



Press Release Press Release

Robots for SMEs: Automation to combat shortage of skilled workers

Augsburg, May 16, 2023 - Shortage of skilled workers, difficult delivery conditions and high energy costs: German SMEs are struggling with major challenges. According to a global survey by the Manpower Group, 75% of all entrepreneurs said they had difficulty filling positions. The use of industrial robots is intended to provide a remedy.

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"It is becoming more difficult to find employees, especially for physically demanding and at the same time monotonous tasks. The turnover of skilled workers is particularly high in these types of tasks," says Gerhard Müller, responsible for the regions Germany, Austria and Switzerland within KUKA's robotics division.

The Augsburg-based automation professional is therefore increasingly targeting small and medium-sized companies with tailored products and solutions, but has observed a long period of reticence: "Many entrepreneurs have so far shied away from the use of robots. Automation is too complex, too expensive and there is too much skepticism in the team," Müller continues.

However, this picture is currently changing. More and more small companies are recognizing the opportunities that lie in the automation of tasks. For example, a **galvanizing plant with 65 employees from the Black Forest** was able to reduce reservations within its own ranks by **purchasing a compact robotic welding cell**, save long transport distances and even win new customers. Similar examples can be found **at the family-owned company STELA**, which was able to increase its productivity, or at the **small Fiedler brewery** in the Erz Mountains, where a KUKA robot stacks the heavy beer crates.

Countering the shortage of skilled workers and attracting talent

"In times of a shortage of skilled workers, the concern of employees about being replaced by a robot in production, which used to be so prevalent, is hardly an



issue anymore. We also get feedback from customers that many are happy to hand over tasks that strain their backs, wrists or nerves," reports Müller. Robots are already in use today for palletizing, loading and unloading machines, quality control or welding - even and increasingly outside the already highly automated automotive industry. "Such a robot is then quickly picked up and can complement well-established teams very well. Many users even give our robots names," says Müller.

Many customers would also give KUKA as feedback that they were able to assign more interesting tasks to their employees after automation. Another effect is also: A company that uses robots is more attractive to new applicants. Finally, the management shows that it is positioning itself for the future and is investing in new technologies and thus in innovation.

This is how quickly the use of a robot pays off: a calculation example

A typical solution, in which a KUKA robot does the welding, costs around 110,000 euros. Included in the price: a project-specific fixture for welding, the welding technology from a premium manufacturer, programming of the robot, as well as commissioning on site at the end customer's premises and training of its employees. The cost for an employee who would otherwise take on this task is around 40,000 euros per year. Since the automation runs in two shifts, personnel costs of 80,000 euros must be expected. ROI (return on investment) calculators commonly used in the industry then show the result: after around 17 months, the investment in a robotic solution has paid for itself.

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KUKA is a global automation corporation with sales of around 4 billion euro and around 15,000 employees. The company is headquartered in Augsburg, Germany. As one of the world's leading suppliers of intelligent automation solutions, KUKA offers customers everything they need from a single source. From robots and cells to fully automated systems and their connectivity in markets such as automotive with a focus on e-mobility & battery, electronics, metal & plastic, consumer goods, e-commerce, retail and healthcare.