

Anniversary year

futronic turns 40 – a genuine success story

Today, futronic is one of the world's top suppliers in the field of complex automation and drive solutions for the glass container industry. It all began with an order from the food processing sector. Four decades ago in 1972, Gerhard Funk and his partners Günther Scharpf and Horst Dieter Reinsch laid the foundation for futronic GmbH in a back room in Tett nang. We'd like to celebrate this important anniversary with a look back at the company's 40-year success story.



A strong team: With premium quality products, longstanding relationships and first-class service futronic goes into future.

As soon as Wolfgang Lachmann is prompted to recollect the past and futronic's early years, his eyes light up visibly. Although Lachmann, who today is responsible for the running of the company together with Michael Preuß, only joined the team in 1988, he was involved in numerous collaborative ventures prior to that

date in his role as software developer at Oberland Glas (now Saint-Gobain Oberland AG). He has kept up his friendship with Gerhard Funk, futronic's founder and namesake who withdrew from active business life in 1986. A little lost in thought, Lachmann turns the pages of a few old brochures – personal co-

pies, some with handwritten notes, that have survived the years and been preserved for posterity. Then he starts to tell the story. Lachmann: „In the beginning, futronic had nothing at all to do with glass production.“ The very first orders were received from the meat processing industry. According to



Photographs from days gone by: futronic founders Gerhard Funk (left), General Manager with responsibility for sales, and Production Manager Günther Scharpf.

Father of the MP-ST: Horst Dieter Reinsch, once Technical Manager at futronic.

a company brochure published in 1983, it was 'technical difficulties with a veterinary product' that persuaded a customer to get in touch with futronic. The three founding fathers were able to solve the problem to the customer's satisfaction. More contracts from the food sector followed on the basis of recommendations. From that moment on, things really took off.

„The trio at the helm of that fledgling enterprise were rather ambitious“, Lachmann continues. It wasn't long before orders were also coming in from customers in other industries such as mechanical engineering or medical, lab and process technology. Even teaching aids used to be part of the futronic portfolio. In 1977, futronic got together with Tett nang Electronics College to develop a training system for digital and microprocessor technology. „We're still reaping the benefits of our experience with this and similar projects to this day when it comes to customer and staff training, for instance“, Lachmann observes.

Future-proof technologies

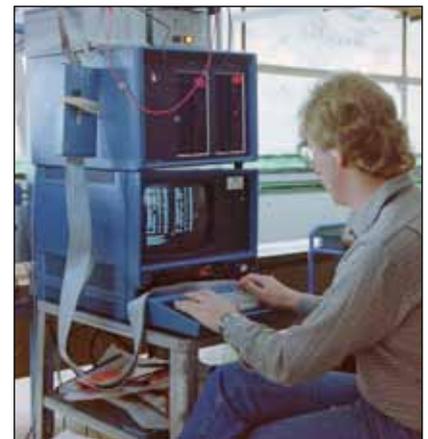
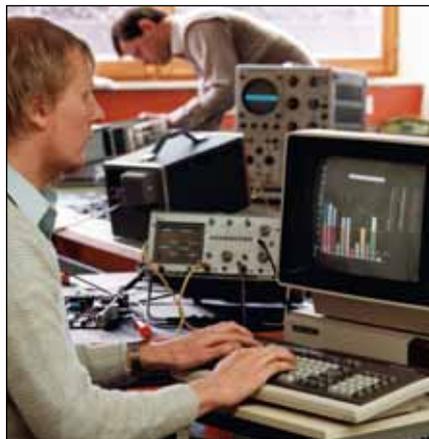
In the spring of 1978, futronic secured its first order to design a control system for glass machines from Oberland Glas in Bad Wurzach. After just four months, its development engineers were able to unveil the MP-ST. „Our machine marked the entry of computer technology into glass production“, Lachmann explains. „Transistor logic and relays were no longer state of the art. The MP-ST proved to be a ground-breaking invention that put us a huge step ahead of the competition.“

