

journal

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futronic
automation



1972 | 2022

the spirit of moving forward

futronic's success story

From garage shop to global player

Vacuum Process Control

VPC makes processes visible in the vacuum cycles and detects manufacturing problems before they occur

Raw sales power

René Elling and Pascal Bohmann are helping to shape the company's future

Shoulder-to-shoulder success

Harnessing synergies: futronic is a traditional believer in constructive networks and strong cooperation partners

automation in a new dimension



Editorial

Dear readers,

50 years of futronic! 50 years in which an awful lot has happened – in which our company has grown from a small garage shop to become a leading supplier of complex automation solutions and a global player by any definition. It's a success story to be proud of. And it's one that thoroughly deserves to be honoured in our cover feature.

It may be just a coincidence that our anniversary coincides with the International Year of Glass. But the timing couldn't be better. We've refrained from celebrating our anniversary in a big way under the shadow of the pandemic and the war in Ukraine. Having said that, we're now looking forward all the more to the first glasstec – that key industry event – after four years of forced abstinence. And we are indeed planning a small celebration at the futronic booth ... after all, you don't turn 50 every year! I hope to see you there!

Of course, success is also dependent on finding the right partners. To mark our anniversary, we therefore decided to shine a spotlight on three typical companies that have accompanied us on our way. We also tell you all about our new Vacuum Process Control System (VPC) – a more advanced version of the VCS – our new, young and dynamic sales team as well as generally what's going on at futronic.

On that note – stay well!

Sincerely,

Michael Preuss

Info

By the way: You can also find news and reports from our company on our website (www.futronic.de) as well as on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. Please feel free to check them out.

- www.facebook.com/futronicGmbH
- www.twitter.com/futronicGmbH
- www.youtube.com - futronic GmbH

Vacuum Process Control

futronic makes vacuum process visible

Last year, we introduced the Vacuum Control System (VCS), which enables manufacturing problems to be detected during the vacuum process. We now take pleasure in presenting a more advanced version: the new VPC (Vacuum Process Control System) makes processes visible in the vacuum cycles and records pressure curves and errors precisely. The VPC thus detects manufacturing problems at an early stage before they have a chance to occur.

Quality-sensitive vacuum process

The majority of manufacturing processes and sequences in an IS machine are measured, monitored and controlled in even the most inaccessible corners. However, the vacuum process in the blow mould, which is quality-sensitive, has so far taken place largely in the dark. The idea behind the VPC was to bring light into this darkness, in other words to make the entire vacuum process visible.

VPC enables proactive maintenance

The pressure or vacuum in the blow moulds is a particularly relevant parameter, for instance. The increase or decrease in pressure, the maximum values and the duration of the vacuum cycles are also measured, as are the response times of the vacuum valves. All data is visualised on the operator terminal and the complete vacuum process is represented in this way – practically in real time! Machine operators can keep a constant eye on the functionality and wear condition of the valves, the filters and the blow mould itself in this way. They can react quickly and correct any malfunctions before they result in defects, without having to interrupt operation.

Standalone version allows seamless integration

The VPC is available as an option for all IS machines equipped with futronic's proven FMT24S machine control system. It can furthermore be retrofitted to any existing equipment featuring an FMT24S control system. The VPC is implemented as a seamless add-on for the FMT24S's OT software. futronic can also supply the VPC in a standalone version with a separate interface for integration into the control infrastructure of other manufacturers.



Raw sales power from NRW

futronic has restructured its sales organisation in the Industrial Automation division. René Elling and Pascal Bohmann are helping to shape and develop the company's future.



René Elling



Pascal Bohmann

Elling joined futronic at the end of 2020 and has settled in well here since. A trained electronic systems engineer and electrician, he followed up this solid foundation with an additional qualification as a business economist. At his old employer, a specialist for automation technology, he worked in intralogistics, focusing mainly on handling systems and robotics. He also spent a lot of time travelling, frequently worldwide, in his role as site supervisor and project manager on installation and commissioning assignments. Following a short interlude in back office sales, Elling returned to field sales where, as a rep, he was constantly away visiting customers or attending exhibitions and trade fairs, living life on the go. When his girlfriend decided to study for a master's degree, René Elling took the opportunity to seek a change of scenery too. He found his dream job at futronic and so together they headed down south.

