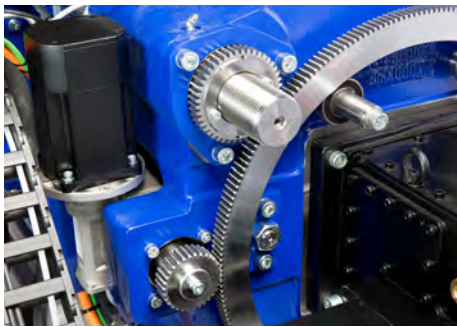


innovations

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Wittmann



Detail of the drive of an *EcoPower* machine from WITTMANN BATTENFELD.

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WITTMANN TECHNOLOGY GMBH

Lichtblaustrasse 10
1220 Vienna
AUSTRIA
tel.: +43 1 250 39-0
info.at@wittmann-group.com
www.wittmann-group.com

WITTMANN BATTENFELD INC.

1 Technology Park Drive
Torrington, CT 06790
USA
tel.: +1 860 496 9603
info.us@wittmann-group.com
www.wittmann-group.com

WITTMANN ROBOT (KUNSHAN) CO. LTD.

No. 1 Wittmann Rd., DianShanHu Town
Kunshan City, Jiangsu Province
215245 CHINA
tel.: +86 512 5748 3388
info@wittmann-group.cn
www.wittmann-group.com

WITTMANN BATTENFELD GMBH

Wiener Neustädter Strasse 81
2542 Kottingbrunn
AUSTRIA
tel.: +43 2252 404-0
info@wittmann-group.com
www.wittmann-group.com

Editorial

Dear Reader,

Following all the upheavals of recent years I had really expected a somewhat calmer year in 2021. After all, the vaccine against the Corona virus just invented at the beginning of



the year promised a foreseeable end to the pandemic. The economy was also running again at full steam. But it turned out to be just as eventful a year as 2020 – only in a different way.

This time, our problems were not so much caused by the pandemic itself, but rather by non-availability of components, especially electronic parts.

Thanks to the great effort put forth by our teams, however, we were able to procure innumerable items missing from our supply chain just in the nick of time, and thus carry out our deliveries on schedule (or according to special agreement with our customers) in spite of all difficulties. Yet instead of easing

off, as we had hoped, these challenges increased as the year went by. To our regret, we still cannot see any signs of the material supply situation improving in the near future. But in spite of all challenges, our Group has mastered

the year 2021 very well. Even though the shortage of components “put the brakes” on our production for most of the year, we have achieved our third highest annual sales figures. Our order backlog is still on a record level, which will keep us busy for a good part of the New Year.

We experienced a stronger touch of normality this year at the few trade fairs which took place in autumn and barely escaped falling victim to the most recent Corona wave. One special highlight which deserves to be mentioned is the Fakuma, which can actually be considered as a test run for future trade fair events addressed to a somewhat more international audience.

This is particularly important, since another K trade fair is scheduled to be held in Düsseldorf next year. This event targets a much more international audience than Fakuma and is consequently more susceptible to travel restrictions that could result from the Corona pandemic.

Although the numbers of visitors coming to trade fairs will be reduced due to Corona, we will be present at the K 2022 with more than 1,800 m² of exhibition area. Sufficient space to present to you the many innovations we have prepared in terms of intelligent machines and appliances, fully integrated work cells, energy efficiency and circular economy.

At any rate, 2022 promises to become an exciting but also challenging year. We look forward to the New Year with great optimism.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank all our associates for their great commitment and dedication, and our partners for the very successful business performance in 2021.

Yours, Michael Wittmann

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The automobile industry is breaking new ground

Future mobility will be vastly different from today's and will present many suppliers with greater and greater challenges. "We improve materials, processes and technologies with a constant focus on ecological and economic sustainability in order to master these challenges", says Renato Mutti of the Italian Oldrati Group in an interview. – With the WITTMANN Group, Oldrati has certainly found a strong, competent partner.

Andrea Selva

Since 1964, the company Oldrati based in Brescia has been engaged in manufacturing technical components made from natural rubber, silicone and engineering polymers, which are used in various sectors of industry ranging from household appliances to the automobile industry, from baby care products to sports equipment and much more.

Over the years, this company has combined all processing steps under its own roof: injection molding processes as well as mold making, extrusion, assembly and finishing. Today, the Oldrati Group is an international player with 11 production plants on three continents, 1,600 associates and 155 million euros in sales. Continuous further development of the group is proceeding by way of ongoing integration of high-tech companies and increasing internationalization.

