

# Looking ahead by tradition

Industry 4.0 and digitization: Machine developers are not alone when it comes to meeting new challenges. The decision-makers in Human Resources at Harro Höfliger face the task of recruiting employees at an early stage to meet future requirements. In order to bring the sought-after specialists on board, they pursue several strategies.

**A** friendly “hello” here, a “good morning” there or a smiling nod from afar: Whoever visits Harro Höfliger in Allmersbach im Tal immediately notices the friendliness of the employees. “Respectful interaction with each other is part of our corporate values. This includes greeting one another in our growing company despite the increasing number of colleagues,” explains Uwe Amann, Managing Director of Human Resources at

Harro Höfliger. But anyone who thinks of “values” as “stuff” is mistaken: “Our employees feel comfortable here. We focus on their individuality and foster their strengths. This has worked well for us in the past few decades. A strategy we would like to continue, no matter how much we grow.” Thomas Weller, CEO at Harro Höfliger agrees: “We learned early on how important it is to secure the best talents who also fit in on a personal level. With such employees, we can achieve anything.”

**Setting the course**  
Finding these highly specialized employees remains a challenge. Like all high-tech companies, Harro Höfliger faces a shortage of skilled workers, and that will not change in the foreseeable future. On the contrary: The increasing degree of digitization and networking at our customers’ production plants requires even more qualified developers and experts on topics that may still be visionary today, but may well be the key to a company’s success tomorrow. Dealing with