In the meantime, he is ably assisted by Pascal Bohmann. Bohmann initially trained as an electronics technician for industrial engineering, then did further training as a PLC specialist, qualified as an electrical foreman in his spare time and went on to become a technical business economist.

He worked on maintenance and repair assignments, spent occasional periods on site for commissioning and was involved in extensive automation and retrofit projects. At his previous employer, a leading global manufacturer of injection moulding machinery, he later assumed responsibility for on-site service and technical assistance at the customer's. He gained a lot of practical experience in the process that he can now put to good use at futronic.

So what do the two men have in common? Like Elling, 30 year-old Bohmann hails from the Münster area of North-Rhine Westphalia. They're the same age and they speak the same language, as you can't help hearing. The chemistry is right and they get on well together – raw sales power from NRW! The only difference is that Bohmann is holding the fort up in north-west Germany, engaging with current and potential clients mainly from his home base. It's a challenge that appeals to both of them – sounding out the market, keeping an ear to the ground and learning what customers want. Their job is to get new projects up and running with new and existing customers alike. And to develop what is still a relatively young business segment at futronic.

News in brief

Country lover on new ground

Futronic, too, is feeling the effects of the skills shortage, of course. It often takes a little patience and perseverance to fill vacancies with the right person. Yet all good things are worth waiting for and Ingo Eisele is another good example of how this strategy pays off. A native of Ravensburg, he started work at futronic at the beginning of the year. As a PLC programmer, 46 year-old Eisele has a lot of experience in industrial automation. After completing his training as an electronics technician, he studied Computer Engineering at the University of Applied Sciences in Stuttgart before returning to his home area, where he spent around 16 years working for a supplier of

automation technology. When the company was sold, he decided that "the time was ripe for new horizons". And that was how he ended up at futronic. The glass industry is new territory for him, but that's exactly what he was looking for, and that's what he came here to do. He's learning the ropes fast and will soon be off travelling again – in fact, much the same as in his old job. He's a family man, though, and whenever he returns home, he loves getting out and about in the countryside, biking or canoeing for instance. That's his way of finding the peace and quiet he needs to recharge his batteries – for the challenges that await him at futronic. Welcome to the team!



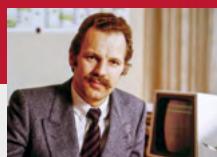


Major anniversary

Success story from Lake Constance

It may be just a coincidence that futronic's 50th anniversary coincides with the International Year of Glass. But the timing couldn't be better. After all, the futronic story is closely linked to the industrial production of container glass. In this anniversary year, Managing Director Michael Preuss looks back on an eventful past, a challenging present and a promising future.

50
1972 | 2022



1972
futronic GmbH is founded by Gerhard Funk in Tettnang



1982
Move to new premises in Schäferhof Industrial Park

2004
Michael Preuss and Wolfgang Lachmann become Managing Directors

futronic launches the new FMT24S IS machine control system



1978
The MP-ST – our first IS machine control system – enters into service

1986
Oberland Glas AG of Bad Wurzach takes over futronic

2006
futronic is sold to Jetter AG

2008
Move to new premises in Tettnang's Bürgermoos Industrial Park

Jetter
automation

futronic turns 50! What an achievement! An anniversary like this obviously needs to be celebrated in a fitting manner. The original plan was to invite business partners and associates, suppliers and customers from all over the world plus the company's employees and people from the local region, of course, to toast our round-number birthday. However, in view of the pandemic, the current economic mood in Germany and the terrible war in Ukraine, "we decided to celebrate in a quiet way", says Michael Preuss, the firm's Managing Director since 2004. "We'll make up for it one day, I promise." For the moment, he is happy to look back on an eventful but illustrious past. To face up to a challenging present. And to look forward to a promising future.