The MP-ST paved the way for futronic's success story as a top supplier of automation solutions for the glass container industry. The successor model was launched in the market in 1987: CIMOG stands for „Computer Integrated Manufacturing of Glass“. The CIMOG was the first control system anywhere in the world to facilitate freely programmable special cycles for the production process. The first tandem control for 16-section machines was shipped by futronic later the same year – further evidence of the company's pioneering position in glass industry. A low-cost alternative to the CIMOG was introduced in the early nineties. The EPRO (Economic Production) was designed for smaller plant and machinery that is particularly popular in the Far East and can manage without the CIMOG's high-end functionality. Finally, in 2004, the FMT24S appeared on the market. The FMT (Flexible Modular Timing) is a distributed control system for IS machines with up to 24 sections

that can be tailored to each customer's individual specification. „The aim was to develop a control that could be used for any application“, says Wolfgang Lachmann.

Change at the top

The increasing number of orders put the Tett nang firm on an astounding success trajectory and the payroll was regularly extended to keep pace with its commercial growth. In 1982, futronic moved from Karlstrasse in the town centre to new premises in Schäferhof Industrial Park. The original „garage shop“ had turned into a fully-fledged manufacturer with almost eighty staff. In the meantime, its client base also included agricultural and packaging industry customers. Parallel to this expansion, futronic was gradually becoming more closely involved with the glass industry and intensifying its partnership with Oberland.



1972	1978	1982	1986	1987	1992
 futronic GmbH established in Tett nang by Gerhard Funk	 First MP-ST enters into service	Move to new premises in Schäferhof Industrial Park	futronic becomes a subsidiary of Oberland Glas AG in Bad Wurzach	futronic presents the CIMOG as the successor to the MP-ST	Expansion of the Schäferhof facility

»Title

In 1986, the Bad Wurzach glass specialist made a takeover bid that was too good to refuse and futronic became a subsidiary of Oberland Glas AG. The founding fathers stepped down and Bernt Küstner, for many years head of Oberland's electrical workshop (see interview), was named as General Manager, with Lachmann following him on board as Technical Manager a short while later. Küstner guided the company through a turbulent period – with considerable success. For a time the motto was „shrink to survive“, but within only a few years the company was back on the road to growth and prosperity. Space on the Schäferhof site became scarce and in 1992 the facility had to be extended.

After 18 years in charge, Bernt Küstner decided to pass on the baton. In 2004, Michael Preuß, who arrived at futronic as a development engineer in 1987, and Wolfgang Lachmann were appointed joint Managing Directors. On January 1, 2006, Oberland – meanwhile owned by Saint-Gobain, the French conglomerate – sold futronic to Jetter AG in Ludwigsburg nearby Stuttgart.

Excellently equipped for the future

Preuß, Managing Director with responsibility for sales and distribution, and Lachmann, answerable for Development & Technology, steered the company to a record profit in 2008 and helped it come through the recession intact twelve months later. During this time, futronic successfully strengthened and enlarged its Industrial Automation division. In 2008, the company moved to a new building complex in Bürgermoos Industrial Park. Today, futronic employs 61 staff who support around 900 installations worldwide. Among the customers of its Industrial Automation division are numerous enterprises like Zeppelin Systems, Liebherr, KTW K.Weishaupt and ZF Friedrichshafen.

„When we develop a new drive and control concept, it's not just a question of staying one step ahead technology-wise“, Lachmann muses. „We also have to live up to our clients' high expectations with regard to reliability, durability and efficiency.“ Lachmann is convinced that this „blend of premium quality products, longstanding relationships, proximity to customers and first-class service is the secret of futronic's success – now and in the future.“

»Interview

An interview with: Bernt Küstner

„futronic was a smash hit!“

Bernt Küstner, a native of Lübeck, North Germany, joined Oberland Glas in Bad Wurzach in 1973 after apprenticeship, engineering degree and initial work experience. As General Manager of futronic he introduced some radical changes that paved the way to global leadership. He withdrew after 18 years, worked as consultant and is now enjoying his retirement. Mr. Küstner recalls a fascinating period spent in Tettngang.

futronic Journal: Mr. Küstner, you know futronic like the back of your hand. What brought you to the company in the first place?

