

# Shaping the future

Since his appointment as its CEO in 2016 Alexander Everke has repositioned ams as a leading supplier of sensor solutions. But there's no slowdown planned in the evolution of the business, as he explained to **Neil Tyler**.

**A**lexander Everke, the CEO of ams, started his career in the semiconductor industry in 1991 when he joined Siemens. He worked in the Siemens' spin off Infineon and was part of the NXP management team in Eindhoven before joining ams in October 2015. He became CEO in March the following year.

Under his leadership, ams has embarked on a radical transformation and has reduced its historically broad portfolio of products significantly to focus on the design and manufacture of advanced sensor solutions.

"Since 2015, we have changed direction. While ams was significantly smaller than some of the divisions I had managed previously, the portfolio was compelling. When I met the team and the employees, I was impressed at their creativity and innovation and knew that I could take this 'raw diamond', polish it and create a lot of value," Everke says.

Major changes to the portfolio followed and, today, the company is focused on delivering sensors across a number of key vertical markets. Under Everke's leadership, the company has been set some aggressive targets over the coming years.

## Ambitious growth targets

"We're looking at growth of more than 40% per annum over the coming three years and my responsibility is to deliver that. Our growth will be driven by focusing on specific technologies that are capable of addressing the megatrends we see around us.

"Sensors are everywhere and are used in everything from smartphones to industrial automation. Demand has been further boosted by the rise of the Internet of Things. With new applications constantly under development we identified the sensor market as being the most exciting one within the semiconductor industry."

The repositioning of the company to capture these growth opportunities has not only required the better management of the company's portfolio, but also the creation of a dynamic management

team to execute the strategy and delivery of a dynamic corporate culture that embraces change.

"Change is a constant," says Everke. "You have to accept it and embrace it. Whenever I speak to analysts and investors, I make it clear that our aim is constant change and continual transformation. Technology is moving so quickly that if we stand still, we'll miss out.

"The better management of our portfolio means that we are focused on four areas, or pillars," Everke continues. "These are optical sensing, imaging sensing, audio sensing and environmental sensing."

That 'better management' of the portfolio has resulted in the company divesting certain units whilst making a series of acquisitions.

"We sold specific lines, such as our NFC and RFID reader wireless product lines to STMicroelectronics, while buying companies that would enable us to generate a leading position across a number of sensing technologies.

"It's important that we have the right people in the right place and be able to offer a complete solution," Everke suggests.

Among the acquisitions are Cambridge CMOS Sensors in the UK and MAZeT in Germany, strengthening the company's position in spectral sensing. Additional acquisitions have been made in high end image sensing in a move to open up the machine vision market, as well as strengthening the company's position in the industrial and medical segments.

"This year we acquired Heptagon, a high end optical packaging specialist and Princeton Optronics to enhance our 3D sensing, AV/VR and autonomous applications."

## Four core market segments

"By buying IP, technology, people and gaining access to customers, this programme of acquisitions is strengthening our position in our four core market segments. Looking to the future, we will continue to look at acquisitions, but only if a company's technology helps us to differentiate further," he explains.

"Our aim has to be to invest in core areas where we have better and more competitive technologies than our main competitors."

To deliver this, it's been critical that the company's corporate culture has been aligned with its business strategy.

"We need a corporate culture that underpins the development of unconventional thinking and one that empowers our workforce, but holds them accountable.

"When I joined, I was impressed by the people; they were really engaged. We need to be seen as a trusted partner, but also as a thought leader in this space." Everke continues, "Our aim is to turn ams into the leading sensor solutions company and that means developing our core sensor solutions expertise and working to differentiate and offer clear leadership in this market."

Going forward, the company will look to address more segments beyond those in which it is currently active.

"We see sensors playing a pivotal role and we need to be positioned to exploit this trend. The whole market is exploring and developing the interface between analogue and digital and we need to be able to create new applications using the best technical solutions."



## Alexander Everke

Alexander Everke started his career in the semiconductor industry in 1991 as Siemens' marketing manager and director with Siemens. After five years, he joined Infineon as vice president sales for memory products and was promoted to senior vice president sales in 2001. Before leaving Infineon for NXP, he was senior vice president and general manager of the Chip Card and Security ICs business unit. Appointed general manager of NXP UK in 2006, he was promoted to general manager of the company's Multimarket Semiconductors, High Performance Mixed Signal and Infrastructure and Industrial business units reporting directly to the CEO. He was appointed as ams' CEO in 2016.

A significant trend is sensor fusion, he suggests.

"It's a crucial part of our strategy. We need to work to better integrate different sensor modalities and that's where our acquisition strategy has such an important role to play. We want to be in a position to integrate different sensor abilities onto one chip, along with offering more sophisticated packaging and interface options."

The importance of integration was highlighted by the company's decision not to divest its wireless capabilities.

"Sensors need to communicate with one another and we want to be able to offer our customers a complete solution. The parts of the business we divested were not core to our business going forward," Everke explains. "Looking to the future there are sensor technologies we do need to strengthen – whether that's smell, vision or audio – if we are to support developing trends.

"We want to be in the position to shape this market," he concludes.