encoway
standard for variety

image: Hager Vertriebsgesellschaft mbH & Co. KG

Product configuration at Hager Group
3D visualisation points the way
to the perfect solution

The specialist for electrical installations brings its sophisticated solutions to life with 3D configurators. The entire planning process has thus been significantly accelerated. Faulty product configurations are just as much a thing of the past as time-consuming coordination and the sending of expensive samples.

When it comes to electrical installations in residential, commercial and industrial buildings, the Hager Group is a much sought-after partner. The independent, family-owned company specialises in smart building automation and security systems, power distribution and cable management. In order to meet the demanding, individual requirements of its customers, the Hager Group has a wide portfolio of products, system solutions and services related to smart buildings. These are marketed under the brands Hager, Berker, Elcom as well as Daitem and Diagral.

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This comprehensive product range has a large number of variants and a level of complexity that requires a substantial amount of explanatory support. Such a high level of variety needs to be mastered and reliably managed. In the past, however, this was often easier

At a glance

▶ Central database

▶ Data maintenance possible without any external support

▶ Generic configuration platform without system discontinuities

▶ Additional brands, markets and languages can be easily integrated

▶ 3D visualisation makes products experienceable for the customer

▶ Complaints and process costs are significantly reduced

said than done. Products were sometimes not assembled correctly by customers, errors kept creeping in during the generation of the Bills of Materials, and numerous manual steps within Hager, for example when creating quotations and order confirmations, took up a lot of the employees' valuable time.

No more incorrect orders

The desire for suitable product configurators was therefore present at an early stage. "Our plans for a product configurator were already well advanced. But we then realised that we would have been dependent on the support of a developer company for any future changes. We did, however, want to be able to act independently, for example when creating and maintaining product data" recalls Michael Weisgerber, IT consultant at Hager Group. "It soon became clear to us that we need our own back end for the object dependencies that we ourselves have control over." This would have to be possible with standard software that ensures intuitive and simple data maintenance.

The Hager Group produces smart building automation and security systems, power distribution and cable management at 22 locations in 10 countries.

Their search for a suitable partner quickly led Michael Weisgerber and his colleagues to encoway, the expert for the marketing of modular products and variant management in machine and component construction and in related industries. "We were very impressed by encoway's modular, open concept." Thanks to the defined and described standard interfaces, the solution provides the flexibility that Hager requires in order to easily manage all data independently, regardless of the user interface of the configurator.

No sooner said than done. To kick off the collaboration, the Hager Group and encoway initially designed a configurator for switches that was intended for the company's internal sales department. "With this project, we initially wanted to test the solution internally" explains Michael Weisgerber. In the past, the switches in question were repeatedly ordered incorrectly from the supplier. "The configurator, which is based on the question-and-answer principle, would have to ensure error-free configuration and a simple follow-up process in SAP without any media discontinuities. Our customers would also have to be able to quickly determine a price." The result was complete silence. "After the configurator was introduced, we heard no more about it – simply because it works so well. Since then we have not had a single incorrect order. The processes are end-to-end and highly integrated. They run leanly and effectively" said Michael Weisgerber.

Following the success of the first joint project, Hager and encoway started to work on a system configurator for door entry phone systems that

the customer would be able to use directly. "Door entry phone systems are very complex and varied. In the past, the electrician had to attend courses and plough through manuals in order to put the solutions together correctly" Michael Weisgerber recalls. Those days are gone since the introduction of the configurator. "On the basis of logical questions and answers, our system shows all the parts needed to build the plant, and provides the electrical engineer with a quick and complete overview. They can thus rest assured that, after configuration, they will be able to install the system correctly. It is ensured that nothing will be missing, and that there will never be too much or too little of anything."

Configuration solution offers full control over data and model maintenance
The configurator for the entry phone systems also impressed. Encouraged by these successes, the Hager Group finally embraced 3D visualisation. "Originally we wanted to implement a configurator for ceiling connection columns. However, during the planning phase, we were able to significantly expand this and integra-

ted a number of other solutions from the cable management product range. We only achieved this thanks to encoway's generic concept" says Michael Sinz, IT engineer at the Hager Group, adding: "As a result, we now have a reusable tool with which we can build any configurator we want based on our 3D models. We have the data and model maintenance in our own hands and are able to react quickly. Now it only takes 20 minutes to introduce new product lines into the configuration application. This quick implementation is also possible thanks to the fact that we can reuse the data for new applications and do not have to re-build everything for each one. This saves time, avoids errors and at the same time reduces our process costs. In addition, no changes to the system are necessary for extensions."

