

## One on One: Discussion with a Global Industry Champion in Special Automated Coating Machines

*Each quarter we sit down with industry executives and thought leaders to discuss the trends, challenges, and best practices that are transforming their businesses. Today, we are with Joseph Vanden Eynden, President and Managing Director of Sprimag Inc. to discuss how Sprimag delivers innovative painting and surface treatment application solutions to its US and global customers.*



Since 1925 Sprimag has enjoyed a leading position for automated coating solutions. Sprimag designs and manufactures machines for functional and decorative coating of mass-produced parts as well as for internal coating of metal packaging such as tubes, cans, and beverage bottles. Coating units from Sprimag are well proven and are often considered as benchmarks in terms of quality, precision, and reliability. With highly qualified and experienced employees from the initial consultation through the engineering, application development, production, and assembly, installation, and commissioning, to the after-sales service, Sprimag is able to meet customers' requirements flexibly, cost efficiently, and ensuring the best quality. Through continuous improvements in all process steps and activities, Sprimag is constantly improving its services to its customer.

***Tell us about Sprimag, the market you serve and the problems you solve for your customers.***

**Joe Vanden-Eynden:** Sprimag is a 95 years-old German-based company which at its origin produced the first spray gun patent in Europe in the early 1900s. In the late 1990's, the company launched its US subsidiary (Sprimag Inc.) in Cincinnati to serve as the front door to the US market, and to sell Sprimag equipment built in Germany.

We offer paint finishing machines for a wide range of products from parts as small as dentist drills, to large car facias, and everything in between. Our primary market though is the automotive industry with specific coating applications. We supply machines for coating of unique engine components, for brake rotors and transmission parts, as well as coating applications on the interior and exterior of the vehicle. Another important part of our business is for the food / beverage industry with coating application machines for the inside of containers (bottles, tubes, cans), where we have developed a strong and recognized market leadership with the best brands in the world.

To better serve our customers we have also developed upstream and downstream innovative solutions, offering equipment to automatically wash, clean, dry, and bake the paint that is applied with our spray technology, hence, becoming a single source supplier to our customers.

***As an international company, what type of differences do you observe between Europe and North America both from the company's and the customers' behaviors?***

We definitely have different customers in North America than Sprimag in Germany, but we approach all our customers the same way: we bring them the best of both worlds. We bring the core approach and technical competencies from Germany with the unique customizing approach from the US. We also look very carefully at our competitiveness, as we are working in a multi-currency environment and focus on bringing the core technology from our German company, providing custom controls from our US office, and sourcing the rest of the equipment locally in the US.

Another difference is that in the US, things tend to be bigger, so we also think bigger. Specifically, the painting lines are XL-size compared to Germany. This gives us the ability to quote much larger projects than in Europe, which has contributed nicely to the growth of the company.

Sprimag Inc., serves global customers, which makes our US subsidiary a global player. We ship and install equipment designed and built in Cincinnati to places all over the world, for example Poland, Korea, Mexico, China just to name a few client locations.

***Tell us about the creative spirit of Sprimag and how do you continue to innovate.***

As a European company we are extremely focused on sustainability. We constantly focus our work on achieving new levels of waste reduction. We look at filtration, paint reclamation, and energy efficiencies to make our equipment more sustainable and cost effective for our clients. We also get great joy from taking on projects that are focused on delivering new sustainability solutions that eliminate wastes such as plastic packaging. Currently, we are working on a project where we are building an innovative machine that can spray a coating inside a recyclable / reusable aluminum cup that replaces the plastic beverage cup traditionally used at sporting events and concerts, reducing considerably the overall environmental footprint.

***How has Covid-19 impacted your business and what kind of trend do you see for Sprimag Inc.?***

Fortunately, we came into the Covid-19 crisis with a large backlog and very early on we were declared an essential business. This has enabled us to continue to support our customers, especially in the food industry. More specifically, we have increased our order entry during this time while also having to adapt to working remotely. To be frank, it has been challenging growth and we are learning how to be as effective via video calls as we were with face-to-face meetings.

To support our customers, we have been adopting digitalization to collaborate with our clients remotely, both in designing customized solutions for our clients as well as in servicing existing equipment. While I personally have not travelled to a client site in nearly 6 months, we are in weekly contact via online meetings with our customers. In this process, we have noticed that our clients like to touch base more often. The number of project meetings and progress tracking has exploded, and has become a bit of a challenge for our time management.

### ***What makes you different from your competitors?***

Customers like to have a single source supplier. As I shared earlier, Sprimag started as an application company, developing the very first spray gun technology, then Sprimag grew into a machine builder. As a result, we are very uniquely positioned to design customized solutions for our customers. This gives us the advantage that we are able to address not only the small problems our customers have, but also to help them solve their complex and challenging technical problems. Our testing and prototyping labs allow us to simulate a process before we build the equipment, which gives the customer the visibility and confidence level they need. In combining robotics and automation, we can design customized machines that solve challenging problems for customers, whether it is fast cycle times, complex technical specifications, or unique coating application issues.

In 95 years, we have solved untold amounts of challenges and have a full portfolio of machine solutions that gives us the width and the depth that advanced automotive and food / beverage companies prefer. Most of our competitors have not existed for even half of our company timeline. They often specialize only on robotics integration or painting booths, but seldom on the full spectrum as we do. We have a lot of history to pull from and to inspire future innovations.

### ***As a leader how do you lead your team and how do you keep the level of energy to build the Sprimag of the future?***

Sprimag Inc. is a small, lean, and agile company on the US side and we do a lot with a small and highly qualified team. This is a challenge, but we have a strong team with a great spirit, and which is fully dedicated to the customer. Most employees have been with Sprimag since the early years and we have invested a lot in our people.

I personally get my energy from wearing a lot of hats. As a small team, we must be flexible, and we all are required to do a variety of different tasks. I enjoy the diversity of working in engineering, in sales and development, and as a manager. We exchange often with our customers, we get to work on fascinating projects, and pre-Covid, we enjoyed travelling across the globe for our business.

We still feel that we are a young company in the US with a huge growth potential. Last year, we were fortunate to reach out to Altix and to involve them in the Sprimag Inc. growth initiative. Altix has brought us vast experience in formulating our growth strategy, with expertise ranging from financial planning, marketing, and core business principles to help guide us on our exciting journey.

*Thank you very much Joe for sharing with us and our readers the story of Sprimag Inc. We wish you and your team continued success and it has been an honor and a pleasure to be on your side for your growth acceleration initiative.*

### ***ABOUT ALTIX:***

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