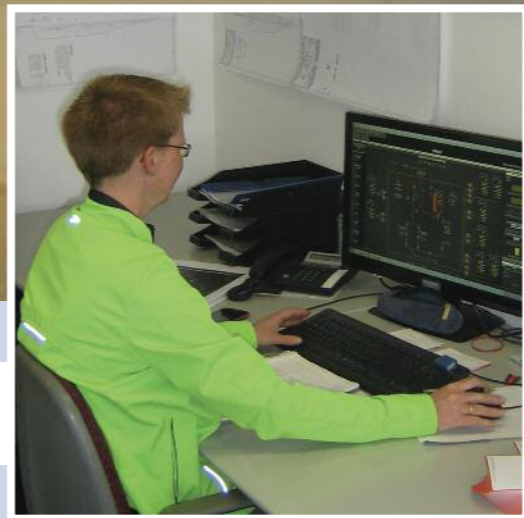
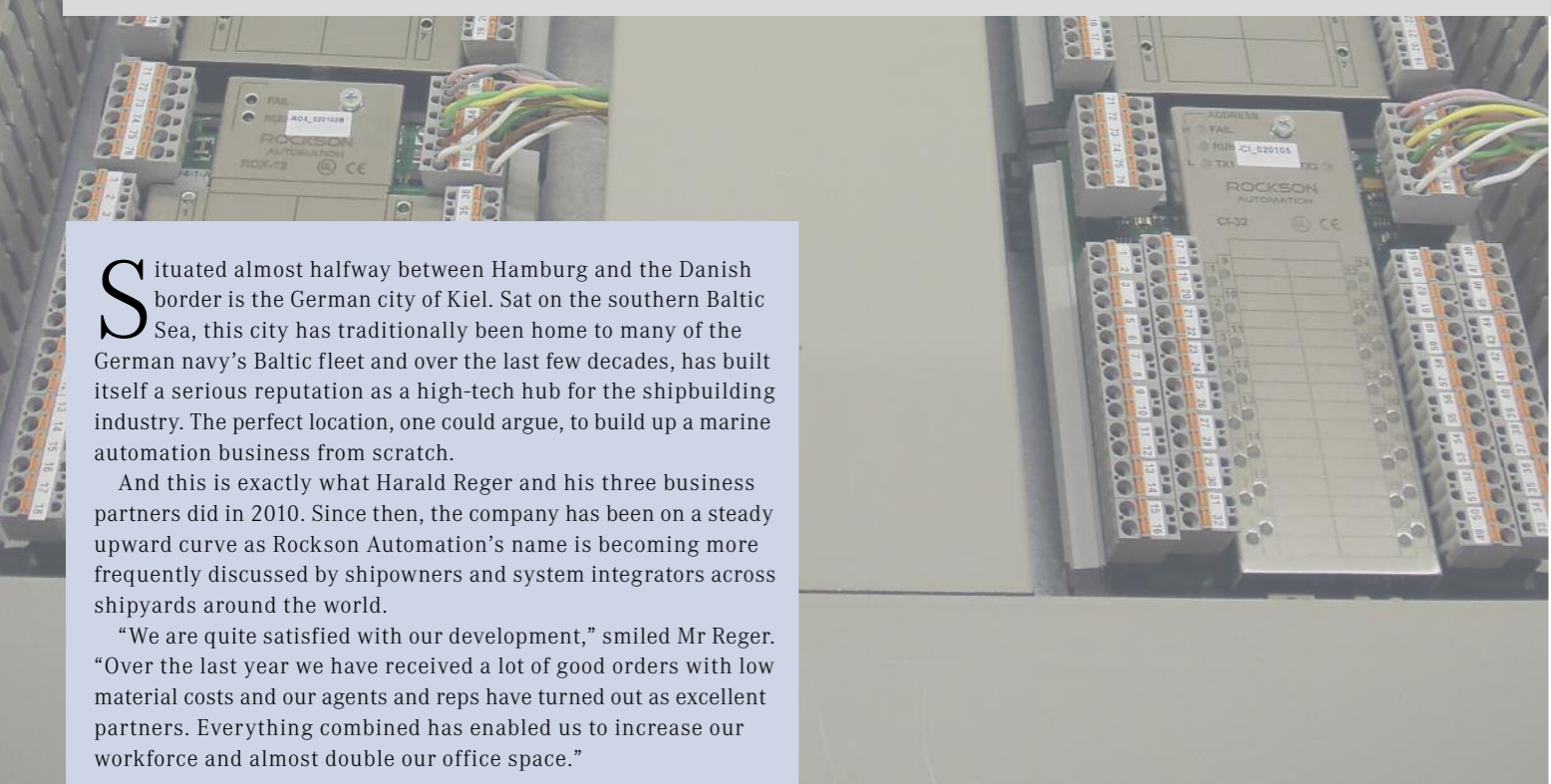
Situated almost halfway between Hamburg and the Danish border is the German city of Kiel. Sat on the southern Baltic Sea, this city has traditionally been home to many of the German navy’s Baltic fleet and over the last few decades, has built itself a serious reputation as a high-tech hub for the shipbuilding industry. The perfect location, one could argue, to build up a marine automation business from scratch.

