

Press Releases

100 YEARS PREH

Reinventing oneself again

Bad Neustadt a. d. Saale. On March 11, 2019 Preh GmbH celebrates a proud anniversary: The automotive supplier from Bad Neustadt a. d. Saale is 100 years old. A look at Preh's history is just as exciting as the outlook for the future: The company has had to cope with industry crises over the past 100 years, reorganize its product portfolio several times, and ultimately reinvent itself as a business concern in the face of major changes in the automotive industry, the next 100 years will probably be no less challenging.

Preh has positioned itself as an innovation driver in the market segments for driver control systems, e-mobility and connectivity. With the slogan "We Drive Innovation," the supplier plans to shape the mobility of the future actively and design the operation in the vehicle cockpit of tomorrow. Preh team's acknowledged high innovative strength is more than ever required for tomorrow.

"We have proven that we can always reinvent ourselves. This also applies to the future. Let's do it together. For the next 100 years!" summarizes Preh management the review and outlook as a theme for all employees worldwide. The starting point for implementing Preh's ambitious goals is favorable: After overcoming the global industry crisis in 2008/2009, the company was able to "hit the ground running" and enter a dynamic growth course. In particular, partnership with Chinese investor Joyson Preh provided strong "tailwind" since its acquisition in 2011: While in 2010 the automotive supplier had a turnover of 351 million EUR with 2,420 employees, in 2018 Preh employed about 7,300 people and with EUR 1.3 billion (provisional figure) was able to establish a new sales record.

1919: Jakob Preh commences as entrepreneur and inventor

In the founding year 1919, the rise to become a leading player in the world market for automotive electronics was anything but predictable. The beginning was modest: The first company headquarters was in a former restaurant with bowling alley in Bad Neustadt. There, with a small team, founder Jakob Preh initially produced electrical installation parts and accessories for the broadcasting industry still in its infancy. He was inventive practically from the beginning, as evidenced by the first patent from the 1920s. In 1924, with the "Preh-Funk," Preh presented his first own radio and was one of the pioneers in consumer electronics. In the 1930s, the company temporarily entered the manufacture of car accessories. With the production of automobile turn signals, Preh was for the first time in the market which should become the mainstay of the company after the late 1980s. The Preh history could have ended in 1945: Jakob Preh was shot by National Socialists while he was trying to surrender Bad Neustadt without bloodshed to the advancing US troops shortly before the end of World War II. Despite this tragedy, Jakob Preh's wife Agnes and their son Walter continued to manage the company.

(From left to right) Company founder Jakob Preh with his son Walter and his son's wife Rosemarie.

New beginning and ascent

After the Second World War, Preh made a new beginning as a manufacturer of toys. On the basis of existing manufacturing skills, the company developed inter alia electric toys, such as remote-controlled cars. Moreover, unused plastic injection molding machines were used to make polystyrene dolls. However, after this excursion into the nursery world, a return to the core competence for electromechanical components soon followed, and thus the entry into the promising supply market for TV sets. Preh experienced a veritable boom in the 1960s and early 1970s as a manufacturer of potentiometers, switches and remote controls. At the same time, increasing cost pressures forced the company to become a pioneer in globalization. At the end of the 1960s, Preh set up a plant in Trofa, Portugal, which still belongs to the Preh Group and celebrates its 50th anniversary this year. In 1971, the founding family was struck by another fatal blow: Walter Preh, the company founder's son, died at the age of only 58. Now it was his wife Rosemarie Preh who continued the company and ensured its survival even in times of crisis.

Setbacks and resurgence

The recession in the 1970s and the industry crisis in the German entertainment industry forced Preh among other businesses to reorient its product portfolio radically. In the mid-1980s, the company finally withdrew completely from consumer electronics and re-entered the automotive supply market. The first orders in 1987 included a heating control unit for the VW Passat and in 1988 a control panel for the BMW on-board computer. In addition to automotive electronics, Preh has also been successful in keyboard and industrial equipment markets for many years. However, as a development partner of major car manufacturers such as BMW, Volkswagen Group, Daimler, Ford and General Motors, the automotive business increasingly developed into the Preh Group's decisive mainstay. Other activities were spun off or sold in the 21st century. Most recently, PIA Automation 2017 has been established within the Joyson Group as a completely separate area. Preh strengthened its position in 2016 by acquiring former TechniSat Automotive - today Preh Car Connect - in the promising automotive segments for vehicle networking, infotainment and telematics.

Preh has reinvented itself for 100 years. Whether automobile turn signals, toys, components for the broadcasting and TV industry or control systems for the vehicle interior - these always were and are solutions with a technical edge.

Innovation as "insurance" for the future

Today, Preh is a pure-bred automotive supplier, with locations in Germany, Portugal, Romania, Poland, Sweden, USA, Mexico and China, and has become a global player in automotive electronics. In addition to the core business of control systems in the vehicle

cockpit, Preh has also invested heavily in growth markets for e-mobility and vehicle networking. The prerequisite for future market success is the Preh team's innovative strength, which has repeatedly distinguished the company since its foundation 100 years ago.

"The innovative strength of our employees is a recurring theme throughout our company's history. And it is our 'insurance' for the future," says Christoph Hummel, Chairman of the Management Board of Preh GmbH. "We drive innovation" is more than just a slogan for us. The role as driving force of innovation describes our DNA. As in the past 100 years, we will continue to be ready to break new ground as technological developments or changes in markets require. Our history shows that we have every reason to be optimistic about the next 100 years."

(From left to right) Dr. Michael Roesnick, Preh GmbH Chairman of the Supervisory Board, developed the company into a global player. Christoph Hummel, Preh GmbH President and CEO, has been shaping the automotive supplier for more than 20 years in management positions. Jeff Wang, founder and majority shareholder of the Joyson Group, took over Preh in 2011.