

# Greater efficiency and enhanced customer service thanks to CAD download service

Schmalz vacuum technology is nowadays a familiar presence where workpieces need to be moved, ergonomically transported or clamped during the production process. Vacuum components from Schmalz are used, for example, as gripper systems for industrial robots, handling devices and packing machines. They also come in the form of suction pads, mounting elements, vacuum generators, valves, measuring and control devices, as well as filter and connection elements.

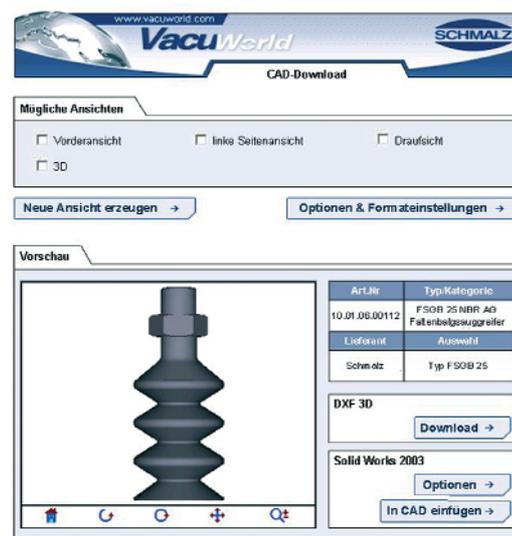
As a modern, future-oriented company, Schmalz pursues a firm Internet strategy. Via its e-Business platform [www.vacuworld.com](http://www.vacuworld.com), customers can access product and corporate information, news and sample applications, as well as a fully integrated online store. It has also been possible since April 2003 to download 3D CAD data for all vacuum components via the website [www.vacuworld.com](http://www.vacuworld.com), which can be inserted directly in a CAD system.

## Supplying drawings via e-mail more time-consuming

When planning a vacuum system, certain calculations need to be carried out for designing the individual components and adapting them to the basic machine. For example, if a robot needs to be equipped with a very specific vacuum gripper unit, the designer needs to have the CAD data for the relevant vacuum components to do this. There were between 100 and 150 relevant requests received at Schmalz every month. "The requests first had to be handled by a designer, then the drawings were usually sent by e-mail or supplied on CD-ROM. This whole process took a very long time," comments Hartmut Schlee, eBusiness Manager at J. Schmalz GmbH.

The biggest problem, however, was the increased demand for 3D data. As volume models offer significant advantages over 2D drawings,

companies, particularly in the engineering sector, switched to 3D design. However, the majority of vacuum component CAD data at Schmalz were in 2D format. "Service is extremely important at Schmalz, so we wanted to supply our customers with drawings in 3D format too," explains Schlee. "But we quickly realized that converting from 2D to 3D takes a whole lot of time and that we would have to assign one worker completely to this task. Added to this, there are very many different 3D formats. You can create a couple of general formats yourself at best; any more than that and you need the support of an expert."



Customized e-Catalog



"You could say that with the CAD download service we're in a win-win situation. Our customers are benefiting from shorter design times and so can cut their product development costs. On the other side, we've been able to reduce our internal process costs and expand our market position through enhanced customer service."

Hartmut Schlee, eBusiness Manager at J. Schmalz GmbH

### **Integrating 3D CAD data in the VacuWorld portal using the service from Traceparts**

In its quest for a competent partner Schmalz came across TraceParts, headquartered in Amberg, Germany. After carrying out an extensive evaluation, it was clear that the TraceParts concept was the one that met Schmalz's requirements best. "We had three key requirements: support for as many formats as possible, seamless integration into our VacuWorld portal and on-demand availability of information," explains Hartmut Schlee. "TraceParts clearly had the best offering to meet these requirements. So, we decided to entrust the integration of the CAD data into our portal and product catalog to TraceParts."

The first stage of the process involved TraceParts preparing the design data for the Schmalz vacuum components' 2D drawings and transferring them to parametric 3D models. Design data for a total of 3,000 articles had to be converted. Using TraceParts' state-of-the-art CAD technology, the conversion process takes place automatically, which meant that this phase could be completed in just two months. Keeping to the specified timeframe was an important factor for Schmalz, as the new service was to be online and presented in April 2003, for the Hanover Fair to be exact. "The cooperation with TraceParts went smoothly from the start, which made us sure that we could complete the project on time," continues Schlee.

TraceParts programmed a suitable front-end for the CAD download service, even based on the Schmalz corporate design. This customization facility is, in Schlee's view, a major benefit of TraceParts. "The 3D models are definitely hosted by TraceParts and are not on our servers. But by customizing the download window according to the VacuWorld website design, customers are getting everything via the one access point."

### **Support for all standard interfaces and CAD formats**

Using the CAD download service, designers can select the desired product from Schmalz's online catalog and easily download it in the

widest range of formats too. TraceParts can offer a large number of standard interfaces, including DXF, DWG and ME10 for 2D drawings, plus DXF-3D, STEP and IGES for 3D drawings. This means that all the geometries created by TraceParts can be seamlessly imported into all the current 2D and 3D CAD systems such as SolidWorks, SolidEdge, ProEngineer, AutoCAD/ Mechanical Desktop or ME10. Also, depending on the CAD system, there is parts list information available such as article number, type, dimensions, manufacturer and form.

Another particular feature of TraceParts is the direct2CAD function that designers can use to insert drawings directly from their web browser into their CAD system. This "just-in-time" availability offers considerable benefits compared with solutions where designers first have to download the data or have them sent by e-mail. "In both cases, the drawings have to be saved temporarily on hard disk before they can be processed further," explains Peter Poerschke, responsible for IT/Multimedia at J. Schmalz GmbH. "Thanks to TraceParts' direct insert functions, these tasks are no longer necessary and the time spent on the design process can be cut significantly."

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With the support of TraceParts, Schmalz can now supply its customers with all the key data at a glance online: product photos, prices, availability and above all, design data.

In the view of the project managers at Schmalz, the investment in TraceParts' solution has, at any rate, paid for itself. Since the system was introduced, the number of downloads has risen by 40%, and feedback from customers has been totally positive.



J. Schmalz GmbH was founded in 1910 as "Johannes Schmalz Rasierklingenfabrik" in Glatten in Germany's Black Forest region.

The vacuum specialist currently employs a total of 250 workers and sells its products worldwide through seven subsidiaries. Schmalz is among the leading companies in the global vacuum technology market.

As a future-oriented company, J. Schmalz GmbH, headquartered in Glatten, makes great use of the Internet. The vacuum specialist's customers can download 3D CAD data for all the vacuum components on demand via the VacuWorld portal and insert them directly in their CAD systems. Using a customized solution from TraceParts Schmalz has been able not only to enhance customer service, but to cut internal process costs considerably too.



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