Bernt Küstner: I first got to hear about futronic when I was head of the electrical workshop at Oberland. We were planning to modernise our facility with the aim of improving working conditions at the machines and optimising our processes. Microprocessor technology was just beginning to take off and seemed to hold a lot of promise. We couldn't find anything suitable on the market, which is why we decided to develop what we were looking for ourselves. It was while we were searching for the best partner for this project that we hit on futronic. futronic Journal: At the time, futronic was a small, unknown company located in a back room in Tettngang. What made you so confident that you'd found the perfect partner?

Küstner: It was clear to me right away that the know-how was there, and Gerhard Funk had the courage to invest in this bold idea with us. futronic developed the MP-ST in just four months. We then tested this innovative control system extensively at Oberland – and were extremely impressed with the results. The MP-ST was subsequently installed in our machines at sites not only in Germany but worldwide. futronic was a smash hit!

futronic Journal: In 1986, you were appointed General Manager of futronic. What are your memories of the early years?

Küstner: Well, the MP-ST sold very well and the company was booming. Unfortunately, the management was lulled by the heady flight into biting off more than it could chew. Oberland bought up futronic on July 1, 1986 in order to protect our know-how and technology lead,



three months before I arrived in September. Minor few job cuts were our only option to start with. They provided us with the freedom to realign the product portfolio to the glass industry, develop new controls and drives and gradually give the company a complete facelift. By the end of 1988, we were out of the red and back to break-even. I'd like to emphasise that we only succeeded because we all pulled together. I was careful never to forget the people behind the numbers. It considered it very important always to have a sympathetic ear for my staff. In spite of that, those were really turbulent – not to say stormy – times.

futronic Journal: You were succeeded in 2004 by Mr. Lachmann and Mr. Preuß. Was that a difficult legacy?

Küstner: No. They've both grown into their management roles and their technical expertise is in any case beyond dispute. It was only logical that they should follow me as Managing Directors. I'm in no doubt whatsoever that futronic will continue to go its own way and develop plenty more innovative products and projects.

1997

futronic is awarded a QM certificate according to DIN EN ISO 9001

2001

futronic is awarded QM certificates according to DIN EN ISO 9001:2000 and DIN EN ISO 14001:1996



2004

futronic launches the new FMT24S IS machine control



2004

General Manager Bernt Küstner goes into retirement and is succeeded by Michael Preuss and Wolfgang Lachmann

Profile: Michael Preuß

A gentle helmsman

In the year of the company's anniversary, one of the two bosses also has a good reason to celebrate: Managing Director Michael Preuß joined futronic exactly twenty-five years ago. Aside from a few holiday jobs and temporary work as a student, he has spent his entire working life at futronic.



A quarter of a century at futronic: Michael Preuß.

Prior to embarking on his professional career, Michael Preuß took a degree in Electronics Engineering at Ravensburg-Weingarten University of Applied Sciences, only ten miles from Tettang. Whereas many of his fellow-students got out into the big wide world after completing their final exams, he opted to remain faithful to his native Upper Swabia, starting to work at futronic as a software developer on April 6, 1987. His sense of diplomacy and sales talent were soon in great demand. Bernt Küstner, former Managing Director of futronic, asked Preuß to accompany him on numerous trips abroad mainly to the US, the Far East and South Asia, where he forged valuable contacts with customers and industry experts before eventually taking over as Sales Manager. The personal support he provided to customers developed into what were often close and trusting relationships and in some cases even friendships. It was at this time that

Preuß laid the foundation for futronic's worldwide network of partners, which is still an integral element of the company's successful and sustainable sales strategy today.

Record profit in 2008

When Bernt Küstner retired in 2004, Michael Preuß took over the helm at futronic together with Wolfgang Lachmann. As Managing Director with responsibility for sales and distribution, Preuß steered the company to a record profit in 2008. It was also under his aegis that futronic came through the recession intact with a positive result twelve months later. During this time, futronic successfully strengthened and enlarged its Industrial Automation division. It was not long before the payroll had almost returned to the level of the boom era in the early eighties. The move to a new building complex in Bürgermoos industrial park in 2008 marked an

important milestone in the history of the company and its Managing Directors.

