

Lectra: serving airbag manufacturers for over 30 years

Paris, July 8, 2021 – **A key player in Industry 4.0 in the fashion, automotive and furniture industries, Lectra has been working in airbag design for over thirty years. Aware that the cutting room must offer quality airbags as quickly and efficiently as possible, Lectra provides manufacturers with its digital cutting solutions. With the 6th UN Global Road Safety Week, an opportunity to develop a shared culture on road safety, held May 17-23 of this year, Lectra revisited one of its high added value areas of expertise: airbag cutting.**

Lectra has extensive experience in continual process optimization, contributing to the reliability of a car safety device that cannot compromise on quality. Mass producing an airbag requires maximum accuracy and optimized material management. This is why, for over 25 years, Lectra has chosen to use laser technology via Focus, then FocusQuantum, its integrated solution that is fully dedicated to this passive safety device.

In practice, this solution includes a new-generation laser cutter for One Piece Woven (OPW) and Cut and Sew airbags, and a complete cutting preparation software suite, as well as access to the advice and services of Lectra experts.

Olivier Nold, Lectra's Senior Vice-President, Business Development said: *“Lectra is a leading global player in the airbag market since the vast majority of airbags are cut on Lectra equipment. We have a presence in all leading airbag companies on all five continents. FocusQuantum is continually offering new elements of value and improvement, with regard to both performance and material savings. Our equipment and software are ‘4.0 ready,’ that is, they are adapted for new uses with over 200 sensors that analyze operation and monitor output.”*

With the advent of stricter regulations aiming to improve road safety, Lectra has again been able to adapt its solutions. *“The latest version of FocusQuantum is three times more efficient than the previous one and has reduced manufacturing costs by 15% per airbag. When put into the perspective of the millions of airbags produced worldwide every year, this represents a significant increase in consolidated profit,”* Olivier Nold proudly stated.

A fast-changing airbag market

In countries with dense urban populations and where the number of injury crashes is still very high, such as Brazil, China, India or Thailand, the appeal of safety equipment is intensifying. Decisions like those taken in India, which has just made front passenger airbags mandatory, ensure market growth in years to come.

Meanwhile, the automotive airbag market has reached maturity in developed countries where we have seen faster growth linked to new regulations. An example of this, while still minimal, is the development of motorcycle airbags—we are seeing an emerging interest among lawmakers in France and Spain.

In addition, innovation in the field of passenger safety has led to the development of new types of airbags (curtain, side, knee, front center) that are currently installed in many categories of vehicles. The latest of these already benefit from pedestrian or external airbags. Knowing that these high-end vehicles may be equipped with 8 to 12 airbags, this increased number of airbags in a vehicle attests to the assured long-term growth of the sector.

Regardless of this growth in quantity, very strict quality specifications must still be met. Just as in the fashion and furniture sectors, airbag manufacturers are challenged by the global trend toward sustainable development in the automotive industry. They seek not only to use new materials (recyclable or recycled) but also to lighten the weight of the airbags in vehicles, to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The fight against pollution also encourages the development of new modes of transportation, in particular in urban areas, where margins of change in the mobility market are real. The rise of autonomous vehicles is an impetus to the design of new protective solutions in what will become new living spaces that are driverless and with no driver intervention. At the same time, these innovations will necessarily increase the final cost of this type of vehicle, thereby limiting their access to the markets of emerging countries.

On the other hand, the parallel development of new soft mobility modes (walking, cycling, roller-blading, electric scooters) multiplies the demand for adapted protective equipment. *“This need for safety during day-to-day mobility is not limited to motorized vehicles. Two French brands have just joined forces to create an airbag jacket for urban cyclists. The airbag market is therefore in a state of perpetual evolution and diversification,”* concludes Olivier Nold.

About Lectra:

For companies that breathe life into our wardrobes, car interiors, furniture and more, Lectra crafts the premium technologies that facilitate the digital transformation of their industry. Lectra's offer empowers brands, manufacturers and retailers from design to production, providing them with the market respect and peace of mind they deserve. Founded in 1973, the company reported revenues of €236 million in 2020 and is listed on Euronext (LSS).

In June 2021, Lectra acquired Gerber Technology, a USA-based company founded in 1968. Like Lectra, Gerber Technology develops software and automation solutions for fashion, automotive, furniture and other businesses across the globe.

By uniting, Lectra and Gerber Technology will become the ultimate Industry 4.0 partner for their customers.

For more information, please visit lectra.com and gerbertechnology.com.

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