

Case Study

FOBA Laser Marking + Engraving

 Empolis



Breaking new digital ground in after-sales

How FOBA Laser Marking + Engraving creates added value in technical service with a 24/7 self-service portal.

With its FOBA Laser Marking + Engraving brand and a team of 250 professionals, ALLTEC Angewandte Laserlicht Technologie GmbH is one of the leading manufacturers and providers of innovative laser marking solutions. FOBA's laser systems are used by manufacturing companies in virtually every industry across the world for direct surface marking. This is why "speed, reliability, limitless possibilities" is the promise that drives FOBA's holistic customer service. In-house service technicians offer expert service in repairs and replacement parts and can also handle device installation and maintenance on request.

The customers' first point of contact is a service hotline for all questions related to technical service for laser marking systems and engraving machines as well as third-party devices such as

exhaust systems and cooling units. FOBA's international service center staff are on hand to provide support by phone or e-mail – from error analysis to first support to replacement part consulting.

In addition to this personal consultation by skilled professionals, the company also decided to shift even more focus onto its customers and offer a self-service portal. This portal is to support customers round the clock as a tool for accessing information about any device. The portal will also offer customers a way to react quickly and independently to smaller incidents and thus avoid business interruptions.

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The starting point: A thorough analysis and evaluation of customer service communications channels

The basis for this decision was a comprehensive analysis and evaluation of the company's customer service to determine the most common service cases and their causes in service hotline calls. Here, both the product groups (e.g., parts and components) as well as the respective malfunctions (e.g., hardware defects, usability, installation, software, hardware, adjustment, logging) were clustered and analyzed. The evaluation revealed that many hotline requests were related to operating laser devices and to hardware and software. The team decided that requests of these types and complexity could in large part be answered through a self-service portal designed to meet these requirements.

A parallel customer survey was conducted in the key markets of medical, automotive, and transport to determine what communications channels FOBA's customers actually use to solve their problems. The analysis confirmed that self-service portals had already established themselves as a primary contact point for many FOBA customers and that respondents already demonstrated acceptance of self-service tools or FAQs on other suppliers' websites. This led FOBA to the decision to build its own self-service portal in order to be more directly reachable for its customers as a first point of contact.

What are the main target groups for the self-service portal?

- New customers who have little experience with FOBA systems
- Existing customers who can benefit from support for new applications with the parameter sets
- Quick troubleshooting support for customers who have their own service teams
- Customers located far away from FOBA field service representatives
- Customers in other time zones who are not covered by hotline support
- Customers who need fast 24/7 support
- Customers who rely on fast response times round the clock

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The self-service portal also promised the potential to ease the strain on the hotline and improve self-service quality and efficiency.

Empolis Service Express® as information hub

In building its self-service portal, FOBA decided on the Empolis Service Express® solution. This knowledge platform makes it possible to provide context-appropriate product and service knowledge with the help of AI. The portal has since been integrated into FOBA's support and service packages and offered to customers as an add-on. Customers can use these support and service packages to streamline replacement parts orders and any necessary repairs for their laser marking devices, while benefiting from FOBA's guarantee of fast and reliable service. The new self-service portal delivers additional added value to customers while simultaneously enabling FOBA to bundle its service calls. This enables both parties to benefit from improved business efficiency.

In the self-service portal, customers receive role-based access to relevant service information and operating instructions. It enables customers to solve both recurring and complex problems on their own. This reduces hotline requests and lowers service costs. Thanks to the easy operability of Empolis Service Express®, the expert tool can quickly and easily become an intelligent assistant.

Without any use of technical jargon, the software helps customers narrow down their issues with the help of step-by-step instructions.

Customers benefit from easy operability and real added value.

The customer only needs to enter their search terms, such as a part or error code, via full-text search to receive immediate display of all relevant documents. And it doesn't stop here: The system jumps immediately to the relevant page in the document – and highlights the relevant section in the text. Customers are thus spared the effort of scrolling through large volumes of documents and text. This even works with typos and colloquially formulated requests.

Besides documents, the system naturally also lists images and videos as how-to guides in the search results. These show users things like how to change a defective filter. A filter may be a simple component, but it can cause costly production downtime since lasers are usually located at the end of production lines. Thanks to access to the relevant repair manuals, customers can solve problems like this in no time, regardless of location, day of the week, or time. Where needed, customers can also use the article number to initiate an order for the respective replacement parts directly via the portal, which saves time and prevents orders of the wrong parts.

“Thanks to Empolis Service Express®, we can pool our expert knowledge of engineering and provide it to our customers anywhere and anytime. This leads to higher customer satisfaction and extends the reach of our service.”

Marcus Saatci, Service Product Manager,
ALLTEC Angewandte Laserlicht Technologie GmbH

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The portal can even react to questions that are not immediately clear, are unusual or sound off-track by automatically asking return questions to narrow the problem down and subsequently offer the right solutions step-by-step.

Summary

With the help of artificial intelligence, FOBA provides customers with up-to-date service and product knowledge – anytime, anywhere. Thanks to the intelligent metadata search function, customers are only shown the (operating) instructions they actually need. They are no longer forced to slog through hefty operating manuals, but always receive the answer to their questions. In urgent cases, customers benefit from step-by-step troubleshooting to help them get operations back online quickly. By using specific error codes, customers can access the knowledge of FOBA's experienced hotline staff, including support with corresponding problem-solving tips.

The portal's parameter database provides additional, application-specific added value. These sets provide the appropriate preset parameters for the range of laser devices,

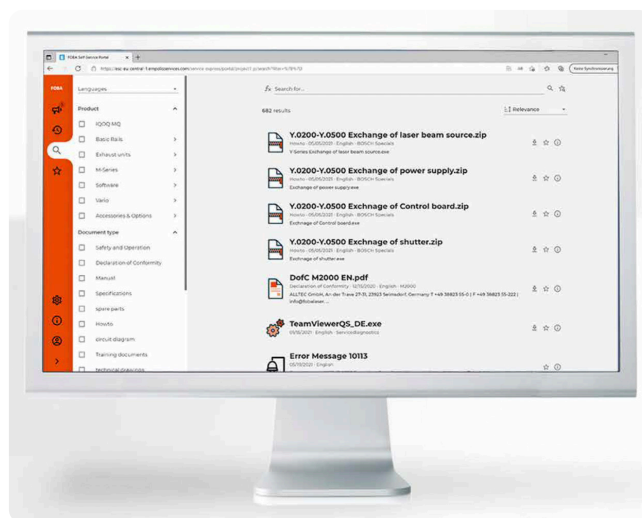
materials, and areas of application. What's more, customers can turn to this so-called Parameter Expert to take advantage of FOBA's years of engineering expertise to operate their facilities successfully and boost efficiency. The portal gives customers access to a total of 260 datasets so that they can implement parameter adjustments themselves as needed. To ensure that the customer is actually only shown parameter sets that are relevant to their laser and their material, the portal also differentiates between laser types and materials. This represents a conscious minimization of the range of solutions displayed, and comes into play in cases such as when new products are introduced, leading to a change in the corresponding laser markings.

In this way, customers can avoid unnecessary production errors caused by incorrect markings and can cut production costs.

About FOBA

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