A sympathetic ear

Michael Preuß always has a sympathetic ear for his staff. Mutual respect and an agreeable working atmosphere are extremely important to him. Flat hierarchies and his friendly nature and gentle leadership style are key factors. His colleagues show their gratitude with great loyalty to the firm, in many instances over a period of several decades. Michael Preuß, born in 1962, is married with two grown-up children. When he isn't away visiting customers all over the world, he likes to cruise around the countryside with his wife on a heavy motorbike, relax with a fishing rod in the early hours of the morning or attend to the needs of Hiltensweiler brass band, of which he is chairman.

2006

futronic is sold to Jetter AG



2008

Move to new premises in Tettang's Bürgermoos Industrial Park



2008

futronic ends the fiscal year with the best result ever in the history of the company



2012

futronic celebrates its 40th anniversary

Glass market: China – China Glass 2012

China in a state of euphoria

The mood at China Glass in Shanghai could not have been brighter. No wonder – the Chinese glass container industry is booming. Over the last few years, the market has grown by more than ten percent per annum. In the first three quarters of 2011, glassworks produced more than five million tons of container glass.

„The trend we have been observing for a while now is clear confirmation that China is also a gigantic market for glassware“, explains Michael Preuß, Managing Director of futronic. He ought to know what he’s talking about – after all, he has been travelling to the Far East for over two decades, taking advantage of key trade fairs like China Glass as a communication platform to „provide our existing customers with comprehensive, first-hand information on current installations and demonstrate our latest developments“, Preuß continues. Together with Million Shen, responsible for sales & marketing, customer support and after-sales service activities in China and Taiwan on behalf of futronic since 1989, he presented Tettnang manufactured technology, including the FMT24S machine control and FDU24S drive system, at the Shanghai New International Expo Centre. The decision to participate in the „Made in Germany“ pavilion of the Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology (BMWi) proved to be well worth the effort. Preuß is very pleased with the response to a large number of business conversations and confident that pipeline projects will soon be reflected in concrete orders.

Plants move and modernise

For Preuß and Shen, these trips east are always a welcome opportunity to visit longstanding customers, learn more about local markets and „explore the enormous potential“. Things are currently moving in the Chinese glass industry on several fronts. Many old-established glassworks and manufacturing plants are meanwhile situated in the middle of residential areas. On the one



hand, further growth is virtually impossible while on the other, legislation and environmental constraints are forcing companies to relocate to what are often new industrial parks way outside the big cities. Wuxi Jiangsu Hua Zhong Glass, for example, has already been compelled to move. A brand new glassworks was recently erected at the new site, to which Preuß and Shen paid a call at the beginning of April. The owners profited from the move to undertake an extensive modernisation programme and invest in machinery conforming to the latest state of the art – including electronic control systems made by futronic.

Zhenjiang Dayang Glass Products in Zhenjiang, 145 miles north-west of Shanghai, likewise opted to combine the relocation to the provinces with a refurbishment project. Dayang has already been a futronic customer for a number of years and had no hesitation in choosing control and drive technology from Lake Constance again when it came to equipping the new IS machines. The production shops that were part of Preuß and Shen’s itinerary mid-way through April still have plenty of space to accommodate extra equipment. Preuß is in no doubt that futronic technology will remain just as popular here in the future.

Investments for better quality and growth

Michael Preuß sums up his trip to China: „The modernisation of machinery and plant is a top priority for glassworks throughout the country“. For one thing, there is a huge demand

A dazzling backdrop: Shanghai is the Chinese glass industry’s second most important centre after the capital, Beijing.

among Chinese bottlers and consumers for glass containers, and the trend is clearly upward. Production capacities will be obliged to grow at the same pace. For another, glass packagings produced in Chinese factories still don’t match up to the high quality expectations of consumers in America and Europe – and the same applies to the machines and equipment. In other words, if the Chinese want to gain a foothold in these markets, they have no option but to invest a sizeable amount in upgrading their glassworks, their plant and their machine, testing and control technology. Preuß: „We’ll definitely have a share in the cake“.



Glass from the greenfield: Zhenjiang Dayang Glass Products’ new factory in Zhenjiang offers plenty of scope for growth.