Michael Sinz's assessment is correspondingly positive: "encoway CPQ is a very successful system that has exceeded our expectations. This has been confirmed to us by everyone who works with it." This not only includes in-house users such as internal and external
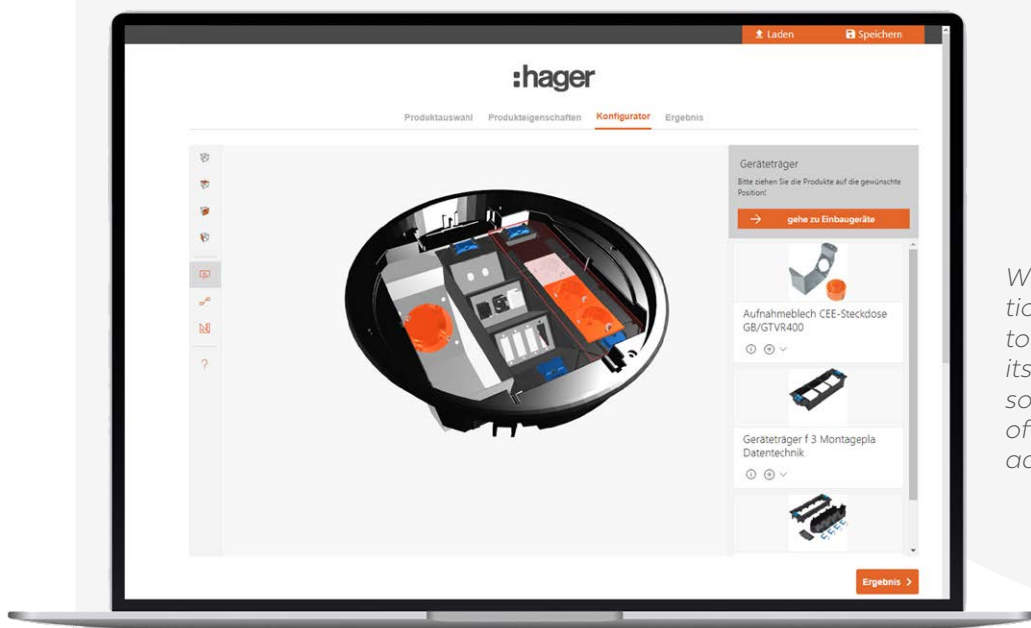
With 3D visualisations, Hager is able to demonstrate its sophisticated solutions and thus offer customers real added value.

sales and the planning department, but also customers such as electrical contractors and planning offices for technical building equipment. "Today, it is easy to create plans, and thanks to the visualisations, customers are immediately given an impression of what the product actually looks like – true to the original right down to the type of material. They also receive renderings of their desired solutions as well as complete, accurate Bills of Materials with which they can continue to work seamlessly. A printed catalogue would never be able to achieve this."

The entire supply chain benefits from 3D visualisation

The staff in the design department also benefit from the new visualisation possibilities. In the past, CAD experts were asked to provide detailed drawings to support their colleagues in their advisory capacity. This is, however, no longer necessary because the products can now be very clearly explained using the configurator. The advantages of 3D visualisation can be seen throughout the entire supply chain and make the strengths of digitisation tangible for everyone involved. Because even a craftsperson can use the visualisations to better illustrate the solutions to their clients and thus reduce their coordination effort. This is a great benefit for craftspeople, who can easily access the 3D planning tool at any time. The Hager Group thus also helps to ensure that its customers are able to participate in digitisation" says Michael Sinz.

The solution can be used for all markets, target groups and languages

The configurator delivers reliable results quickly and conveniently and only allows feasible product combinations, which means that the entire planning process is accelerated sustainably and the interaction between everyone involved becomes considerably easier. Time-consuming coordination is just as much a thing of the past as stocking and sending out expensive product samples. After each launch, word quickly got around about the strengths of the configurators. Since then, the company has constantly come up with new ideas for further applications and refinements. On this basis, further product groups are to be prepared step by step and the visualisation and connection to production continuously expanded. There is no shortage of ideas. And the system is well equipped for this process. "Together with encoway we have created a generic tool. This has resulted in a group-wide solution that can be used anywhere. We are able to maintain the content centrally and make it available for all markets, target groups and languages in the respective corporate design of our brands" says a satisfied Michael Sinz.

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Customer information

Hager Group
Industry: electrical engineering
Location: Blieskastel
Size: 11.500 employees worldwide
Sales: 2 billion € (2018)
Founded: 1955
www.hagergroup.com