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NEWS



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EVENT
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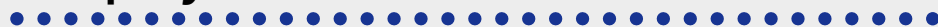
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Varioptic's pilot line automates production... and quality

Varioptic's new semi-automated pilot production line is up and running. In mid-October it began rolling out the prototype lenses—stringently tried and tested—that are in much demand from makers of camera modules.

“The manufacturing process we have designed has enabled us automate the critical stages and so supply our partners with reliable products,” states Vice President, Engineering, Jean-Jacques Louart.

Varioptic decided to invest in its own production line in early 2005 on securing ISO 9001 certification. The move was in keeping with company policy of making quality integral to business development.

The manufacturing process guarantees consistent performance and, crucially, is reproducible. Varioptic partners can now design production facilities for output volumes of several million units per month. Louart stresses that Varioptic has proved that not only can it design breakthrough technology, but the high-volume production facilities to go with it, too. He adds: “More than anything else we want to see our lenses swiftly incorporated into consumer goods.”

Twentieth partner TAPs into assessment of Varioptic technology

As Varioptic braces for market launch in the second quarter of 2006, the number of companies seriously interested in its breakthrough liquid lens technology continues to grow. One sure sign was that a twentieth organization recently signed up to a Technology Assessment Program (TAP) of our liquid lens products.

We put TAPs in place to satisfy the keen interest in assessing and understanding our technology both from researchers and businesses. It was a wise move. The long – and lengthening – list of TAP partners* include international optics and imaging leaders. Significantly, though, there are also companies working in areas where liquid lens applications would patently bring new market gains.

The healthy interest from and growing number of organizations that TAP into our technology bode well for business in the run-up to 2006, which Etienne Paillard describes as “takeoff” year.

*Varioptic does not reveal the names of its evaluation partners for reasons of confidentiality.

Company News

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Former Equant boss chairs Varioptic

On November 21 Howard Ford, managing director of Equant from 2002 to 2005, accepted the Chairmanship of Varioptic. "Having Howard Ford on Varioptic's Board of Directors is an honor," said Etienne Paillard. "His business acumen and decades of experience...will serve to help Varioptic in reinforcing our business strategies."

Howard's outstanding track record has seen him ply his skill and vision across industry with a special focus on telecommunications and IT. With his keen eye for cutting edge technology, he is as excited about joining Varioptic as we are to have him. "Varioptic's technology opens the door to break-through innovations far beyond multimedia applications!" he enthuses.

On graduating from Christ's College Cambridge with an MSc in chemical engineering, British-born Howard began his career at IBM Europe. His positions there included General Manager of IBM's European PC business. He then joined UK-based mobile phone operator BT/Cellnet (now O2) as Chief Executive.

In 1997 he embarked on an impressive leg of his career at Equant. President for Europe, Middle East and Africa, and responsible for Global Sales, Marketing and Professional & Consulting Services, he was appointed Managing Director in 2002.

The global reach and wealth of his experience in the technology trade have honed his ability to spot potential. So it is heartening to hear him state: Varioptic's "clever solution for electrically controllable optical lenses combined with a high market demand makes [it] a company to keep an eye on."

Howard Ford has an abiding interest in lifelong learning. He was on the board of QA Training and Chairman of the Thames Valley Training and Enterprise Council, which annually managed government funds of some £30m for the vocational training of young people in the UK. He is also Chairman of the Branshaw Foundation, an educational charitable trust.

Those who believe in learning believe in the future.

Sunex and Varioptic debut production of liquid autofocus lens

On 20 November 2005 Sunex, Inc., and Varioptic S.A. announced that first-ever tunable liquid lenses for digital imaging applications would soon be rolling off Sunex production lines.

The lenses produced use the electrowetting and liquid autofocus technology pioneered by Varioptic, who partnered Sunex in developing its new products. Sunex believes Varioptic's expertise was decisive. "Having this technology is a tremendous competitive advantage" declared a Sunex official.

Initial offerings include Sunex's AFL872 lens. It has a compact autofocus capability and is designed for up to 1/3-inch, 3-megapixel CMOS image sensors. Varioptic's liquid autofocus technology frees it of fixed-focus constraints like restricted depth of field, while making it a more compact alternative to traditional autofocus technologies.

With small form-factors, high MTF/resolution and low distortion, these lenses are ideally suited to mobile imaging devices, webcams, video conferencing and any application requiring high performance in a small package.

Camera module manufacturers, take note.

Company News cont'd

Bruno Berge's nomination at WTN awards an honor

When the influential New York-based World Technology Network (WTN) announced in October that Bruno Berge was a nominee for its 2005 World Technology Awards for Design, many inside and outside Varioptic felt that his nomination was richly deserved.

Every year WTN members nominate a list of peers they deem to be doing the most innovative work in one of 20 technology-related fields, ranging from biotechnology and new materials to IT to new energy sources.

"I am delighted to have been nominated for the design of the 2005 World Technology Awards," was Bruno's response. "Recognition from one's peers means so much more than other kinds of honors."

On November 15 we waited with bated breath as the winners were announced at the grand gala ceremony in San Francisco. In the end, Bruno was not among them, so he did not become a fully-fledged member of the WTN this year. Still, as a "member-nominated nominee," he is now an Associate. No mean feat, because nomination is an intensive, months-long, global process, during which WTN members rate their peers' work on how likely it is to be of long-term significance.

Commenting on Bruno's nomination, WTN chairman James P. Clark said: "We look forward to assisting Bruno Berge in continuing to help create our collective future and change our world." We second that.

Events

Photonics West, January 21-26, 2006

Varioptic will be at the Photonics West Show in San Jose, CA. Our stand will be in the French Pavilion, where we will be demonstrating our Arctic tunable lens unit.

3GSM Congress, February 13-16, 2006

Varioptic will be attending the 3GSM Congress in Barcelona, billed "the world's premier mobile event."

Check us out in Booth J41.