Domestic glass for China

Controls for stemware production

The Tett nang specialist is currently developing the complete control system for two stemware production lines – from glass cutting at the feeder to the conveyor to the annealing lehr – on behalf of Forma Glas, the Austrian engineering firm. The project encompasses the planning and design, software development, component manufacture and commissioning. The equipment will be shipped to Forma Glas for a cold run in the summer of 2012 and is scheduled to start production at the end customer's facility in China early next year.

„The contract from Forma Glas is immensely important for us“, said a delighted Alexander Körner, Head of futronic's Industrial Automation division. „For one thing, it will enable us to strengthen our position significantly in the domestic glass market.“ For another, it gives futronic's engineers a chance to demonstrate the whole breadth and depth of their expertise. Körner: „This project is the first time ever that we've been asked to supply a control system for a complete production line“. „futronic can draw on considerable expe-



Shoulder to shoulder: Rudolf Bernroither of Forma Glas GmbH and Alexander Körner, Head of Industrial Automation and responsible for sales, are looking forward to fruitful collaboration.

rience with similar projects for end customers“, explained Rudolf Bernroither, Managing Director of Forma Glas. futronic is simultaneously redesigning the entire control concept, making this solution more economical than any offered by competitors. Bernroither: „That was what tipped the scales“.

Forma Glas GmbH, headquartered in Neukir-

chen (Upper Austria), develops and manufactures high-end production machinery for premium quality domestic glass. futronic and Forma Glas also intend to cooperate closely in future, for example by bundling their international sales activities. The two companies will sign a cooperation agreement to this effect in the second quarter of 2012.

Commissioning

CIMOGs go productive at Ardagh Netherlands

Irish glass manufacturer Ardagh Glass has just finished modernising the machinery at its Dongen site. Last autumn, three brand new Emhart and Heye machines went productive at this facility not far from the Dutch city of Tilburg. Each of these three IS machines is controlled by a futronic CIMOG control. „We've already been cooperating with futronic very successfully for several years“, explained Henri Boons, Senior Electrotechnical Engineer in Dongen. „There was therefore no question that we would also choose futronic controls to equip our new machines.“

The test phase was completed without a hitch, and Ardagh's engineers and operators were thoroughly satisfied with the performance of all the machines and controls. „Our controls are non-proprietary, in other words they are totally compatible with machines made by a large number of other manufacturers“, said futronic sales engineer Marc Meersschaut, whose sphere of responsibility includes customers in the Netherlands. This independence of specific

systems is one of the outstanding strengths of futronic hardware and software, which are far more flexible than the system-bound alter-

natives proposed by competitors. Meersschaut: „I'm glad that we can show off this flexibility yet again in Dongen.“



Runs like clockwork: Henri Boons (right) and Mari Loonen, Senior Electrotechnical Engineers at Ardagh Glass in Dongen, are delighted that the commissioning went so smoothly.

Anniversary gala

Virtual factory celebrates 10 years

When enterprises and entrepreneurs got together in Markdorf back in 2001 to set up the Baden-Württemberg Virtual Factory (VFBW), futronic was there. This innovative network of companies celebrated its tenth birthday last November with a special anniversary gala at the Zeppelin Restaurant in Friedrichshafen.



10 years of VFBW: Chairman Edmund Dehnel welcomed business associates, friends and representatives of regional industry and politics.

About 110 representatives of regional industry and politics, business associates and friends turned up to pay tribute to the VFBW. Among those offering congratulations were Professor Günther Schuh of RWTH Aachen University, spiritus rector and initiator of the VFBW, Professor Peter Jany, CEO of the Chamber of Industry and Commerce of the Lake Constance-Upper Swabia region, and a delegation from the PTV (Production and Technology Association East Switzerland).

Profitable cooperation

CIC boss Peter Jany also stressed in his eulogy that the VFBW is much more than the

sum of its component parts. He praised the enterprise network as a shining example of „what profitable cooperation can look like“.