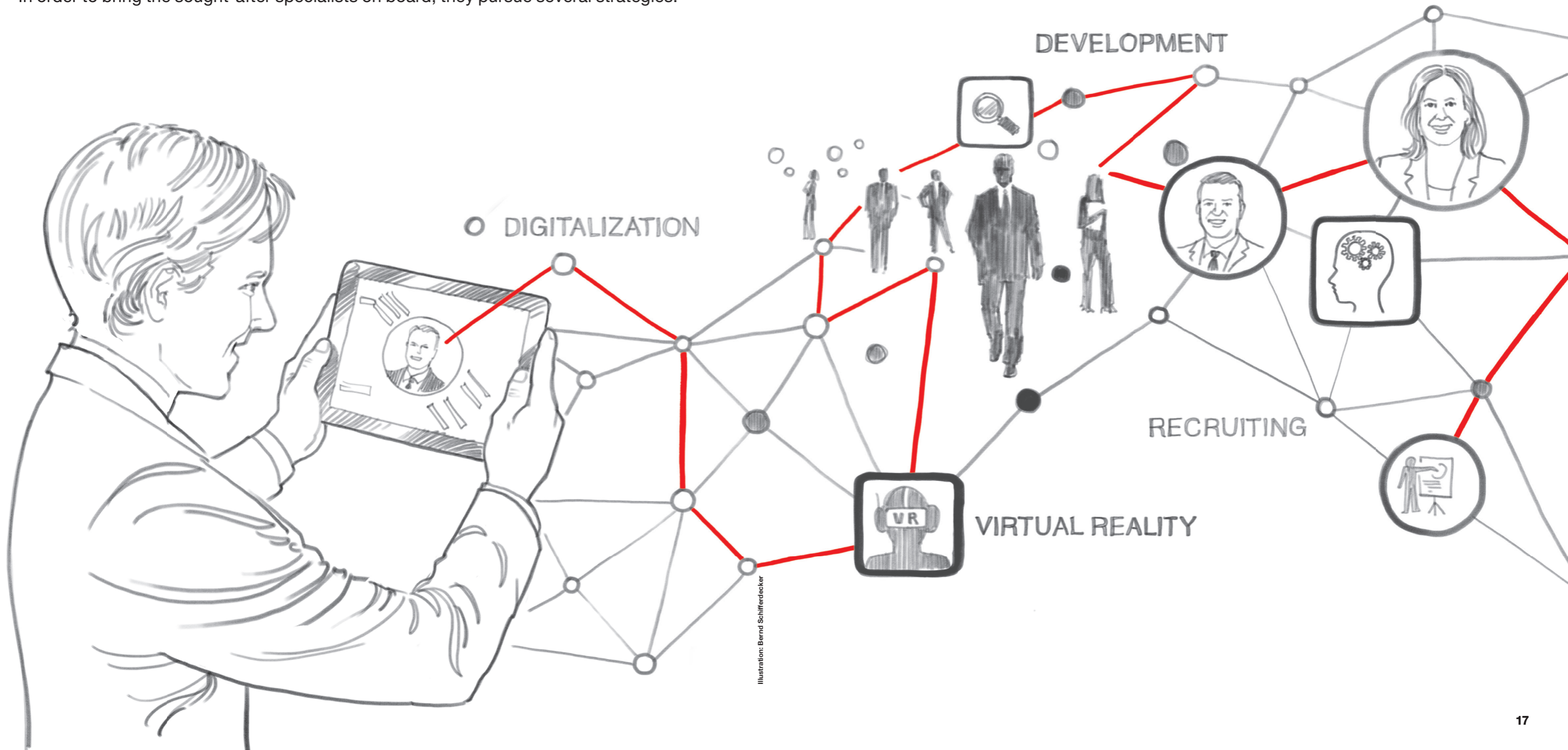


Illustration: Bernd Schifferdecker

new ideas and thinking outside the box is a tradition at Harro Höfliger. This explains why topics such as Deep Learning, Machine Learning, Big Data as well as the question of how to harness these technologies for our customers, now appear on meeting agendas.

Fabian Elsässer, Head of Central Electrics and Software Development, explains: "It is important to find out where our customers are heading, and to make sure at an early stage that we have the necessary know-how in order to provide them with assistance. To achieve this, we need to find ambitious and motivated employees in professions that have not been the focus of our attention thus far, but will become increasingly important in the future. We will need software engineers and data analysts who can cope with the complexity of future productions."

**Fostering talents**

With the goal of instilling interest and enthusiasm for the company in these highly sought-after specialists early on, the HR managers go directly to the source. Uwe Amann: "We have always worked closely

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Fabian Elsässer, Head of Central Electrics and Software Development

with vocational and secondary schools. A completely new example is the partnership with the Albstadt-Sigmaringen University which specializes in IT. In a very short time, we were able to recruit a new employee there. A Business Analytics student will write her master thesis at our company."

In addition, Harro Höfliger relies heavily on the dual system, which has been a successful model in Germany for years. The high degree of practical relevance is consistent with the company's training philosophy in many respects. Fabian Elsässer: "The Bachelor and Master theses of our students provide insights into aspects of the future. If we identify topics that might be of potential interest to our customers, we are already developing employee skills in this direction in order to be strong and effective at the appropriate moment."

As a further advantage, the young people get to know the company from the ground up during their internship semesters and are involved in everyday professional situations. "Our employees enjoy many freedoms. Everyone should be able to develop their full potential

*"Every employee should be able to develop their full potential according to his or her abilities and should be ready to take responsibility."*



Uwe Amann, Managing Director of Human Resources

according to his or her abilities, but also be ready to take responsibility and make decisions at an early stage. This also applies to our newcomers," explains Amann. Elsässer adds: "As a supplier of specialty machines we deal with a consistently large number of prototypes. Our customers trust in our know-how. To ensure this, we rely on self-confident employees and foster their respective talents. In addition, we provide every newcomer with a mentor, who not only helps him or her to find their way around the company, but also quickly and profes-

sionally helps them reach a superior level of knowledge."

**Developing ideas**

Digitization and Industry 4.0, globalization, demography and shifting values bring about changes that we must adapt to. That is why Harro Höfliger experts are exploring ways to make it easier for their customers to work in the changing world of production and labor, finding solutions right here within the company. "Increased networking is making the manufacturing environment more and more complex, and our machines are placing ever-increasing demands on the operator," explains Elsässer. "We have to take the pressure off them by designing our machines to be easier to operate." High usability HMI systems are one way. Services that support customer production processes are also becoming increasingly important. As an example, pattern recognition to identify operating errors or augmented reality solutions where oper-

ators can adjust a machine using an app on a tablet computer.

Working with these and other systems today and in the future requires close cooperation between experts in new technologies and experienced mechanical engineers. It is a challenge for the managers at Harro Höfliger, but one that they are happy to face. Thomas Weller: "In an environment of trust, anything is possible. Specialists of different disciplines learn from each other, and different generations complement each other. We support this by offering a wide range of qualification programs, trying to include everyone. Ideal conditions for generating future-oriented solutions that help us and our customers to get ahead." ■

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Thomas Weller, CEO

