

A master tinsmith to the court becomes world market leader: 125 years of Dürr

Bietigheim-Bissingen, March 5, 2021 – 125 years of innovation, thousands of patents and three generations of entrepreneurs: This year the Dürr Group celebrates an anniversary that is rare even in the Swabian industrial landscape, which is steeped in tradition. On June 4, 1896, Paul Dürr signed the registration of a business in Cannstatt. A few years later, his high-quality work earned him the title of ‘Master Tinsmith to the Court of Württemberg’. His son Otto early got involved in the series production of sheet metal parts. After the Second World War, Heinz Dürr and those accompanying him on his journey wrote a chapter in the history of the German economic miracle and created a world-renowned mechanical and plant engineering firm. Today, the Group is a leader in digital and resource-efficient production technology – e.g. for the automotive industry, furniture manufacture, or the production of turbines and medical technology.

“The future needs the past” is a quote by the philosopher Odo Marquard, which Heinz Dürr likes to apply to the company founded by his grandfather. As early as the 1960s, he had a Dürr magazine printed in order to explain to his employees where their company had come from and what goals it was pursuing. In the first issue, the then 34-year-old managing director prepared the roughly 1,300 employees for change and growth: “In a world of technology, the people who lose out are those who have increased their development, sales and production potential too little and too late.” Today, Heinz Dürr is Honorary Chairman of the Dürr AG Supervisory Board, and the quote still applies.

Continuing to explore new paths

Dürr’s history has been characterized by a passion for innovation and a willingness to explore new paths. Paul Dürr invested in modern machines early on, and just a few years after its foundation, his tinsmith business was regarded as particularly advanced. Before the Second World War, he had succeeded in turning his craft enterprise into a small industrial company with an engineering department. In 1950 he ventured into plant engineering, while the 1960s

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brought the first electrophoretic dip-coating plant for cars, the foundation of a foreign subsidiary in Brazil and entry into environmental technology. Later on, conveyor technology was added to the portfolio. In 1989 Dürr went public, using its proceeds to buy application technology specialist Behr and thus become the world market leader in painting technology. Around the turn of the millennium, Dürr began installing painting robots on a significant scale and acquired the measuring technology group Schenck. In 2008/2009 – in the middle of the financial crisis – investments were made to expand business in China. In 2014 Dürr made the surprise acquisition of a majority stake in the HOMAG Group. This world market leader in woodworking machinery has since become an important pillar of the Group. Most recently, the focus has been on investments in sustainable technologies: The acquisition of Megtec/Universal (2018) doubled the environmental technology business, and in 2020 the HOMAG Group expanded its business in production technology for eco-friendly timber houses. In addition, the HOMAG Group has strengthened its position in China through the full takeover of the sales joint venture HOMAG China Golden Field. The latest strategic development is the majority stake acquired in automation specialist Teamtechnik. This company, which has been part of the Dürr Group since February 2021, mainly offers testing technology for electric drives and production systems for medical technology.

Setting store by entrepreneurial spirit

CEO Ralf W. Dieter explains Dürr's adaptability as follows: "We set great store by entrepreneurial spirit, but this is not just a matter for management. We want our workforce of over 16,000 employees to act as entrepreneurs in the company. We trust their judgment and give them freedom." This also applies to digitalization – currently the most important trend that Dürr is shaping through new ideas. To be able to act more quickly, the company pools its software activities in a Digital Factory with flat hierarchies and agile processes. In 2019 Dürr received an award from RWTH Aachen University for its pioneering work in the use of artificial intelligence. Since 2017 the ADAMOS IoT network, which was co-founded by Dürr, has been supporting the digital transformation in the German mechanical and plant engineering industry.

The darker times of Dürr's history

In its 125-year history the company has also experienced difficult and darker times. In the first few decades, it was at risk of insolvency several times. During National Socialism, Dürr and its roughly 80 employees were involved in the state's arms industry. In the Second World War, forced laborers were used in production. Dürr is confronting the past, with historians delving into and shedding light upon its history. The company also contributes to the compensation fund of the 'Remembrance, Responsibility and Future' foundation.

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In the early 2000s, the company had to bring down its high debts; this was achieved, among other things, by selling parts of the company outside the core business. The Group emerged well from the 2008/2009 financial crisis since it had implemented many internal improvement measures in previous years. Although it lost substantial amounts of business during the coronavirus crisis, its good financial situation and high liquidity have ensured stability.

125 years of 'Engineering Passion'

The celebrations in the anniversary year of 2021 are based on the motto '125 Years of Engineering Passion'. On its [website](#), the Group looks back at its company history, for instance via an interactive timeline, historical rebus puzzles, videos and a feature entitled 'Dive into the Archive', where readers can browse through records from the German Empire and old customer lists, among other things. During 2021 new content about the company's history will be continually added here.

An anniversary event with customers and those who have been part of the journey is planned for November – if the coronavirus situation allows. A book on the company's 125-year history will also be presented at this event. There will be celebrations in Germany and abroad for the employees to whom the Dürr Group owes its market success today.

Images for this press release can be found [here](#).

The Dürr Group is one of the world's leading mechanical and plant engineering firms with extensive expertise in automation and digitalization/Industry 4.0. Its products, systems and services enable highly efficient and resource-saving manufacturing processes in different industries. The Dürr Group supplies sectors like the automotive industry, mechanical engineering, chemical, pharmaceutical, medical technology and woodworking industries. It generated sales of € 3.32 billion in 2020. The company has more than 17,000 employees and 120 business locations in 33 countries. Since February 2021, the majority-owned automation specialist Teamtechnik has also been part of the Group. The Group operates in the market with the brands Dürr, Schenck and HOMAG and with five divisions:

- **Paint and Final Assembly Systems:** paint shops as well as final assembly, testing and filling technology for the automotive industry, assembly and test systems for medical devices
- **Application Technology:** robot technologies for the automated application of paint, sealants and adhesives
- **Clean Technology Systems:** air pollution control, noise abatement systems and coating systems for battery electrodes
- **Measuring and Process Systems:** balancing equipment and diagnostic technology
- **Woodworking Machinery and Systems:** machinery and equipment for the woodworking industry

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