

Another milestone in regulating units: after the drives, Sauter perfects the valves.



Rudolf Weber

Fabien Peter

Sauter's new generation of drives marked a major step forward in the functional quality of regulating units. Now it is the turn of the valves: there have been significant improvements in functionality, reliability and durability, along with a reduction in the number of basic models. Sauter Facts talked about this development with Rudolf Weber, Sauter's CEO, and Fabien Peter, Head of Product Management (Field Equipment).

Facts: Your experience with the SUT drives must be just right for further development of the valves.

Peter: Certainly. By introducing the SUT drive technology, we were able to cut back the range to a small number of more versatile variants. It was soon clear that we would also need to move forward with de-

velopment of the valves, so we could offer the best possible regulating units for every application.

"Our regulating units are second to none in the controls industry."

Rudolf Weber

Facts: Considering the various valve types currently in existence, can you make a before-and-after comparison?

Peter: We will be reducing the current range of 1200 valves to 300. If you do a rough calculation of the combination possibilities with various drives (there are now just three, instead of sixty), the rationalisation opportunities become obvious – especially where our customers' inventory is concerned.

Facts: Considering functionality, there are two important things about valves: first, a perfect seal, and second, flow noise – correct?

Peter: Correct. Although noise is the more difficult issue of those two. It is impossible to produce a completely noiseless valve. But we have a new development, the Sauter profile cone, which can handle increased pressure differentials in greater si-

lence. The Sauter profile cone offers a very precise characteristic curve, it regulates well, and stays low-noise – something customers will notice right after they install one. Customers also want their valves to provide a lasting tight seal, which we ensure with a stainless steel ring welded in to the base. And another thing: the pressure-relieved cone is also sealed on the outlet side.

Facts: So this kind of drive/valve combination has no competitors?

Peter: No, not really. Yet there is still little point to that if customers say they love the product, but balk at its price.

Weber: Our prices will be keen. Also remember: most of our products incorporate a great deal of development work, and customers benefit from that. We pitch ourselves as an innovative market leader, priced so our customers can stay competitive.

"The proprietary Sauter profile cone handles large pressure differentials with very low noise."

Fabien Peter

It is important for us to retain market share, so both the technology and our prices have to be right. Earlier, we were at a disadvantage inasmuch as we had a top-notch drive but no valve to match. By fixing that, we are making ourselves competitive across the board.

Facts: Can the valves be improved further still?

Peter: Yes, but only in tandem with the drives. One has to consider the whole regulating unit as a single functional box.

Weber: We have a strong standing in development know-how, and we want to hold on to that. All the technology, the complete regulating unit, has to be "made by Sauter." What is more, manufacturing these things is technically demanding work that involves a great deal of precision, and that should likewise remain in