Following a phase of declining production, accompanied by a certain amount of caution towards investments in new projects – which set in more than six months prior to the beginning of the pandemic – the automotive sector has now undoubtedly been experiencing an upturn for several months, which is shared by many of the most important manufacturers. This is how the current situation is outlined by Renato Mutti, General Manager of the Oldrati Group's Hightech Polymers Division in Villongo (Bergamo).

"After a phase of great uncertainty during past years, the fact that there is now more clarity about the development of electrical and hybrid drive systems has contributed to restoring a certain amount of stability. The sector seems to have been changing over a prolonged period of time.



Renato Mutti, Oldrati Polymers Division:

"There is absolutely no lack of plastics processors on the market, which is why it is so important for us to stand out against the crowd and to rely on new technologies, in order to escape from mere price competition."

This development will require extensive investments in the technologies, with a strong focus on a low environmental impact, adaptation of older models and the development of new vehicles", says Renato Mutti. "I expect that we will experience a phase in which the major producers will be forced to become much more open minded towards the proponents of new technologies, whose ideas should be integrated into the production processes. The readiness to finance innovative start-ups in the areas of new materials, weight reduction and autonomous driving will also increase."

Andrea Selva: What will be the role of your group in this context?

Renato Mutti: We are primarily – but not only – a processing company. Our task, too, is to offer advanced and innovative solutions tailored to fit our customers' needs. In the automotive sector, for instance, the sensitivity towards the issues of weight reduction, cutting of fuel consumption and lowering of emissions has increased considerably. On the industrial level, this makes it necessary to rethink numerous production technologies as well as the design of components and materials, which will have an enormous effect on the entire structure of a vehicle, with a subsequent influence on the process and cost of homologation. It is not unusual for us to exchange views with major suppliers and to suggest alternatives providing a better technical solution and stabilization of cost development, since it must also be considered that our injection molded parts are often built into complex assemblies. There is absolutely no lack of plastics processors on the market, which is why it is important for us to stand out against the crowd and to rely on new technologies, in order to escape from mere price competition. The way towards reducing the environmental impact requires extensive investments, a necessity which must be accepted. Anyone wishing to play a major part in this process of change must be ready to differentiate. This is why we have decided to apply this approach to organizing our supply network, too, and have selected partners over the years, who complement us with their competencies and are eager to launch innovations.



Oldrati injection molding production in Villongo, Bergamo: WITTMANN BATTENFELD injection molding machines with automation equipment from WITTMANN as far as the eye can see.

Which production technologies do you suggest to meet the need for saving time and reducing emissions?

For example, injection molding with one-shot technology, which enables shorter production times and substantial energy savings by reducing or even completely dispensing with further assembly steps. We possess advanced knowledge in many technologies and have repeatedly succeeded in arousing great interest. This kind of approach has prompted us in past years to believe firmly in innovative solutions which are perceived as potential economic advantages by automobile manufacturers and which, in addition to saving energy, also contribute to reducing emissions in the overall calculation of automobile production. Of course we take the same innovative approach in all sectors in which we are active. In 2018, we introduced at an international trade fair in cooperation with one of our partners, a manufacturer of molding machines, a

project which we had developed for a major customer from the medical industry. The task was to completely redesign a pediatric nasal rinsing device, which had previously been manufactured by separate molding of polycarbonate and thermoplastics on two machines. Our suggestion was to replace the thermoplastic material with liquid silicone in medical quality, to improve not only its performance but also its tactile perception and visual attractiveness. With due consideration of the necessary cooling and heating processes, we then designed a mold which is suitable for the injection of both plastics and silicone. The success of the resulting product has confirmed to us that we are on the right track.

Can this concept also be applied to the automotive sector?

Definitely. Starting with lighting technology, a sub-sector which is also undergoing radical changes and has first developed in

the direction of LED technology and then towards laser technology. Here, automobile manufacturers are making investments, because these technologies have a significant influence on passive vehicle safety. In addition to developing new components, it is necessary to integrate special circuit boards in the engine compartment or in the trunk to control this type of lighting, which is more and more in line with the state of the art, including the ability of the lighting to vary with the movement of the vehicle or changes in the external environment.

What new solutions are you developing right now?

