Reta-Awards 2026:

DEICHMANN honoured for ‘Employee Empowerment’

Essen, 24.02.2026

When digital innovation noticeably makes everyday work easier and puts employees at the centre, real added value is created. This is precisely why DEICHMANN was honoured at the 2026 Reta Awards: in the 'Employee Empowerment' category, the international jury recognised the introduction of the new 'Qualitize' app, which the Essen-based family business uses to simplify and standardise administrative processes in its stores and provide targeted support to local teams.

At this year's Reta Awards (Retail Technology Awards) on Monday evening in Düsseldorf, DEICHMANN was honoured with one of the prestigious awards in the international retail tech industry. The jury recognised the digital tool 'Qualitize' as one of the leading technological innovations in the field of employee empowerment. The award ceremony took place in conjunction with EuroShop 2026, the world's largest trade fair for the retail industry, and was held at Dr. Thompson's Seifenfabrik in Düsseldorf.

Michael Kluge and Kathrin Schmidt accepted the award on behalf of the entire project team, consisting of employees from DEICHMANN SE and Qualitize GmbH.

Qualitize: Digital support at the touch of a button

With 'Qualitize', DEICHMANN has created a central digital work platform that is consistently geared towards the requirements of the store teams. The app combines structured communication, clear task flows and standardised reporting processes in an intuitive solution. Reports can be created directly from the store – supported by checklists, evaluations, photo uploads, comment functions and an integrated speech-to-text application. This allows follow-up processes to be derived immediately, such as reorders or further measures, which can be initiated directly from the app.

The application is complemented by AI-supported functions such as automatic translations, intelligent summaries and image processing, which further reduce the amount of work involved. Analysis and approval workflows also ensure transparency, efficiency and improved data quality. 'Qualitize' is seamlessly integrated into DEICHMANN's existing IT ecosystem and accessible via single sign-on. A particular advantage for employees is that all functions are also available on the Zebra devices that are already used for merchandise management in everyday store operations.

Quick introduction – measurable results

The app was rolled out remarkably quickly. To date, Qualitize is already in use in 1,153 stores. Its launch has significantly reduced administrative work, made processes clearer and ensured that information is available and traceable at all times.

'With the employee empowerment app "Qualitize", we are creating a uniform, easy-to-use work platform for our teams in the stores. Routine tasks are faster and easier to understand – and thanks to AI-supported translations and summaries, there is more time for our customers. Full utilisation after only four weeks confirms the high practical value of the solution,' says Michael Kluge.

A strong sign of digitalisation in retail

The Reta Awards are presented annually by the EHI Retail Institute e. V. (EHI), a research and education institute for the retail sector based in Cologne, and are among the most important awards for technological innovations in retail. Three equal winners were honoured in each of the five categories 'Artificial Intelligence', 'Checkout & Smart Store', 'Customer Experience', 'Employee Empowerment' and 'Supply Chain Excellence', and one winner in the special category 'MarTech Innovation'. A total of 28 projects were nominated this year from more than 75 international submissions, five of which were in the 'Employee Empowerment' category.

For DEICHMANN, the award in the 'Employee Empowerment' category is both recognition and motivation. It confirms the company's commitment to viewing digitalisation not as an end in itself, but as a tool for sustainably reducing the workload on employees, improving processes and making retail fit for the future.

About the EHI

The EHI is a research, education and consulting institute for the retail sector and its partners, with around 80 employees and an international network of 850 member companies from the retail, consumer goods, capital goods and service industries. The EHI is also a shareholder in GS1 Germany and Agraya and a partner of Messe Düsseldorf at major trade fairs such as EuroShop. The president of the EHI is Markant CEO Markus Tkotz and the managing director is Ulrich Spaan.

Further information: http://www.reta-europe.com/

Medienkontakt



Unternehmenskommu
nikation
Michael Eger
Presse@deichmann.co
m

DEICHMANN SE, which is headquartered in Essen, Germany, was founded in 1913 and is still a wholly-owned family company. The corporate group is the European footwear retail market leader with operations in more than 30 countries worldwide. It employs over 49,900 people and operates more than 4,700 stores and 40 online shops. In addition to the DEICHMANN stores, the company owns Dosenbach, Ochsner Shoes and Ochsner Sport in Switzerland, vanHaren in the Netherlands and Belgium and Rack Room Shoes in the USA. It also owns the SNIPES Group with stores and online shops in Europe and the USA. For many decades, the company has been involved in a variety of social projects, for example through the DEICHMANN Foundation.