And this is exactly what Harald Reger and his three business partners did in 2010. Since then, the company has been on a steady upward curve as Rockson Automation’s name is becoming more frequently discussed by shipowners and system integrators across shipyards around the world.

“We are quite satisfied with our development,” smiled Mr Reger. “Over the last year we have received a lot of good orders with low material costs and our agents and reps have turned out as excellent partners. Everything combined has enabled us to increase our workforce and almost double our office space.”



installation in engine room

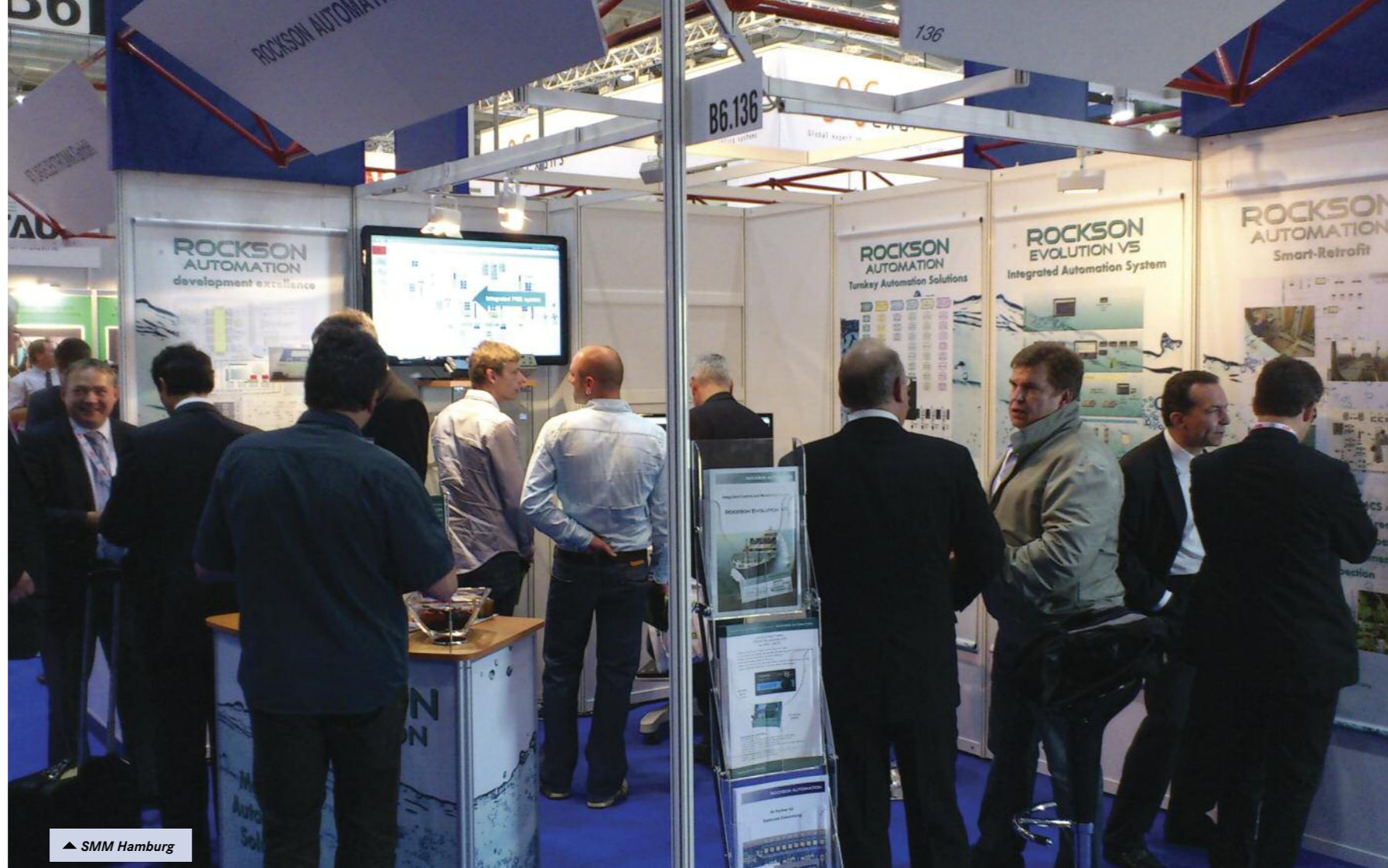


Engineering

The culmination of the company’s success and a strategy of developing its own hardware and software components in-house and all German sourced, is the Rockson Evolution V5. This automation system is designed to meet the toughest demands in the maritime environment and covers the complete range from simple alarm and monitoring systems, up to the most sophisticated integrated control and monitoring system available on the market.

Available to all Vessels
 “We can sell the Rockson Evolution V5 to every type of vessel,” said Mr Reger. “At the beginning, we focussed on the retrofit market and after convincing many German and European shipowners to place retrofit orders, they have helped us get onto the makers list for newbuilds in China.”

The V5 system is based on a wide range of predefined logics for ship operations that allows shipowners a standardised and ready to use solution. And its scalable design enables Rockson Automation to quickly update its interface and applications - be that liquid temperature and inert gas pressure reading, generator protection, fuel consumption and performance monitoring, or whatever the vessel requires.



▲ SMM Hamburg



▲ Steaming page light

give cheaper prices for packages. But they cannot compete with the support that we, as a small company, can provide to each and every customer. We are focussed on developing close relationships with the client and our research and development team are currently working directly with a number of customers to develop specific hardware and software suitable to their specific requirements.”

Sales Beyond Expectations

This close customer approach is not just appreciated at face value with clients but on the company’s balance sheets too. “For the 2012-2013 financial year, our turnover reached €1.5 million; as we planned,” said Mr Reger, who continued by revealing this year’s figure topped €1.8 million. “This is beyond our expectations and we hope we can grow with the market.”