In the field of lighting technology, we are currently working on a project in which a metal part is to be replaced by a high-performance plastic material, and simultaneously the sealing device is to be integrated in the plastic part. In a single step, this solution not only reduces the

part's weight, but also dispenses with downstream assembly of its components. Concerning the benefit, our idea has made it possible to produce a lighter component consisting completely of plastics, on which the sealing element is overmolded – which also improves its tightness. But this is not all. The combination of all production steps into a single process leads to a substantial reduction of emissions and energy consumption by up to 30%. Production of all components at the same facility also brings about a reduction in flows of goods and cargo handling, thus simplifying logistics, which means a further reduction in the environmental impact.

How do material shortages and material prices affect your core markets?

Raw materials are definitely scarce, and the prices of available materials are virtually non-negotiable. This is a difficult situation, which has caused many discussions but not yet been met by targeted actions, and which puts especially processors at a disadvantage, because they are unable to shoulder the burden alone of acting as a buffer between raw material suppliers and customers. Currently, there is still a great imbalance. In petrochemistry, at present characterized by a strong oligopoly, an attempt is being made to improve margins via the quantities. The global demand is under pressure. In Europe, this is primarily felt in the form of delays in deliveries, but in reality, America and, above all, Asia are absorbing a major proportion of the available materials on the market, which is also causing a disruption of the traditional dynamism in global logistics. All these factors are aggravating the crisis, forcing many manufacturers to slow down their production and to reduce quantities, because they are short of the necessary components and raw materials. Thanks to meticulous care on all levels, we are mastering the situation with suppliers and customers in a spirit of partnership – thanks to our close business relationships consolidated over many years, we have managed to mitigate the effects to a certain extent.

Do you think that this special situation could bring about long-term changes?

I believe that major restructuring may take place, such as an extension of production capacities and simultaneous creation of sub-global economic flows.

Globalization will definitely not come to a stop, but a certain volume could come back to Europe, at least to the extent of bringing some flows back into balance. This trend has already been observable for several months.

What effect is the market situation having on your own investments?

The investments are being continued in spite of the present difficulties. This certainly applies to our projects in the areas of multi-material molding, technology and machinery, but we also attach great importance to projects to improve specific abilities of our staff members, the real key element of innovation. Accordingly, we offer our associates specific training programs and Master's degree programs every year in order to develop the mindsets of all our corporate staff members not only in the areas of research and production, but also in the fields of organization and decision-making. A good example to illustrate this strategy is our new measurement lab: on an area of more than 300 square meters, a development center for new technologies is currently being established, where all specialists will come together to work with more synergy effects.

And how are your production facilities organized in terms of digitization?

At Oldrati, the digitization process had already started long before the 4.0 paradigm appeared on the horizon, and we are fully meeting the goals of the Digital Agenda for Europe in this respect. In recent months, we have also worked hard on implementing IT security concepts. We know that data are increasingly becoming the cornerstone of every business. But at the same time, we are also aware of the fact that with increasing networking, companies are becoming more and more a potential target for attacks from outside. In view of new computer generations, fire-wall developers are also under obligation to redesign their products. This is why we are very cautious in our decision-making, although we are convinced that we are moving in the right direction, since innovation and security must go hand in hand.

What is your approach to the sustainability concept?

We experience every day that certain decisions in this area that we have made in the past are actually proving to be



effective. Several weeks ago, we were invited in connection with the EU funding instrument Horizon 2020 to take part in a project targeting digitization and sustainability, where we will test solutions for intelligent energy management in production plants using computer-assisted systems. The aim is to promote the integration of renewable energy and to achieve a very detailed allocation of consumption peaks. We are currently evaluating our participation, but I think that this is another piece of evidence for the reputation we are building for our company in this area. We were deliberately chosen because we were meeting the requirements for this project. The project as such is looking for corporate profiles in the international chemistry sector which demonstrate advanced experience in using clean energy.

Andrea Selva writes for the Italian trade magazine "Plastix", where the article reprinted here was first published in the September 2021 issue.



Oldrati has developed a molding process with one-shot technology for parts consisting of thermoplastics combined with silicone, including specially designed molds suitable for the necessary heating and cooling processes. This picture shows a working cell from the WITTMANN Group.

Pictures right and left page: The new measurement lab has been established as a development center for new technologies where specialists in various fields meet and cooperate to exploit synergies.



Environmental award for a Hayco production plant in the Dominican Republic

The new "Donald Espie Hay Building", opened by Hayco in the Las Americas Free Zone Park in Santo Domingo Este in the Dominican Republic in 2017, has been awarded the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) platinum certificate by the USGBC (the US Green Building Council). One deciding factor in this success story was the significant amount of energy savings achieved by the use of injection molding lines with "Drive-on-Demand" from WITTMANN BATTENFELD.