Groundbreaking invention

futronic was established in Tettnang in 1972 by General Manager Gerhard Funk, who also gave the company its name, and Production Manager Günther Scharpf. The two of them were joined not long after by Horst Dieter Reinsch, who was responsible for the technical side. futronic had nothing to do with glass production in the beginning. On the contrary, the first orders came from the food processing sector and it wasn't long before more projects followed from customers in other industries. It was in 1978 that futronic secured its first contract to design a control system for glass machines from Oberland Glas in Bad Wurzach, now Verallia. This system, known as MP-ST, marked the entry of computer technology into glass production, displacing transistor logic and relays which were no longer up to the challenge. It was a groundbreaking invention. "It put futronic a huge step ahead of the competition", Preuss declares. futronic has been a subsidiary of Jetter AG of Ludwigsburg since 2006 and the MPST paved the way for the firm's success story as a top supplier of automation solutions for the container glass industry.

Success as a collective achievement by every single employee

"We've not only continued to develop our products significantly since then; we've also realised umpteen exciting and unusual projects. After all, that's our core business: I wouldn't want to single out anything in particular", Preuss comments. "And it's really great that we'll be celebrating our 50th anniversary this year!" He confesses that steering the company in a dynamic environment through all the crises of the last five decades, through all the ups and downs – of which there have been more than a few – moving it forward, keeping it on course for growth, responding to new trends and realigning the business again and again has probably been the greatest achievement of all. "And it hasn't been the achievement of just one person, because we're not a family firm and we never have been", Preuss explains. "Credit is due to everyone here at futronic – to every single employee for their collective contribution to our success. We have every reason to be proud of them."

Evolving technologically, strategically and structurally

Looking forward, Preuss is very confident "that we can continue on our growth journey in spite of the difficult situation right now". And of course the company also wants to evolve technologically, strategically and structurally. It's common knowledge that standing still means going backwards. It goes without saying that futronic's experts are devoting considerable attention to digitalisation issues. To the technologies and the data that are the essence of it all", the Managing Director adds. All R&D staff have this at the back of their minds whenever they develop a new control system. They also cooperate closely here with various partners, exchange ideas and experiences and reflect together on which technologies, solutions and data can add genuine value for customers.



Looking forward to the next ten years

What's more, the Tettnang control system specialists listen carefully to what their users are saying, so that they know what's going on where and can identify needs. And draw the right conclusions to allow them to develop products that meet the requirements of futronic customers – and the market in general. "That's always been important to us and it will be in the future too", Preuss remarks. In short, his company has to stay on the ball and not wait too long if they're going to play an active part in shaping the future of automation, particularly in the container glass industry. Amongst other things, that means expanding and consolidating futronic's position as one of the world's leading providers of complex automation solutions for machines and equipment. Preuss: We've set our sights high and we're looking forward to the next ten years."



2013

Extension of the company premises – total investment: nearly one million euros



2022

futronic celebrates its 50th anniversary

2012

futronic celebrates its 40th anniversary – on Lake Constance

New partnership with Forma Glas – and a successful start for the new Tableware division

2018

Wolfgang Lachmann, Managing Director Development & Technology, retires after some 30 years at futronic. Michael Preuss and Christian Benz take over at the helm

Even more shop floor capacity is created at futronic

2020

futronic invests in a photovoltaic system and charging points for employees' electric cars

Shoulder-to-shoulder success

futronic is celebrating its 50th birthday this year. Perhaps we would never have come this far if our company had not understood how important it is to always engage openly with potential cooperation partners, establish constructive networks (or at least loose ties) and seek shoulder-to-shoulder alliances. The anniversary is a good opportunity to pause for a moment, cast a look back and shine a spotlight on a few typical long-time companions – after all, those birthday candles are partly in their honour too.

Forma Glas, for example, has been one of futronic's closest cooperation partners for ten years now. Headquartered in Neukirchen, about an hour's drive north of Salzburg in Upper Austria, the company develops and manufactures high-end production machinery for premium quality tableware.