Potential not yet exhausted

„Virtual means imitating reality“, said Schuh in his witty presentation about networks in industry. „Based on that definition, a virtual factory is one that pretends to be a big company in order to handle a particular order. In actual fact, however, it usually consists of several smaller firms that bundle their expertise and capacities to enable them to offer services aligned to real demand.“ The great advantage here is that each of the partner enterprises pre-

serves its own dynamics and independence yet can adapt more flexibly to changing requirements – something that is vital to develop a competitive edge and seize new market opportunities. This kind of cooperation model, or „value network“ as Schuh also referred to it, will play an increasingly important role in future. His conclusion: „The VFBW’s potential is still far from exhausted.“

After the official programme was over, those present were invited to visit the nearby ZLT hangar to see an airship under construction. The event was hailed as an unqualified success, winding up with supper at the restaurant with ample time to chat and network.



Good-humoured: Prof. Dr. Günther Schuh.



Zeppelin ahead: The walk through the ZLT hangar offered impressive perspectives.

Change of leadership in Human Resources

Walker makes way for Kremler



Soon to be Germany's fastest HR Manager: Nicole Kremler succeeds Horst Walker.

Horst Walker, Human Resources Manager who has been at futronic for almost twenty-five years, will go into well-earned retirement at the end of June. Nicole Kremler, his successor, has already started work in Tettngang. Aged 29, she joined the company at the beginning of the year from Metzeler Automotive Profile Systems in Lindau. Metzeler is a supplier in the automotive industry where Kremler trained as an Industrial Business Management Assistant prior to completing an additional qualification as a Certified HR Specialist. Human resources has always been an area that interests her greatly, she says. After twelve years at Metzeler, she set out in search of a new challenge. She found what she was looking for at futronic. In her future position as Human

Resources Manager, Nicole Kremler intends to continue on the successful path charted by Horst Walker while also setting a few priorities of her own. Alongside classic human resource management, she plans to devote considerable attention to youth advancement and vocational training. She will also tread new ground when it comes to recruiting and make more intensive use of online media and social networks. In her private life, Kremler has a passion for fast sports. In winter she speeds down the region's ski slopes while in summer she gets out her motorbike and tours around Germany. Two or three times a year, she and her partner travel east in their VW bus to set a few records on real race-tracks in Hungary and the Czech Republic with her machine. Nicole Kremler lives with her partner in Lindau on the shores of Lake Constance.

»News

Social responsibility

Christoffel Blind Mission thanks futronic

We also have another anniversary to report: futronic has been supporting the Christoffel Blind Mission (CBM) charity with an annual donation ever since 1986. As an expression of his appreciation for „25 years of friendship and help“, Dr. Rainer Brockhaus, CBM's National Director in Germany, sent a special certificate to the company earlier this year. For more than a century now, CBM has aimed to improve the lives of people with disabilities, especially in the Third World, by providing medical care and running rehabilitation and education programmes.

„Enterprises and entrepreneurs bear a responsibility for the society in which we live“, explained futronic Managing Director Michael Preuß. „Our commitment to the Christoffel Blind Mission is an attempt to shoulder this social responsibility.“ futronic has also lent its support to regional organisations for many years, including the food bank in Tettngang and Tettngang Electronics College (EST).

Collaborating to change the face of the world: CBM thanks futronic with a certificate for its longstanding loyalty and support.

Bernhard Altmeier
Hardware Developer
(25 years)



Bernhard Altmeier has been at futronic for twenty-five years – as long as the boss. Originally trained as an electronics engineer, he works in Hardware Development and Quality Control. One of his principal duties is subjecting our hardware and software applications to a thorough scrutiny before they leave the premises for installation at the customer's facility. We are delighted that Bernhard Altmeier has remained faithful to us for such a long time and would like to congratulate him on this anniversary.

»Imprint

The futronic Journal is the customer magazine for futronic GmbH; it appears twice annually. Circulation: 600 printed, Issue 1/2012

Publisher: futronic GmbH, Michael Preuß (V.i.s.d.P.), Tolnauer Straße 3-4, D-88069 Tettngang, Tel.: +49/7542/5307-0, Fax +49/7542/5307-70, Internet: www.futronic.de, E-mail: info@futronic.de

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Authors: René Kius, Alexander Körner, Marc Meersschat, Michael Preuß

Image credits: Lisa Berger, Forma Glas, futronic, Karin Volz

Printing: Verlags Druckerei Ehrat, Adolf-Kolping-Str. 1, 88212 Ravensburg

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