

Smart search for a faster product matching: thyssenkrupp Schulte uses in-house developed AI solution to create quotations

- AI-supported software called “smartsearch” analyzes customer inquiries and quickly finds the right products
- smartsearch is an add-on for “smart ORDER” that provides answers to open-ended inquiries
- Language models increase the success rate and offer support in searching for materials

thyssenkrupp Schulte, which is part of thyssenkrupp Materials Services, uses smartsearch, an in-house software solution that analyzes open-ended customer inquiries with the help of artificial intelligence and compares them with the product catalog. The aim is to achieve a higher degree of automation in quotations and orders to make processes more efficient for customers and sales. The AI software reads and analyzes customer requests, automatically searches the product catalog for the required product, and promptly generates a complete quotation.

“The goal of smartsearch is to create a suitable quote for the customers in just a few seconds. This speeds up the purchasing process, reduces our colleagues’ workload, and establishes us as a reliable and fast partner. It’s another piece of the puzzle in our strategy to promote digital solutions, make materials distribution more efficient, and rethink materials as a service,” said Andreas Kellermann, Head of Materials Distribution in the Distribution & Trading unit at thyssenkrupp Materials Services.

Faster product searches thanks to intelligent software

Until now, it was common practice in materials distribution to manually enter customer inquiries in SAP. This process was extremely time-consuming, especially with an extensive product portfolio of over 200,000 items. smart ORDER has already enabled partial automation of inquiries, but the solution could not handle open-ended inquiries. smartsearch combines AI, machine learning, and search algorithms to solve this problem. Many small language models work in the background, learning from each inquiry and constantly evolving. The implementation has already shown initial success: Over 50,000 inquiries have been processed, and the success rate of offers has increased significantly.

smartsearch is already part of the workflow for many colleagues. The next step is to gradually implement the software at other European locations and potentially at thyssenkrupp Plastics. There are further applications for smartsearch that could be implemented in the future. For example, the company plans to use the software to read and evaluate supplier offers. Using the software as a virtual material advisor is also under consideration.

About thyssenkrupp Materials Services

thyssenkrupp Materials Services is a global leader in materials distribution and services. Around 16,000 employees serve 250,000 customers in the core markets of Europe and North America. The focus is on three fields of activity: storage and trading of materials, their targeted processing and services related to supply chains. The company is currently the only materials distributor and processor at scale with a significant share of digital solution businesses. In fiscal year 2023/24, thyssenkrupp Materials Services generated total sales of €12.1 billion and adjusted EBIT of €204 million.

About thyssenkrupp Schulte

thyssenkrupp Schulte GmbH is part of thyssenkrupp Materials Services and is a materials distributor for steel, stainless steel and non-ferrous metals. The portfolio ranges from a broad product range of flat products, profiles and tubes. thyssenkrupp Schulte is present at around 30 locations throughout Germany. The extensive product portfolio is complemented by competent expert advice and a comprehensive range of services.

Image material is available for download under the following link (source: thyssenkrupp Materials Services): https://transfer.thyssenkrupp.com/public/t153538n_e54e5db52643554e445c6c

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