

Question and answer about Metech Serbia.

1. It has been a while since BSBA readers had chance to hear something from Metech Company. In a few words, and generally speaking, what has happened in the last two years? How would you describe your business in that period?

Metech had very well past two years and we are very proud of what has been done. We have increased our customer base, turnover, knowledge and capacity while maintaining company stability and possibility to further grow. In this regard we do not consider anymore Metech as only a production location but as a regional capability centre for the sheet metal processing. This growth also enabled us to move Metech market focus from simple sheet parts to production of total concept machines.

2. The plan was to increase the production year by year, gradually, did you accomplish that and how?

We consider that gradual increase of production year by year is the only way to continuously keep growing. Our old employees need to learn to use the new machines and perform new production processes. Our new employees need to learn how company functions and what is expected from them.

For this, time is needed. Complete company needs to grow, not only our production. This is why our planning, logistic, sales, purchasing, engineering, export-import, quality and IT teams also grow and daily improve/optimize their way of working.

On manager level we constantly evaluate our bottlenecks and try to eliminate them. Managers listen to their subordinates and try to implement organization changes and new administration tools which will help employees to be more productive and happier.

This should result in a good service to our customers and growth in our relationship and trust.

At end, when customers feel comfortable enough they will award us production of additional and more complex projects.

3. Last time we met, we talked about the big investment that was supposed to convert Metech into the leader on the Balkans and that investment was a one-million-euro-worth robot machine. What is your experience after using it for two years in Smederevo, are you satisfied? How that investment has changed the business of Metech?

Laser welding robot was just one of many big investments we had in last period. In the meantime we have invested in 2 additional welding robots, fiber laser and assembly areas, grinding machine, bending machines and welding equipment... At this moment Metech uses the newest technology available on the market to process sheet metal and produce the parts exactly as our customer's want, at the price which they are willing to pay.

Those investments opened for us many new sales possibilities. We were able to enter the markets and realize the business where we were not present up to that moment. We established cooperation with many new companies and markets in last two years.

4. What is the most topical (trendy) in Metech at the moment, what are you working on the most and on what capacities, who are the buyers and how is your cooperation with foreign partners?

We see that Europe market has a positive trend and growth. Currently companies located in EU have lots of job. Their production and growth capacities are limited as in their countries labour force is not available on the market. Many companies experience from last years is that suppliers from Far East are not reliable. Suppliers from central EU are overbooked and cannot accept new jobs. This is why today's trend is to move the production from west EU to Balkans. Many companies are today exploring Serbia's production possibilities and researching if cooperation can be established.

Our answer to this market trend is not to enlarge any individual capacity we have, but to grow as a system. This is why this year we decided to mostly focus on internal organization and optimization.

Externally, we focus on customers who are/will become our long-term partners and customers who have the products we believe in.

5. How many employees do you have and are you planning to increase that number?

We currently have around 350 people working at Metech. Metech plans to continue growing and we certainly also plan to employ more people in process. Our focus at this moment is to first find for our existing employees work positions which are most suitable for them and for their competences. Parallel to this activity we are searching for new people. Those new people should have the correct attitude, skills and knowledge to join our team.

6. What is the short-term goal that Metech have until the end of this year?

Short-term goals for Metech this year are to optimize all internal processes, to enlarge our engineering capacities, to introduce in serial production several major new projects we have been awarded in 2017., to improve cooperation with our suppliers and to have a stable, long-lived and mutually beneficial partnership with our customers.

7. On the other hand, what are your long-term goals, how do you see Metech in Smederevo in, let's say 10 years?

Long-term goals for Metech is to become and stay a company which will be in every aspect regarded and known as one of the best suppliers for sheet metal assemblies on a worldwide level. To achieve this we still have lot of work ahead of us. What makes us happy is that we consider we have a young team who is willing and able to achieve this goal.

8. You told us that you had problems to find qualified workers, has something changed?

Unfortunately, not much has changed. Problem still remains to find people which have correct knowledge to work in Metech. Especially when we are talking about the high qualified workers.

This is why we strongly believe in giving our existing employees, which proved to have a potential to do more, a chance to try themselves on other positions and become more important part of the organization. This is why in last period we have organized lots of internal activities (welding schools, language classes, specific trainings...). We want our existing employees to improve their knowledge and have correct tools to take and succeed at new professional challenges that lay in front of them.

Parallel to this internal activity, we also continue to search for new people. At this moment we have open investigation for several positions in our company. Due to our quick development and further growth vision, mechanical engineers, as the starting point for all new projects, for us stay the focus of our investigations and our efforts.

9. Are you satisfied with the cooperation with the Technical School in Smederevo, we know that Metech helps the education of the students in that school, and what are the chances that your company joins to a new model, dual education? Has anyone from Smederevo introduced you to that model, what are your impressions, what do you see as an advantage and what as a flaw (of that model)?

Good cooperation and communication exist with the Technical School. We try to support them as much as possible. In past years we donated to them lots of materials, machines and other equipment. We will also continue to do this. We are at this moment in realization of our next project – we will donate the furniture which they need.

We have been introduced to the model of dual education. Concerning this topic Metech vision is slightly different. We consider that schools need to be equipped and able to do give to their students adequate and appropriate knowledge. Companies should focus on making their business profitable. When both have a success in the field they specialize in, all will benefit. This is why our idea is:

1. If possible provide to schools needed equipment
2. Influence the school teachers to teach the students the skills/knowledges companies realistically needed.
3. Support students to think “out of box”, be innovative and help them participate to the different contests where they can present their ideas.

We will in future try to support proposals coming from Technical, but also all other schools, in line with above strategy.

10. Metech is one of the founders of the Free Zone in Smederevo, and as it turned out it was a historical moment for this city which relies a lot on industrialisation. You saw all the steps, from founding to improving conditions for investments and business in our zone, how would you describe it (our zone) to any other potential investor? In other words, are you satisfied with the dynamic of creating better conditions for business and what remains the most important task for our city in that meaning, what's missing?

Free Zone of Smederevo stays for Metech one of the most important projects. Free Zone of Smederevo grow in last few years and now represents a very stable company. From the project start, this was one of our goals and we are glad that this goal was reached. But, many goals are still are to be achieved. Free Zone of Smederevo should provide adequate and diversified service to their customers. It should be able to help customers optimize their costs, give solutions to problems and support in topics where customers do not have expertise.

On strategic level, most important point for the Free Zone is how to reorganize it's business so in 10 years, when Serbia enters EU, it can continue to exist.

We think that if above points are resolved successfully, Free Zone will have long-term stability, and potential investors will have security to invest in Smederevo.