Stronger position in the tableware market

A decade ago, Forma Glas was on the lookout for a new, reliable and flexible technology partner. That was when they made acquaintance with futronic. The control system specialists got together with the Austrian firm to develop a completely new control concept for rotary blowing machines which, technically speaking, still form the heart of the successful cooperation to this day. "The agreement enabled futronic to significantly strengthen its position in the tableware market", recalls Stephan Pies, Head of Sales and responsible for all projects undertaken with Forma Glas.

First project as general contractor

Since signing their cooperation agreement, the two companies have realised a number of projects side by side. futronic has traditionally been responsible for the control systems and drives on behalf of the Austrian engineering firm – from glass cutting at the feeder to

the conveyor to the annealing lehr and from planning and design through software development and component manufacture to commissioning.

The partnership is a two-way street: a leading manufacturer of perfume bottles originally approached futronic in 2018 with an idea for a rotary fire polishing machine, including an extremely detailed sketch of a fire polishing conveyor consisting of rotating sections on which the glass containers are rotated past the burners. This constituted a novelty in that "it was the first time futronic had acted as general contractor for a project", Pies comments. The automation technology obviously came from Tettnang. The system design and the mechanical components, on the other hand, were outsourced by futronic to its partner Forma Glas in consultation with the customer.

Service package for GPS machines

Essen-based GPS Glasproduktions-Service GmbH likewise enjoyed a longstanding, trustful supplier relationship with futronic over a period of many years. Then, in 2018, the machinery specialist went bankrupt and was eventually wound up. Numerous glass manufacturers producing on IS machines from GPS were faced with serious problems as a result. Who



Much stronger position in the tableware market with Forma Glas



Licence agreement: manufactIS and futronic offer a customised service package to all former GPS customers





Digitalisation: Data plays a central role in the cooperation with Glaess

G L A E S S
Software & Automation



Committed to successful partnerships:
futronic's Head of Sales Stephan Pies and sales
engineer Murat Yolaçan

would now handle maintenance and repair of their equipment?

The futronic specialists know the machinery at the company's various plants like the back of their hand. And in any case, at the heart of most GPS machines is technology made in Tettnang. The previous owner, a major glass manufacturer with facilities in quite a few countries around the globe, therefore agreed a comprehensive service package with futronic, with benefits not only for the company's own machines but also for all former GPS customers (see the report in the futronic Journal 2019 for more details).

Comprehensive support worldwide

The licence agreement covers all repair and maintenance services – from failure analyses and troubleshooting to software management as well as the procurement of spare parts. "As service partner, we can offer all former GPS customers worldwide comprehensive support for the electrical part of the equipment", observes Murat Yolaçan, the sales engineer at futronic who was involved in the deal at the time.

manufactIS – worldwide licence to service

But what about the mechanical part of the GPS machines? That's taken care of by manufactIS, once again in the framework of an exclusive licence and cooperation agreement with the former owner. The company, which was founded by two former employees and meanwhile belongs to Ross, the American pneumatics specialist, has access to the drawings of GPS machines and components and is in possession of a worldwide licence to service them as well as a large warehouse for spare parts.

futronic and the founders of manufactIS know each other from the days of GPS, of course. And it naturally made sense for the two firms to enter into a partnership and pool their respective expertise. Unfortunately, though, along came Covid-19 before they'd had a chance to get going properly. The upshot: "We've yet

to realise our first project together", Yolaçan admits. Nevertheless, "everyone is aware that our shoulder-to-shoulder alliance will open up opportunities and potential from which both sides will profit immensely. Thanks to manufactIS, futronic will be in a position to diversify and offer not only the electrics, especially the controls and drives, but also the mechanics. And the same is obviously true in the opposite direction.