Gabriele Hopf

Hayco, based in Hong Kong, is a globally leading manufacturer of durable consumer goods for daily use, which has been successfully operating three production sites in China for more than 35 years. In 2015, Hayco decided to establish a production plant in the Dominican Republic to optimize its deliveries to the USA and Europe.

Right from the start in August 2016, this building project in Santo Domingo Este was planned according to the standards of the LEED Initiative.

Donald Hay, founder of Hayco, personally committed himself to take actions as specified by the LEED Initiative in planning and constructing the production facility. So it was also an obvious choice to give his name to the building, where 2,000 people are now employed.

The most important contributing factors to winning the LEED platinum certificate were:

- Local procurement of building materials.
- 40 per cent reduction in electricity consumption by using injection molding machines from WITTMANN BATTENFELD.
- Installation and complete use of 1.5 MW solar electricity generated on the roof of the building.

- Substantial cuts in energy and water consumption by using water technology with low flow rates and adjustable LED lighting.
- Covering of green areas with native plants, which need no watering.
- Use of public transport by company staff.

The Hayco Donald Espie Hay Building is equipped with servo-hydraulic molding machines from the *SmartPower* series and large machines from the *MacroPower* series, as well as robots, auxiliary appliances and a central materials handling system from the WITTMANN Group. A total of 82 injection molding machines are installed in the Donald Espie Hay Building.

"Drive-on-Demand"

Apart from their compactness and user-friendliness, the servo-hydraulic machines from WITTMANN BATTENFELD stand out above all by their intelligent, economical use of energy.

Their high level of energy efficiency is primarily due to the combination of a fast-response, speed-controlled, air-cooled servo motor with a robust fixed displacement pump, known as the "Drive-on-Demand" system. "Drive-on-Demand" means that the drive unit is only activated as long as re-

quired for movements and pressure generation. During cooling times and cycle breaks for parts handling, the servo drive remains switched off and consumes no energy. In operation, "Drive-on-Demand" is the basis for highly dynamic control of machine movements and minimized cycle times.

This results in a high standard of regulation accuracy combined with improved repeatability and time savings in axis movements. "Drive-on-Demand" achieves in a demonstrably lower energy consumption compared to systems using servo-controlled, dual-circuit pump technology or electrohydraulic drives.

Christopher Hay, CEO of the Hayco Group, is proud of his company having won the LEED platinum certificate for the Donald Espie Hay Building. "Hayco is one of only five manufacturing facilities in all of Mexico, South and Central America to have received this award", he says, and continues: "Hayco has set itself the goal of being a leading company in the area of sustainable production, hoping by this example to encourage other production companies to construct sustainable buildings." WITTMANN BATTENFELD shares Hayco's happiness and warmly congratulates them on their success.

Gabriele Hopf is the Marketing Manager of WITTMANN BATTENFELD in Kottlingbrunn, Lower Austria.



Injection molding machines from WITTMANN BATTENFELD in the Donald Espie Hay Building. (Photos: Hayco)



View of the new Hayco-owned Donald Espie Hay Building in Santo Domingo Este, Dominican Republic.



The project team responsible for planning and implementing the measures in accordance with LEED Initiative standards.

Keeping the rodents under control with robots from the WITTMANN Group

Leading manufacturer of rodent control products, Bell Laboratories, Inc. in Wisconsin employs WITTMANN robots to reduce cycle times and increase output.

Chris Unseth

Since COVID-19 appeared over a year ago, one problem that hasn't received much attention is a rather unpleasant one: the increase in rodent populations in urban and suburban neighborhoods.

The problem has not gone unnoticed for Bell Laboratories, Inc., a molder of rodent control products in Windsor, Wisconsin; the company has seen sales increase over 20% in the past year due to increased demand for its products.

Jim Walsh, a designer/injection molding process engineer for Bell Labs, says: "Last March, when restaurants shut down across the country due to the pandemic, rodents lost their #1 food supply from restaurant waste in dumpsters. So, they went out looking for food, and neighborhoods started seeing much higher rodent populations."

With this increased demand for its products, which include rodent bait stations, mechanical traps and more, Bell Laboratories turned to WITTMANN BATTENFELD, Inc., the US subsidiary of the WITTMANN Group, to help them better automate their molding processes.

Less downtime, higher productivity

In business since 1974, Bell Labs has over 500 employees and sells its products in over 60 countries. They manufacture their products at their two facilities in Madison and Windsor, Wisconsin and distribute directly to the rodent control industry (professionals, agricultural users and to consumers).

