



## PRESS RELEASE

Künzelsau/Cologne, 21.09.2020

### Artificial intelligence, Internet of things, virtual reality: the Berner Group fosters digital transformation in the manual trades

**The Berner Group combines tradition and modernity. The B2B wholesale dealer, a partner to professional users in the automotive, construction and industrial sectors for more than 60 years, is increasingly focusing on innovative solutions for its subsidiaries. For example, Caramba Chemie will be using artificial intelligence to make car washing more resource-efficient in the future. The Internet of things helps customers of Berner Germany to manage machines and tools. And the venerable Ingelfingen-based company BTI uses virtual reality to ensure realistic experiences in warehouse planning.**

For many Germans, driving through the car wash has a fixed spot on the weekly to-do list. Until now, all cars have been cleaned according to the same program, regardless of the amount of dirt that has accumulated. The result: in most cases, significantly more resources are consumed than are actually necessary. Caramba Chemie, which operates the Specialty Chemicals division in the Berner Group, has long been committed to more sustainability in car maintenance. Now the Duisburg-based company is once again proving its pioneering role in the field of specialty chemical cleaning agents. By using artificial intelligence (AI), Caramba will be able to make the washing process more customized in the future and therefore considerably more environmentally-friendly.

Together with a strategic partner, the manufacturer is currently developing a solution that automatically detects the degree of accumulated dirt on a car, selects the appropriate cleaning chemicals and controls their dosage accordingly. In the future, the optical sensors will even be able to analyze the exact type of dirt present, enabling an even more targeted approach.

“The more tailored the dosage of cleaning chemicals is to the dirty vehicle, the greater the sustainability effect,” says Christoph Möltgen, responsible for Caramba on the Berner Group’s Executive Board. “This is because fewer chemicals end up in the wastewater, which can then be more easily treated and returned to the washing process. Ultimately this also reduces the consumption of fresh water and protects the environment.”

#### **“Talking” tools**

For its customers, Berner Germany opens the door to the networked world of the Internet of things (IoT). With the help of Berner Tracking, an online management system, professional tradesmen can always keep an overview of their equipment. Whether by smartphone on the construction site or on a desktop PC in the workshop office: on a clear and comprehensible map, the solution shows within seconds where an urgently needed machine is located and who is currently using which tool.

The interplay of computer software and mobile app allows available tools to be queried regardless of location. The company’s own inventory only needs to be recorded and categorized once. The international transmission standard NFC (near-field communication) ensures contactless data exchange between people and objects. In addition to tools and machines, tradesmen can also manage expendable items (e.g. work gloves). Detailed information, including the current stock level, automatic repair, maintenance and inspection date reminders or safety fact sheets and other important documents, can also be stored for each item. This effectively prevents operating errors and damage. Advance reservations of machines or tools can even be made via the system for a specific period of time.



“Speed is more important than ever, particularly in the construction sector. A missing part can delay the entire construction progress, leading to considerable follow-up costs,” says Carsten Rumpf, responsible for the omni-channel sales companies on the Berner Group’s Executive Board. “Berner Tracking ensures higher productivity, greater efficiency and less depletion of materials or expensive equipment. Thanks to the solution, unnecessarily long searches are no longer necessary. It also reduces the administrative workload. Tradesmen save their most valuable asset – time.”

### **Virtual shelving systems**

BTI Befestigungstechnik has been using virtual reality (VR) technology for almost two years now. This venerable Ingelfingen-based company uses VR glasses to illustrate its products at customer events and leading trade fairs, for example. Especially when it comes to warehouse planning, this pioneering technology fully demonstrates its reality-based advantages. Because in the virtual space, shelving systems can be planned step by step, in line with the individual wishes and requirements of the customer, and can then be viewed directly thanks to the glasses.

In this way, construction professionals get a very precise impression of the dimensions the shelves will take in existing stockrooms, as well as the features they are equipped with. The virtual tour is always well-received and is a real crowd puller at events, especially since every action can be followed live by visitors by means of a separate flat-screen monitor.

### **The Berner Group**

The Berner Group is a family-run European commercial enterprise. Our vision is: “We keep the world together and moving.” This means we are the central B2B trading partner for all materials in the maintenance, repair, and production segments for our customers in the building, mobility, and industry sectors. With more than four channels we create an integrated omni-channel purchasing experience for our customers. In the steel and C materials as well as chemicals segments we are also an innovative manufacturer. We are represented in over 23 countries for our customers with more than 200,000 items and 8,200 employees.