Digitalisation – Data as a raw material

A very special raw material – data – plays the leading role in our cooperation with Glaess Software & Automation. At home in nearby Weingarten, Glaess specialises in programming conventional PLCs and industrial robots and also designs bespoke solutions like control and visualisation systems as well as special apps. During the last several years, futronic has occasionally drawn on the know-how and capacity of these pros from Upper Swabia.

As automation specialists, it goes without saying that both futronic and Glaess have naturally devoted considerable attention to Industry 4.0 for a while now. As digital transformation gathers new momentum, the two companies are currently taking the next step in their collaboration. The idea: to concentrate know-how and synergies and implement specific customer projects. The aim is to secure a pole position for the company with respect to the digital transformation and develop sustainable automation solutions.

Glaess structures, analyses and harnesses data

In short, "We're good at capturing and collecting sensor data on the machine level and at sharing it via a suitable infrastructure", the Head of Sales explains. "However, what we can't do right now is structure and analyse the ever larger data volumes and evaluate and harness them based on relevant criteria." Other specialists are called for here – like Glaess. It's good to know you've got the right partners.

Logistician on the ball

Roland Althammer is what you might call the nerve centre of the warehouse and shipping. He joined futronic as an apprentice and seems to have found his destiny with us.



Roland is a true futronic home-grown. He came to us in September 2016 at the age of 19, forever with a mischievous grin on his face, his head full of ideas and dreaming of football. He embarked on a two-and-a-half-year traineeship as an Industrial Business Management Assistant with a higher-level qualification in "International Management with Foreign Languages". A native of Tettnang, he started off in Logistics and Materials Management. That evidently made a lasting impression on him. Although he subsequently did the rounds of various other departments as part of his compulsory

curriculum – including Purchasing, Human Resource Management, Order Processing and finally Accounts and Controlling – he's really more of a hands-on person, always on the move, as he says. Sitting still in the office is "not for me". It was clear very early on that he would stay with us on after completing his training. And also that he was keen to get back into material logistics and shipping. He feels he's in the right place there: he constantly gets to deal with people throughout the company – a wanderer between worlds, so to speak – and especially appreciates the diverse nature of

his work. He's currently back in the classroom, qualifying part-time as a certified foreman in logistics services. In future, our former apprentice will be in a position to train apprentices himself. Roland, 25 years old in the meantime, is more mature today and a great colleague, absolutely reliable and always up for a joke. He still dreams of football but in a different role. As a player, you can watch him every now and then in the district league. As a referee, however, he wants to aim higher: "Tier four or five would be quite something", he admits. We're confident he'll make the grade.

futronic inside



Two long-time companions say goodbye

You're always loath to let go of deserving employees. But sooner or later, their time at the company inevitably comes to an end. Two more long-time companions have now reached an age where it's time to step aside and take well-earned retirement. Bernhard Kubik was with futronic for almost 37 years and Johannes Dimmler for 38. Both of them had become part of the furniture, as it were, and it's fair to say that futronic would be a different company without them. At a small ceremony, Managing Director Michael Preuss thanked them for their outstanding service. He described it as "a good way to end", and, together with Head of Development Frank Ebersbach, wished Bernd Kubik and Johannes Dimmler (from left to right) all the best and plenty of time to relax as they embark on this new phase in their lives. He could not resist sharing a few anecdotes, which he punctuated with warm words and his inimitable sense of humour.



Nico Willert, trainee

futronic has been providing training to young people for many years. The emphasis is clearly on training in commercial and technical fields. We also offer an apprenticeship in warehouse logistics. Six young men and women are currently training with us. Our most recent newcomer is Nico Willert, who joined the company in September 2021 to become a trainee electronics technician for industrial engineering. 20 year-old Nico was born in Cottbus but grew up in Laimnau, not far from Tettnang. During a work experience placement at futronic, he discovered his penchant for electronics – for circuits and circuit boards, cables and wiring. A career involving that kind of thing appealed to him: "It's right up my street", as Nico puts it. There were no places available at the time, so he did an apprenticeship as a carpenter first. But for about a year now, he's been on board with us and we're very glad to have such an enthusiastic trainee on our payroll.

About this publication

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