With a close network of sales representatives dotted throughout Europe and Asia, the company looks well on course to keep on growing.

“What I like the most about the company is how proud I am that we are working worldwide with good partners and we can keep our clients happy with our excellent products and support. This is a relationship that I really enjoy.”

“With our remote maintenance interface we can help customers, wherever they are in the world, from our offices here in Kiel,” said Mr Reger. “Whether they want an upgrade or are looking for malfunctions if they have them, our excellent relationship and close interaction with various manufacturers of ship subsystems, enables us to deliver efficient and reliable interface and integration solutions to our customers.”

To date, the company has installed 60 Rockson Evolution V5 systems and has another 30 in the order book. The likes of Essberger (tankers) MSC Shipmanagement Ltd (container ships), Thomson (passenger ships) and Rickmers Reederei (heavy-lift multi-purpose carriers), are all happy customers and provide firm evidence to back up Mr Reger’s claim of his company’s systems being capable of adaptation for any vessel type.

Product and Market Developments

“Last year, we were very proud to receive three orders for megayachts; another market for us,” said Mr Reger. “We are also looking towards merchant vessels and special vessels and we hope in the future to have more than just a footstep into the

megayacht market. We spent seven months improving our system for the megayacht market as it’s quite different to merchant vessels. So much so, that we now have two software product lines; one for merchant vessels and one for megayachts.

“We hope to move forward in both markets. New-build orders at Chinese shipyards are on the rise, and I have recently been to shipyards in Singapore and Taiwan that specialise in megayachts.”

The talk of China, Singapore and Taiwan, combined with the company’s recent decision to employ a full time engineer in China, underlines the potential that Mr Reger and his colleagues are convinced lies within the Asian markets. But the ‘Made in Germany’ label is a crucial element of success much closer to home.

“European and German shipowners always ask us, ‘is your system made in Germany?’ And when we answer ‘yes’, it’s a good argument.”

It is an argument that goes some way in alleviating the competition, and more specifically, price issues, that Mr Reger admits is Rockson Automation’s biggest challenge when up against industry giants. “Within the Asian market, we are competing with the big ones from Norway and Germany; global players who can



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