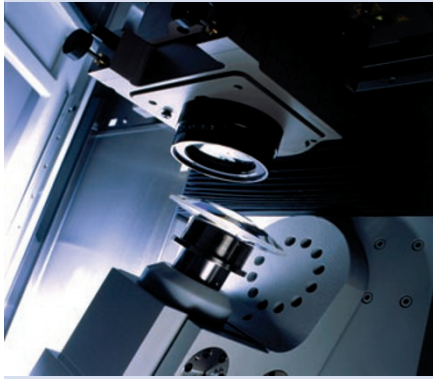


Spurring on optics consumers to greater demands



QED

Buyers of optics should demand 100% measurement certainty from their suppliers, according to Don Golini, president of QED Technologies. He claims that most optical shops can only measure 60–70% of their optics over a full aperture and that the optics industry has tolerated this level of accuracy for many years.

“But there is no other high-tech industry that would accept this low level of certainty,” says Golini. “Many people in the optics industry just accept

60–70% because they believe there is no alternative. But today’s computer power has enabled powerful stitching techniques that give 100% coverage of a product and enable the customer to have 100% certainty of what they are buying.”

He also believes that metrology systems will play a role in bringing down the cost of custom optics. “The optics industry has become accustomed to unique, dedicated metrology set-ups being used for every product, particularly when manufacturing aspheres,” says Golini. “With today’s lower volumes and higher-precision applications, optics shops do not have the time or money to invest in expensive unique one-off metrology systems for each product. Again, stitching offers a flexible and cost-effective alternative.”

In fact QED Technologies has recently won an R&D100 Award for its subaperture stitching interferometer for aspheres (SSI-A) product. The company claims that optics manufacturers can, for the first time, obtain measurements of a wide variety of spheres, flats and aspheres with one turnkey system.

\$46.5 million for the fourth quarter in fiscal 2007, at which time the company increased its spending on research and development, as well as marketing in the semiconductor industry. A greater percentage of the company’s net sales were made through third-party distribution channels, with correspondingly higher sales and marketing expenses.

“We were negatively impacted by a reduction in capital spending by our customers in the semiconductor manufacturing and display markets. This contributed to a year-over-year revenue decline of \$22.0 million in fiscal 2008, adversely affecting earnings, which was clearly a disappointment,” commented Bruce Robinson, ZYGO’s chairman and chief executive officer. However, he added, “Capital spending in the display sector showed a positive recovery in the latter half of fiscal 2008 and we entered fiscal 2009 with a strong backlog in display.”

It has been a busy year for ZYGO. One of the highlights of the year was the acquisition of Solvision, a provider of three- and two-dimensional metrology for semiconductor substrates and packages. It also introduced multiple-application single-sensor metrology tools for wafer measurements of dimensions of 45 nm and below. In addition, in the second half of fiscal 2008 it launched a majority-owned joint venture in China, which will focus on developing and assembling products designed for the local market.

Perceptron net sales up

Perceptron, a provider of non-contact measurement and inspection solutions for automotive applications, has reported net sales of \$72.5 million for fiscal 2008, whereas net sales were \$62.3 million for the fiscal year 2007. This represents an increase in sales of 16.4% over fiscal year 2007.

“The 2008 fiscal year was challenging for us, given the ongoing turbulent economic conditions in the North American automotive market and the delays we experienced in the ramp-up of new products in our Technology Products segment,” commented Harry Rittenour, president and chief executive officer. He said that although they expected turbulence in the automotive markets to continue in fiscal year 2009, there would be opportunities for Perceptron as the domestic original-equipment manufacturers shift production from current models to new models that are more economical to operate. “We have new commercial products that we anticipate will begin to ship in the first quarter of fiscal year 2009,” he said. The company expects sales in North America and Europe in 2009 to be below fiscal year 2008 levels. However, in fiscal year 2009 sales in Asia

are expected to continue to grow and offset the decline in North America and Europe.

ZYGO profits go down



ZYGO

Bruce Robinson, chairman and chief executive officer of ZYGO.

The US company ZYGO has announced a 12% decrease in net sales for fiscal 2008 compared with 2007, and is blaming the decrease on a drop in sales in its lithography original-equipment-manufacturer and display-systems products. The company, which makes optical metrology instruments for semiconductor capital equipment and industrial markets, saw its annual sales drop from \$18.0 million in fiscal 2007 to \$159.0 million in fiscal 2008.

In the fourth quarter of fiscal 2008, net sales were \$48.5 million. They were

KLA-Tencor buys Vistec business unit

The company KLA-Tencor has entered into an agreement to acquire the Microelectronic Inspection Equipment (MIE) business unit of Vistec Semiconductor Systems, which is wholly owned by Golden Gate Capital, a private equity firm based in San Francisco. The MIE business unit of Vistec has headquarters in Weilburg, Germany, and provides advanced semiconductor mask and wafer manufacturing systems.

“The Microelectronic Inspection Equipment division of Vistec not only complements KLA-Tencor’s product portfolio, it will give us an opportunity for growth into new segments of the mask and wafer markets,” said Rick Wallace, chief executive officer of KLA-Tencor. He added that Vistec’s mask registration measurement systems will allow KLA-Tencor to offer an expanded range of products to their customers. “With its heritage as part of the Leica group, Vistec has a deep technology foundation that will be a good fit with KLA-Tencor’s culture of innovation in optics and other advanced technologies.”