They run 26 molding machines ranging in size from 110 to 600 tons. Most of their products are molded with recycled PP or PS.

Since they first decided to try automation in 2014, when they purchased their first WITTMANN product (a WITTMANN sprue picker), the company has gone all-in on WITTMANN robots. They now employ 15 WITTMANN robots and are looking at purchasing more.

"When we started with the WITTMANN company, we thought one sprue picker would be simply all that we needed", says Jim Walsh. "We used it on a couple of our single-cavity cold runner molds, and while it did solve some of our part removal and placement issues, we realized fairly quickly that we needed more sophisticated robots to work with our multi-cavity hot runner molds."

After switching from sprue pickers to WITTMANN robots, the company saw dramatic improvements. "We were having issues with parts sticking in the molds and not dropping out at ejection", says Walsh. "Also, we were seeing parts breaking at the living hinges when dropped onto conveyors. The robots have solved these problems, and more."

Besides realizing faster cycle times due to better part removal, the robots have saved on tool wear due to one ejection cycle instead of three or four due to stuck parts. Also, the robots have saved on downtime due to tool repairs caused by the mold closing on stuck parts.

Additional benefits

Other functions that Bell Labs uses its WITTMANN robots for include stacking and closing very small mouse bait stations, a func-

tion that used to be done by machine operators; and counting the parts dropping into totes.

Another key feature of the WITTMANN robots is their ease of programming, says Walsh. "We really find these robots very easy to program and the programs are easy to customize to work on different molding machines and molds", he says. He also mentioned a unique WITTMANN feature, a manifold with tubes that allows for easy greasing of key robot points. "This makes it easy and painless to maintain the robots", he says.

The latest WITTMANN robot that was acquired and installed at Bell Labs is a W833 model, which runs on a large 560-ton machine. This robot features a telescoping Y-axis, which allows clearance of the overhead crane that is positioned on the ceiling above the machine.

More rodents, more robots

Bell Labs is currently in discussions with WITTMANN on purchasing additional robots. The company is specifically looking at adding more W833 robots for their larger machines.

"Our operators understand how to work with these robots and are very comfortable with them", says Walsh. "As our business continues to grow, we will certainly continue working with WITTMANN to help us with our automation needs."

Chris Unseth is Midwest Regional Sales Manager IMM & Robots of WITTMANN BATTENFELD, Inc., the US subsidiary of the WITTMANN Group.



Production floor of Bell Laboratories, Inc., Wisconsin, USA, showing the company's WITTMANN robots in operation.



Bell Laboratories products: "Tomcat" brand mouse trap, and "T-Rex" rat traps.

Intermediate result at Jesco Molding: 2.5 million cycles and counting – without a glitch

Jesco Molding from the US uses PRIMUS robots from the WITTMANN Group for cost savings, better accuracy, and improved efficiency.

Mike Formella

Based in Salt Lake City, Utah, Jesco Molding is a custom molder producing a wide variety of parts ranging from dental devices to pool and spa parts, sporting goods and industrial supplies.

Founded in 1979 as a tool and die maker, Jesco eventually grew into a custom molder with 11 machines and \$3 million in annual sales. Jesco has a sister company, PMI Mold Making, that builds and maintains injection molds.

For a small molder Jesco is extremely productive; the company employs 10 but has approximately 70 customers and produces over 250 types of parts. A few years ago, the company decided to make their first foray into automation by adding their first robot, a WITTMANN PRIMUS 14, to their operations. The results have been outstanding; their first PRIMUS robot, bought off the show floor at NPE 2018, has run over 2.5 million cycles and counting, without a glitch.

Manpower challenges

Like most companies in the industry, Jesco struggles to find employees. Their difficulty in finding help led them to explore integrating robots and automation into their operations. At NPE 2018 in Orlando, a visit to the WITTMANN BATTENFELD booth resulted in their first robot purchase.

"The WITTMANN robot that Jesco bought off the show floor was the first PRIMUS sold in the USA", says Jason Long, WITTMANN BATTENFELD's National Sales Manager Robots & Automation. "The PRIMUS was new

at the time, and it's our most cost-efficient robot for pick-and-place applications. It's safe to say that with over 2.5 million cycles and counting, the PRIMUS has exceeded all of Jesco's expectations."

Improved accuracy

James Schoudele, Vice President at Jesco, says that the PRIMUS robot helped the company achieve better accuracy in its molding operations, and create a win-win situation for its employees. "We worked with WITTMANN to help us design the best way to integrate the new robot into our dental device molding cell", he says. "We also had a custom end-of-arm-tool (EOAT) designed by Richard Savage. By adding a cavity separation station and cycle count program, we were able to produce and pack the parts more consistently."

