

## **Consulting for Diagnostic Imaging**

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Stefan Hellwig, technical director and senior consultant at the Germany-based IDTM GmbH, shares his insights about moving out of the pre-owned diagnostic imaging equipment business and into consulting for diagnostic imaging, mobile diagnostic imaging equipment and image guided therapies.



*Stefan Hellwig*  
**IDTM GmbH**

### **DMN: How did you get started in the industry?**

**SH:** That's a little while ago. In 1993, I was working for a private research company, developing hard and software for real-time MRI image reconstruction. That's where I met Michael Friebe, who just moved back from the U.S. where he had been working as Project Manager / System engineer for Toshiba America Medical Systems. In 1994, Michael founded Neuromed and I was the first employee. Neuromed became Central Europe's largest provider of mobile imaging services. The company owned and operated more than 15 mobile MRI/CT, CATHLAB and PET systems and was a major seller and reseller of pre-owned diagnostic imaging equipment. After Neuromed was sold, I joined Tomovation. And after Tomovation was sold, I joined IDTM.

### **DMN: Is this a new role for you-- technical director and senior consultant?**

**SH:** Being technical director has been my job since we started Neuromed in 1994, so that's not a new role for me at all. I have always been responsible for all technical aspects of our activities, such as project planning for MRI, CT and PET/CT installations, system and site surveys, project planning for mobile units, radiation protection, etc. The title senior consultant is new for me, but since I am involved in the technical parts of our consulting projects, the activities have been the same and I have a lot of experience in that field. That's probably where the senior in senior consultant comes from.

### **DMN: Tell us a little bit about IDTM GmbH, and how long they have been around?**

**SH:** IDTM GmbH was founded in 2012. We are a dedicated consulting company for diagnostic imaging, mobile diagnostic imaging equipment and image guided therapies. We provide consulting for private practices and hospitals (radiology, cardiology, and nuclear medicine) for all aspects around purchasing, installation, operation, and evaluation of the capital equipment. With IDTM we are not in the pre-owned diagnostic imaging equipment business anymore and therefore have a complete independent position. In addition to the consulting work, we do high-quality system and site surveys for MRI, CT and PET/CT systems.

### **DMN: Why was the company created?**

**SH:** We had the feeling that there was a lack of qualified consulting companies that have the experience and the contacts to do high-quality consulting not only for the financial but for the technical aspects too.

During our activities in the pre-owned business, we always had to push hard to get detailed and reliable specifications of MRI, CT and PET/CT systems that were either sold by the OEM trade desks, by hospitals or by most brokers. And it was even more difficult if the system was located abroad. For companies without detailed technical knowledge of the above systems, it is quite impossible to get reliable and detailed specifications.

We think the solution to this problem would be to have an independent company evaluating the system to generate a detailed report with pictures of the system components and even check the outtake route for the system components. This would enable the buyer to get a better picture of the systems they are going to buy, including the expected expenses for the rigging of the system components and therefore a lot better chance to market.

**DMN: What excites you most about the future of diagnostic imaging?**

**SH:** The integration of different modalities such as PET/CT, which is already established and in particular PET/MRI and SPECT/MRI is something that I find very interesting. This technology can improve data quality, allow more accurate rendering of metabolic to structural data and improve patient throughput, as PET and MRI data can be collected simultaneously in the same scan session.

Another thing is the combination of hi-intensity focused ultrasound (HIFU) with MRI for MRI guided treatments such as bone pain palliative therapy, uterine fibroid ablation therapy or prostate cancer therapy.

**DMN: What will the next generation of systems focus on in your opinion?**

**SH:** I don't think that the race for higher field strength, stronger and faster gradients, more channels, more slices, etc. will continue as we have seen it in past years. Enhanced patient comfort such as gradient noise reduction systems and software-based improvements such as automated workflows might be the focus of future developments. The introduction of software assistants that will guide the radiographer through the scanning procedure and will help customize the examination on a patient level or software assistants for diagnosis support is something that will get more attention for next generation systems.

**DMN: Anything else you would like to add about the company or your role?**

**SH:** A lot of independent companies that deal with refurbished equipment would benefit from a neutral and experienced set up that helps them to deal with all the problems associated with these complex imaging systems. Supply and demand of refurbished tomography systems in Europe is increasing and very often systems from Europe are also interesting for U.S. or Asian customers. So there is a need for a qualified supplier of technical and warehouse services. Besides the consulting business we will therefore offer deinstallation and crating, warehousing storage, system staging, refurbishment and upgrading -- if requested.