



More service

We create freedom for manufacturers to leverage their product development

Sven Markus
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After purchasing a treadmill, a cross trainer or home exercise machine, good customer service plays a key role for manufacturers of gym equipment in retaining private customers and fitness studios in the long term. Sven Markus, Managing Director of Rhenus Sports Tech, points out why the cooperation with a logistics provider specialised in gym equipment is worth it and how a partnership can be arranged in practice.

Mr. Markus, what role does logistics play for the sports and fitness industry?

Smooth logistics are the prerequisite for a positive delivery experience on the last mile. In particular for premium gym equipment, the customer also expects high-quality service combined with prompt delivery, professional installation and intelligible introduction into the functions of the equipment. When equipping gyms, flexibility is a key aspect for new equipment or the exchange of machines. It is particularly important to install the gym equipment quickly in order to minimise disruption of ongoing operations. However, smooth delivery alone is not enough.

What other logistics challenges do you mean?

Gym equipment is used for many hours and is of course subject to heavy loads during training. Even products with very good workmanship are susceptible to wear and tear so that damage to the material is not unusual. This is a difficult situation for manufacturers: on the one hand, it is important to quickly act as a problem solver for gyms and home athletes even after the equipment has been purchased. On the other hand, travelling and maintenance or repairs take a lot of time.



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What exactly is it that you can do better than the manufacturers?

Our advantage is to have a wide network in Europe and to be able to reach the particular site in a short time. Although many manufacturers are well positioned in individual regions, very long distances often have to be covered. This means that a technician will spend more time in the car than with the customer. This effort is a cost driver for the manufacturer or is to the detriment of customer satisfaction if the consumer needs to wait a long time for repair. We know technicians who drive 100,000 km per year. This involves immense loss of time. With our teams, we create breathing room which the technicians of the manufacturers can use, for example, for the further or new development of fitness products. This is why we offer a comprehensive service module of maintenance and repair.

What exactly does the product cover?

The manufacturer normally informs us about a necessary repair or regular maintenance. In the event of equipment damage, we agree an appointment with the customer by phone as soon as the manufacturer has sent the spare part to the consumer and this has arrived. If required, we can also take care of the entire spare parts management in our multi-user warehouses. A technician will travel to the place of damage within a few days and carry out repair or maintenance on site. Depending on the gym equipment in question and the agreement, this is done in 1- or 2-man handling. It goes without saying that our trained technicians come with the tools needed to repair the damage. A functional test will be performed after repair and the manufacturer will receive documentation about the assignment.

