

Back to the Future at Siplace

Written by Pete Waddell and Mike Buetow
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ATLANTA -- In some ways it looked like the **Siemens** of old.

With Gunter Lauber CEO based in Munich and Jeff Timms back as chief executive and GM of the Americas, the former German assembly equipment powerhouse is being remade as **ASM Assembly Systems**,

although it retains the familiar Siplace brand.

The company leaders were back in the Atlanta suburbs last week, hosting an open house for customers and key media.

During the presentations, they noted the marriage brought together ASM's strength in Asia with Siplace's large user base in Europe and North America. Sales have been rebounding, [rising to \\$626 million in 2011](#), and ASM set a record for sales.

On the technology front, the company has launched the [Siplace feeder for dispensing](#), and continues to upgrade the X4i platform. According to Timms, the German operations will continue to design and build the high-end placement equipment, while other equipment will be built close to the respective end-markets. To ensure ongoing innovation, ASM is investing 10% of its revenue in R&D.

The Siplace open house featured several panel sessions, two of which touched on outsourcing trends. In one, **Engent's** Dr. Dan Baldwin and **Plexus's** Kirk Van Dreel both noted certain programs have been coming back to the North America, spurred in part by a change in perspective by customers who now feel they need their supply chain in closer proximity to their end-customers and a continued emphasis on Lean initiatives. Unrest in Mexico hasn't had an appreciable effect, with Timms noting that that nation's interior -- where much of the manufacturing is -- is more stable than the US-Mexico border.

Another panel, this on the future of electronics in Americas, agreed that outsourcing would increase and Steve Puddles of **Spectral Response** pointing out that EMS companies remain in position to benefit. Van Dreel noted an increase in public-private cooperation, in particular at **NASA**.

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Dr. Manian Ramkumar, director of the Center for Electronics Manufacturing and Assembly at **RI T**, said a return of manufacturing will bring industry back to the education process, but universities don't have the budgets they once did.

There were product demos, a ribbon-cutting, food and champagne. More echoes of Siemens, which also put a premium on taking care of its guests.