The integration of the PRIMUS robot allowed Jesco to increase throughput on the dental device, improve accuracy, and free up manpower to focus on other projects.

"We quickly saw we could achieve better and more accurate part production because of the robot", says Schoudele. "This allowed us to give our employees more money, as they were freed up to do other things."

Low price – high technology

While the PRIMUS is WITTMANN's lowest cost robot, it is packed with high technology features. Since their purchase of their first PRIMUS in 2018, Jesco has bought a second one and also a more advanced W818 robot

to further automate their operations. "The robots are fantastic, maintenance is minimal, and WITTMANN's support has been excellent", says Schoudele. "The PRIMUS is by no means an 'economy' type of robot. The teach program is very easy to use and allows us to write programs in a few simple steps, and WITTMANN is always there to help answer any questions we may have."

An automated future

With the new WITTMANN W818 robot coming soon to Jesco, the company will continue its move to further integrate automation and reduce operator parts handling. "Hand touching always add a variable to the part run", says Schoudele. "We are looking at a more complete automation pack-out to ensure our customers get the highest quality products that they deserve."

Andrew Rajkovich, Owner of Ponderosa Plastics Equipment LLC and the WITTMANN BATTENFELD sales representative for Jesco, feels that Jesco's success is sort of a triumph for the company. "By being the first US company to purchase the PRIMUS robot, and their first-ever robot at that, Jesco took a chance that has worked out extremely well for them," he says. "They are now confident, because they have seen the results, that robotics and automation can help them improve their operations."

Mike Formella is West Coast Regional Director of WITTMANN BATTENFELD, Inc., the US subsidiary of the WITTMANN Group.



The WITTMANN PRIMUS robot separates cavities, counts and packs dental parts into bags for shipping.

Jesco Vice President, James Schoudel (left), and WITTMANN sales representative Andrew Rajkovich stand in front of the molding cell with the PRIMUS robot.



Change of the management at WITTMANN BATTENFELD Spain S.L.

The two long-standing Managing Directors of WITTMANN BATTENFELD Spain in La Pobla de Claramunt near Barcelona, Jordi Farres and Merce Margarit have retired September 30, 2021. Effective 1 October, the company's general management was taken over by Salvador Gracia, who previously held the position of Strategic Finance Manager.



Dr. Werner Wittmann (right) thanks Merce Margarit and Jordi Farres for their many years of successful management of WITTMANN BATTENFELD Spain.



Salvador Gracia took over the management of WITTMANN BATTENFELD Spain S.L. as of 1 October 2021.

The cooperation between the founder of the WITTMANN Group, Dr. Werner Wittmann, and the two Managing Directors of WITTMANN BATTENFELD Spain, Jordi Farres and Merce Margarit goes back all the way to the late 1980s, when the company then trading as WITTMANN Kunststoffgeräte GmbH sold flow controllers to the Spanish machine manufacturer Margarit.

Later on, Margarit established Deaplast as an independent company responsible for the sale of auxiliary appliances, including flow controllers and temperature controllers from WITTMANN.

In 1990, the loose cooperation between WITTMANN and Margarit, alias Deaplast, was firmly established by an official agency contract. As a further step, Deaplast was taken over by WITTMANN in the year 1992,

and both members of the Deaplast management duo were appointed Managing Directors of the new company WITTMANN Robot System S.L.

The Spanish management team has proved successful to this day, and they have seen innumerable spurts of growth over the many years.

These include the continuous growth of WITTMANN in the Spanish market, the Group's extension of its product portfolio, and finally the integration of BATTENFELD Iberica.

Today's company, now trading as WITTMANN BATTENFELD Spain S.L., employs 38 staff members and is also in charge of managing the Technofrias agency for the Portuguese market. With a powerful team of very experienced technical experts, the

Spanish market has been and still is being continuously further developed. Salvador Gracia was recruited in 2008 to strengthen the team further, and he has earned an excellent reputation as Strategic Financial Manager.

Since the middle of 2020, Gracia has been allowed to prepare himself for his new position of Managing Director, and meanwhile he has been getting more involved in the company's operative business.

On 1 October, he took over a highly motivated, long-established team. Among others, he will be supported by Yoel Vaca, Sales Director, and Jorge Molpeceres as Technical Director.

Together, they are determined to further advance the growth of the WITTMANN Group on the Iberian peninsula.

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