New range of valves



VUD/VUE
BUD/BUE



VUG
BUG



VUP

Existing range of valves



VXD/VXE



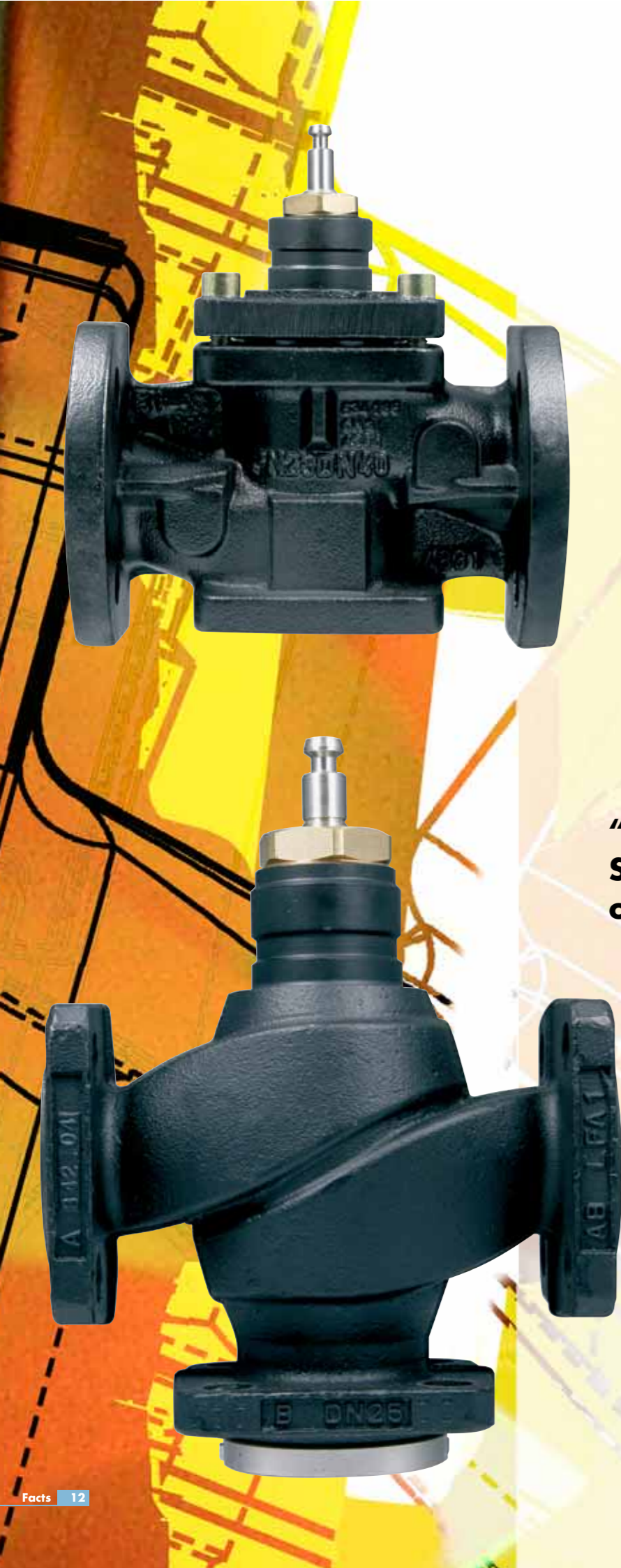
BXD/BXE



V6F/V6G/V6S



B6F/B6G/B6S



Switzerland. Sauter is properly tooled-up in this respect, and we also enjoy a very good reputation for turning out industrial quality.

Facts: Are there any limitations on the valve types available, or are they now ready for general introduction?

Weber: The new range will be introduced early next year – 2006 is going to be the year of the valve!

Peter: Something else worth mentioning: Sauter will be pursuing a whole new philosophy across the range, by producing short-stroke flange valves that nobody else offers at present. Flange valves used to require a considerable stroke distance, which was fine for working with large pressure differentials and volumes. But lower temperatures are more common these days. We took courage and moved to short-stroke – with the result that our SUT dri-

“Production stays in Switzerland and so, too, does our quality know-how.”

Rudolf Weber

ves are just as effective as earlier, big drives.

Then again, 80% of the valve price is in the casting. When I specify a throw of 20 mm, the valve has to be a certain size. But when I need only 8 mm, that reduces the amount of casting material required, which cuts down remarkably on the production cost.

Facts: Why is it so important and noteworthy that the valve is made of ductile cast iron?

Peter: The standard calls for certain quality in given application areas, which in turn dictates the best material for the job. That is why we use ductile cast iron (GGG40.3): being a heat-treated casting metal, we can achieve the required product quality.

Facts: Is there anything else to bear in mind when selecting valves for a particular application?

Peter: An important point is to select the proper valve size – something that the planners usually do. In a heating installation, for instance, an undersized valve will not pass the requisite amount of heat. But specify one that is too large, and regulation is impaired. That is why Sauter provides the VALVEDIM software tool for determining the correct size of valve.

Facts: It must be a huge challenge when you are simultaneously trying to limit yourself to just a few valve types.

Weber: It takes perfect co-ordination between the product management and production departments. The entire range needs to be defined for optimum productivity, so we can stay competitive.

Facts: And are you satisfied with the results?

Peter: I will only be happy when our products gain the market acceptance that we seek, and when we can produce them in the projected quantities.

Weber: Of course, we have other yardsticks, too. We have superseded old ranges; the current crop of products ought to do well. But regrettably, we are losing out on



“The flange technology will enable us to move towards short-stroke valves, which is something that none of our competitors currently offers.”

Fabien Peter

this, we would have to give up production. But simply becoming a dealer and trader would mean a loss of image. We would then be incapable of developing innovative products to go with the Sauter system, and that is not what we want. Another thing: the drive's intelligence could definitely be utilised better than it is at present. That

will be our next move: we have the valve – now we want to further perfect the way it is driven.

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margins. So, following the thrill of rolling out a new range, we are faced with a less spectacular value-engineering task: how to produce a given product for even less.

Peter: If our hearts were not really in