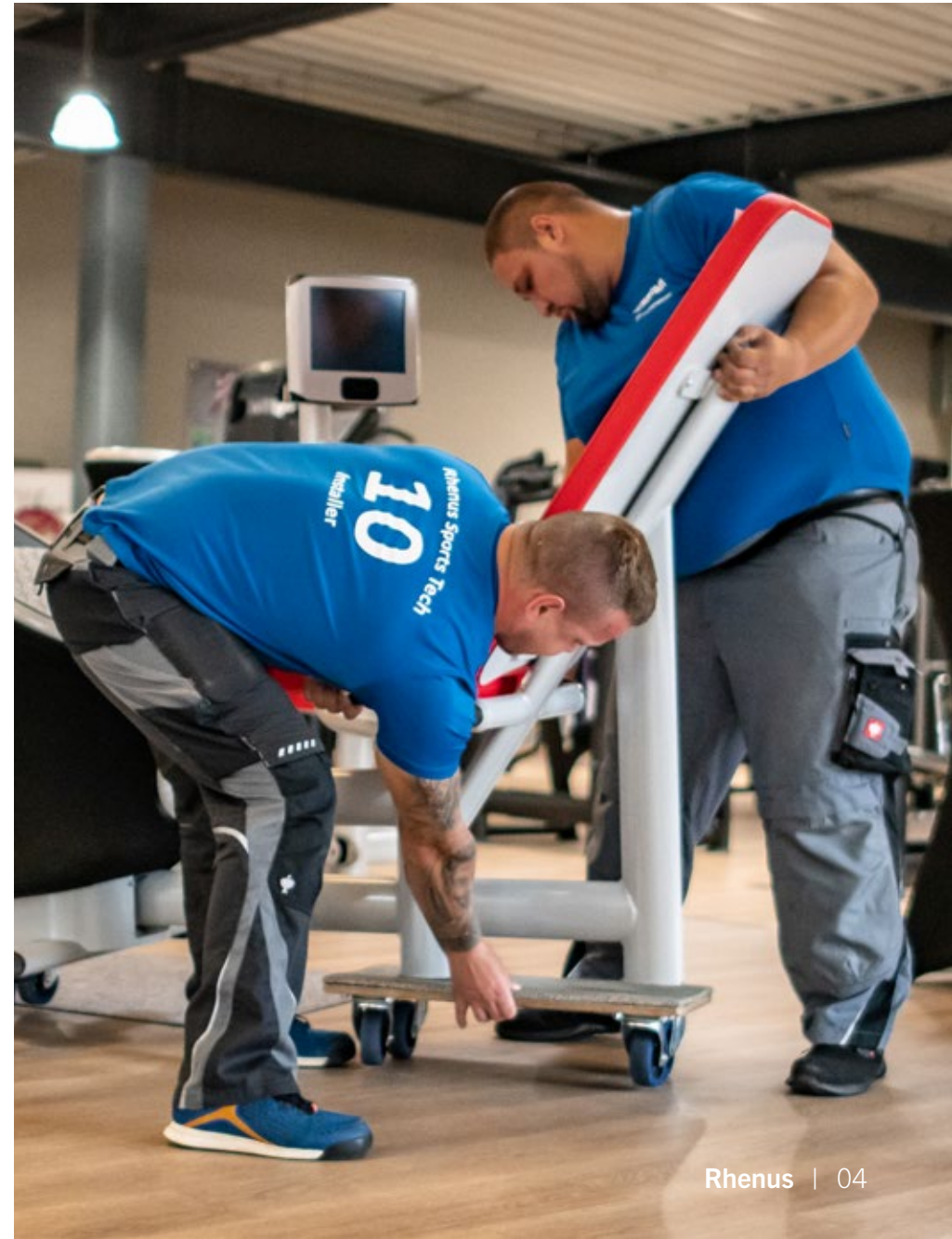


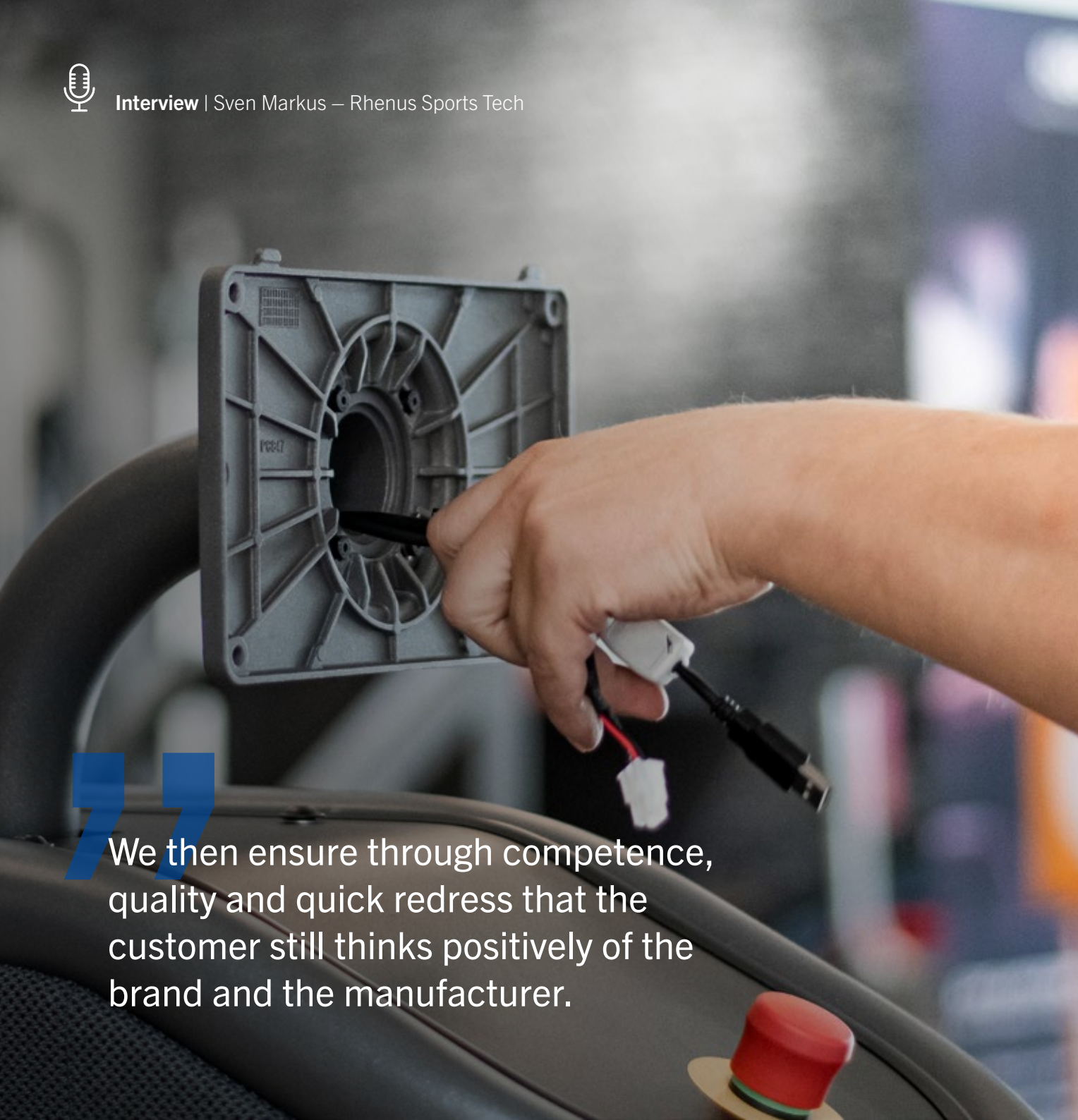
What expertise do your employees have to be able to maintain and repair the different gym equipment?

