

INTERVIEW SST TEAM MEMBERS

Interviewer:

Josephine Menz
Head of Communications



In Interview:

Jacqueline Peintinger
Sales Manager North America



Michael Peintinger, PhD
Managing Director North America



I welcome Jacqueline and Michael for an interview.

1. First of all, please tell us which area you are responsible for at SST and what your tasks include.

Answer Jacqueline:

I am taking over the role as Sales Manager North America at Smart Steel Technologies and will be mainly responsible for the NAFTA area.

Answer Michael:

I joined SST as Managing Director North America and will focus on setting up our operations in the United States and Canada. This includes everything from incorporation to building up a local operations team and winning new customers.

2. What is your original matter/subject and what did you do before joining SST?

Answer Jacqueline:

With my background in Business Administration I joined QuinLogic/SMS group in 2015 supporting the North American metals industry with data integration and rule-based quality assurance solutions. When I joined the SMS Pittsburgh team after QuinLogic's integration, I

was responsible for digitalization solutions in the areas of Production Planning, Asset Health, Quality and Energy.

Answer Michael:

I earned my PhD in Theoretical Chemistry from the University of Bonn and spent some time researching quantum chemical methods at the Max-Planck-Institute for Chemical Energy Conversion during my Postdoc before switching to the steel industry. In 2015, I joined QuinLogic and soon relocated to the United States to develop the business in North America and had various roles, from Technical Sales Manager and Senior Customer Consultant to Managing Director. QuinLogic develops rule-based quality management systems as well as data integration and warehousing solutions. Together with Jacqueline, I analyzed customer needs and how these solutions could help steel, aluminum and brass companies improve their product quality and increase their yield. I built up a local team of engineers that implemented these software solutions at our customer's facilities. QuinLogic was acquired by SMS group in 2019 and early in 2021 we started integrating the American QuinLogic subsidiary into the SMS digital division in Pittsburgh and I then led the joint teams of SMS digital and QuinLogic for Quality Applications as well as Data Integration and Management as General Manager. So I do have a track record of building up a subsidiary for a German company in the States.

3. Is there any achievement that you are particularly proud of?

Answer Michael:

From the academic point of view it is of course the full scholarship I received from the Max-Planck-Society and that a few of my publications were on the cover of scientific journals. But I am most proud of what we had built in the US, a well organized subsidiary that allowed us to win the trust of our customers and establish long-term relationships. This carries over to our new roles at SST. The feedback from everyone in the industry was great and we immediately started talking about how AI solutions can improve the production process.

4. How does your new role at SST and its artificial intelligence product portfolio continue what you have been doing in the past?

Answer Michael:

Big data is the basis for all data-driven applications. QuinLogic had developed an excellent product in that regard, the Production Data Warehouse, PDW in short. Their expert-rule-based quality management software QES uses data aggregated in that system to evaluate the product quality and make decisions to automatically hold or release coils.

We have spent the last years getting our customers AI ready. And now is the time to deliver on that promise. SST has a fantastic data platform that features specific modules tailored for real-time AI applications and it does easily integrate with the solutions we brought to the market in our previous roles. And the grading results from the quality management system

can be used as a target signal. No investment is lost, the value can even be increased by extending it with SST's time series database components. And then the process improvements gained by applying the ready-to-use AI solutions can quickly be turned into savings. Instead of managing the defects it is now all about not making defects in the first place. So it is indeed a continuation of the journey to digitalization of the industry!

5. How do you perceive acceptance of digitalization and AI in particular on the North American market?

Answer Jacqueline:

Over the past decades, digitalization has more and more become a crucial component of the steel industry. While a part of the industry is still facing data silos making data access and understanding as well as working with this data difficult, some companies have understood its value and already taken important steps towards digitalization.

Trust in artificial intelligence and machine learning solutions might not be as established as it can be - yet - due to existing use cases that haven't been able to convince as well as the complexity of the matter, however there will be hardly any possibility to exclude the technology in order to stay competitive in the market.

6. What convinced you to start at Smart Steel Technologies?

Answer Jacqueline:

There are two key aspects: First, convincing references. These days, all vendors in the industry are claiming to apply ML/AI algorithms to steel production processes but clearly lack actual use cases as industry conferences have shown. SST has convinced me with impressive references achieving tremendous process and quality improvements as a result of a robust knowledge of steelmaking AND AI technology. And Second, right from the beginning I've been proud to have joined a company with an amazing start-up team culture and room to grow.

Answer Michael:

Technology! I saw a presentation held by Dr. Falk-Florian Henrich, our CEO and founder. I was impressed by the results he showed: A fifty percent improvement in defect reduction at ArcelorMittal. And this could only be achieved by having a correct target signal to train the neural network on. So the Surface AI offered by SST is a critical factor in making artificial intelligence algorithms succeed in improving the steel manufacturing process. And that really caught my attention. This is unique in the market, there is no competing product available. Why is nobody doing this? Not the ASIS vendors but also not other third party companies? This is what everyone of our customers who runs automated surface inspection systems needs: Of course for the correct classification of defects to hold, release or repair material but specifically for AI. It is the perfect target signal for these neural networks so they can reduce for example the number of slivers. And that is exactly what ArcelorMittal did with that system.

7. We would have one final question: What do you want to achieve with SST in the near future?

Answer Jacqueline:

Over the next few years, my goal is to build up a satisfied customer base in North America introducing proven ML & AI solutions and its capabilities as the next level of technology. My goal is to jointly achieve measurable improvements that not only save money but also have a positive impact on the environment by reducing CO2 emissions.

Answer Michael:

My immediate goal is to quickly set up Smart Steel Technologies' operations in North America. Our customers will have a team located here in the USA that will design, implement and maintain the deployment of our AI products. We are already working with potential customers to identify where we can show a quick return on investment and help to improve the production process to get the first projects in America started very soon. Soon you'll read the next success story published by SST customers!

This was our interview with Jacqueline Peintinger, Sales Manager North America at Smart Steel Technologies and Michael Peintinger, Managing Director North America at Smart Steel Technologies.

We hope you enjoyed reading it!