Along with our technical competence, which has grown over decades, quality, professional equipment and trained staff are of great importance to us. In 2023, for example, we opened a state-of-the-art training academy in Niederaula (Hesse), where our technicians are instructed in the handling of various equipment. If requested by our client, we can also have our technicians trained on site on the manufacturer's premises. On top of that, large and heavy sports equipment is maintained and repaired in 2-man handling. This will minimise the risk of accidents and reduce the rate of damage.

Can any company book the new maintenance and repair service?

We deliberately decided to offer our service as an independent module for manufacturers of gym equipment. Therefore, a manufacturer does not need to book other services such as delivery of new equipment or installation, if installation is not desired. Quite the contrary: high flexibility combined with scalability is important to us. In this process, we adapt to the individual needs. However, it goes without saying that other services can also be booked in addition if the need should arise in the course of the cooperation.





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Along with the advantages of a logistics partnership for the manufacturer – what are the benefits for the customer?

Regardless of whether a defective device is located in the gym or at the customer's home – we ensure a quick check and repair as soon as the spare part has reached the recipient. A defective device is always a nuisance for the customer. We then ensure through competence, quality and quick redress that the customer still thinks positively of the brand and the manufacturer despite the damage, thanks to our quick remedy. In this way, we strengthen the customer's loyalty to the manufacturer or the selling company. In the field of maintenance, the gyms benefit from the fact that we minimise disruption to the members' workout.

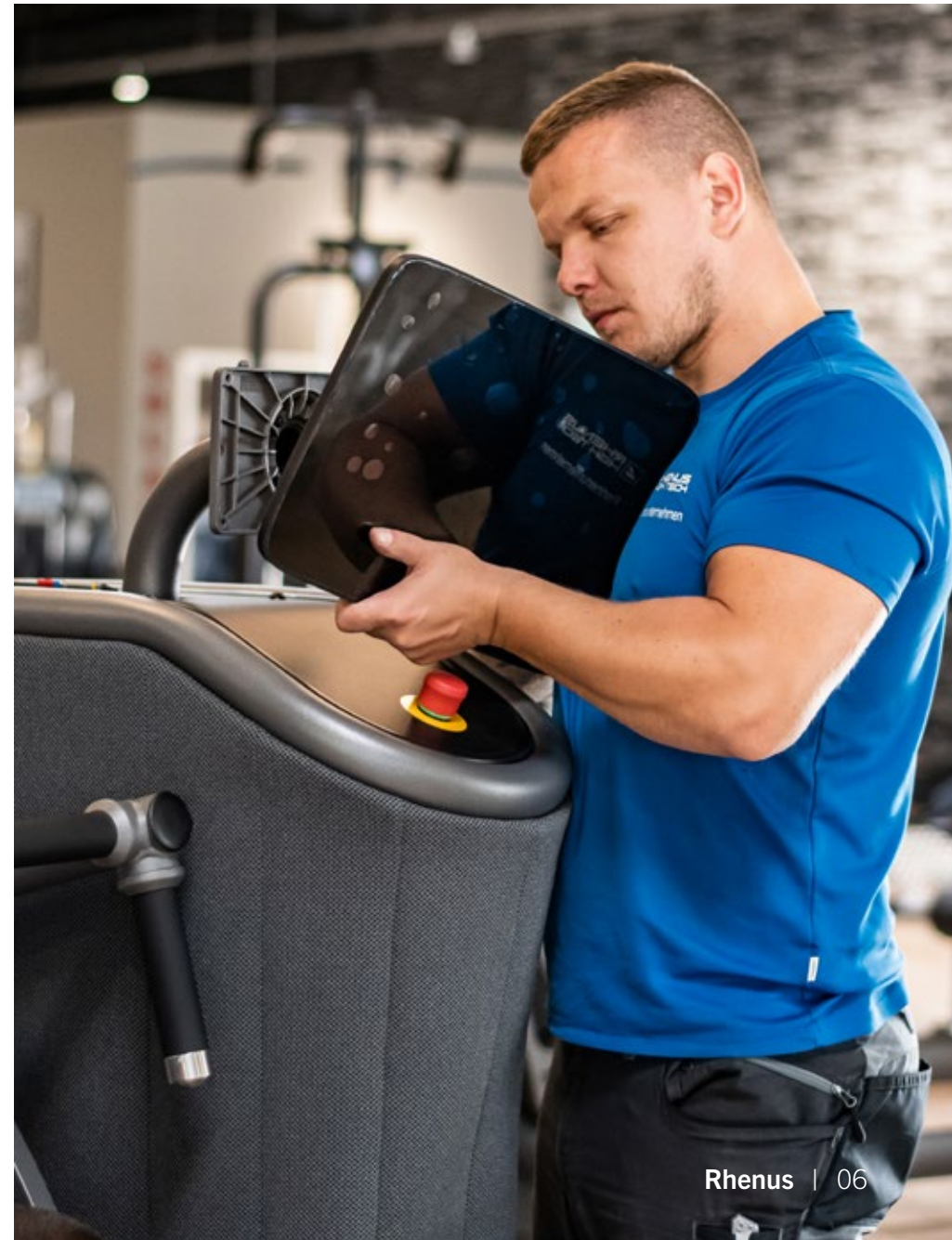


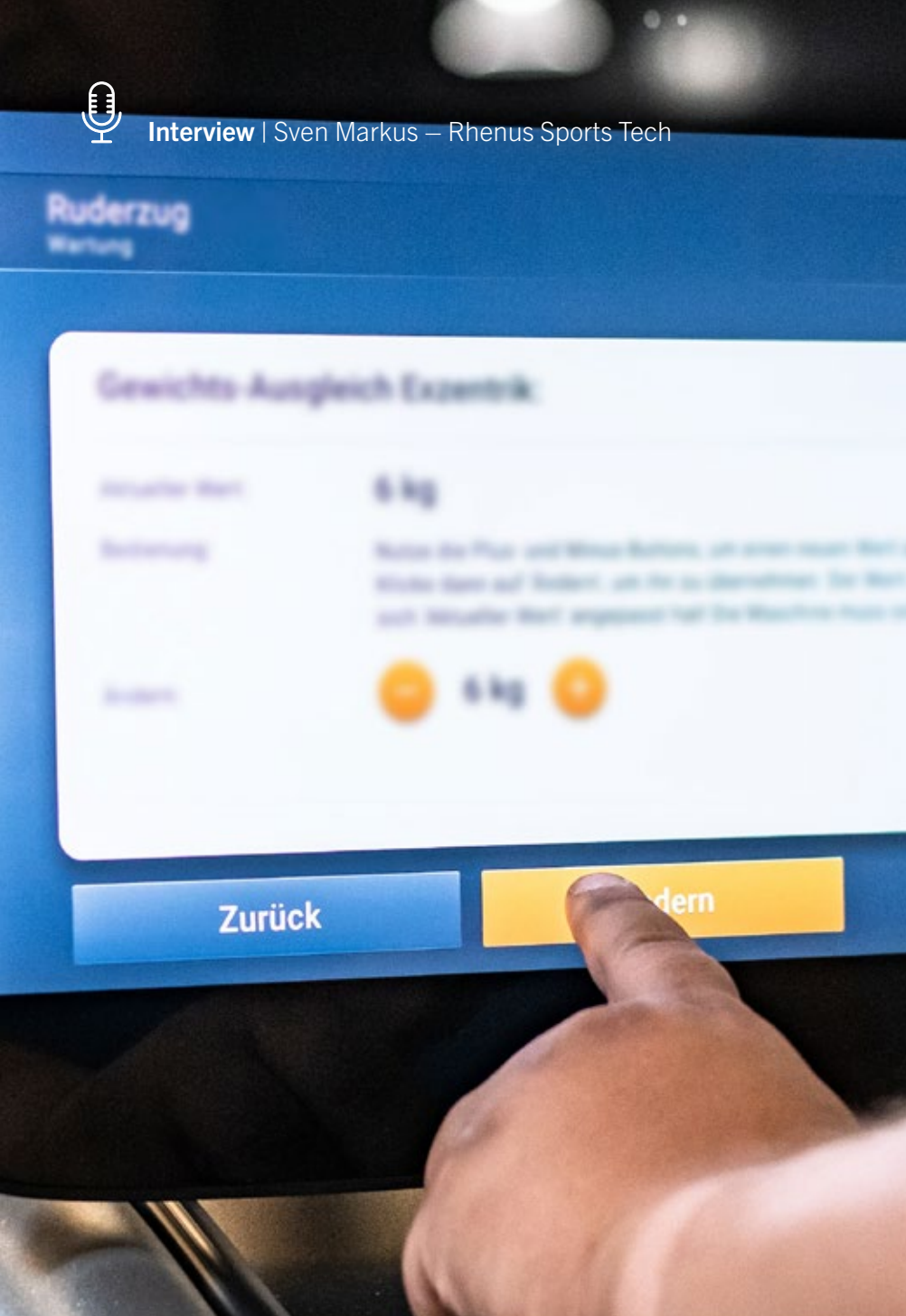
Does your service also include a performance promise?

Of course we would like to be judged by our performance. Together with the client, we define the KPIs that are important to them, such as the net promoter score (NPS) that measures customer satisfaction. We already achieve very high values compared to competitors in this sector. In Germany, for example, the NPS of Rhenus Sports Tech is about 72 per cent. If requested, our client will also receive regular reporting about the KPIs.

What are your initial experiences with the new offering?

Our product receives a lot of attention in the market, in particular because it can also be booked independently as a module. Thus, a manufacturer does not enter into any other commitment, if this is not desired. We are currently further expanding our network to create the highest degree of flexibility in this way.





The fitness market is constantly on the move. What impact do you expect this to have on fitness logistics in the coming years?

The fitness market was subject to consolidation during the COVID-19 pandemic and will certainly experience mayor growth again in the coming years. Sports enthusiasts are increasingly demanding when it comes to equipment and innovations or the technical sophistication of the machines. Accordingly, gyms need to be prepared to offer their members innovative equipment. This has to be efficiently delivered, maintained and repaired by logistics providers. Also the home fitness sector will continue to develop. Innovative equipment is very popular at home in order to make the workout more varied. Thus, fitness logistics companies can brace themselves to deliver technically sophisticated products also in the future.

If you dare to take a look into the future, what can your clients expect from Rhenus Sports Tech in the coming years?

In addition to our focus on carbon-reduced delivery, we are in regular exchange with companies from the fitness industry. The aim is to recognise trends and especially pain points early and be able to develop supporting logistics services – both in the B2B and the B2C sectors. In addition to key services such as delivery and installation, additional services in particular will play an increasingly important role. We will be glad to take on the task of realising these services for our clients.



Interview | Sven Markus – Rhenus Sports Tech



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