

Press release

Friedhelm Loh Group

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Portrait of a visionary: Dr. Friedhelm Loh at 70

A powerful motivator and a hard worker: On the 70th birthday of Dr. Friedhelm Loh

The Friedhelm Loh Group's success story is inextricably linked with its owner, and not only in terms of its name. It is the story of a passionate entrepreneur who has inspired his industry, motivated his employees and committed himself to the people in the region. The family entrepreneur's trademark and aim is to be ahead of his time and to influence the times he lives in. Today, Dr. Friedhelm Loh is 70 years old, and it is fitting to celebrate and look back.

Herborn, 16 August 2016. When 28-year-old Friedhelm Loh followed in his father Rudolf's footsteps, his personnel number was 181. Today, on his 70th birthday, he has inspired and influenced the electronics industry both nationally and internationally. With a fine instinct for trends and tendencies, he established the idea of standardisation in control and switchgear manufacturing; he went to India, China and the rest of the world as one of the first medium-sized entrepreneurs, and he is now promoting digital transformation more than anybody else – within his own company and within the industry. He is a standard setter with his social commitment and lives up to his responsibility as an entrepreneur while others are just talkers. His driving forces are courage, his willingness to work and his faith.

It all began in 1961 with the vision of a pioneer and with four enclosures made of sheet steel. The entrepreneur Rudolf Loh and his wife Irene founded the Rudolf Loh KG, which was later to be renamed Rittal, after its location at Rittershausen in Dietzhöhlztal. Their three children also got quickly involved: "When the first small factory building was being built, we children cleaned off

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the plaster from the old bricks”, Dr. Loh once recalled. A revolutionary idea would quickly result from his father’s clever idea: Mass-producing enclosures for the electrical control systems in mechanical and plant engineering, and then delivering them from stock. Demand for the standardised enclosures increased very quickly, the company grew and made a name for itself beyond the borders of Hesse. In 1974, the 28-year-old Friedhelm Loh took charge of the company’s fortune.

Forging a global brand from a start-up company

Forty years later, Rittal – with its enclosures and climate control systems – is a world leader in control and switchgear manufacturing, employing over 10,000 people and forming part of the Friedhelm Loh Group. The Group is internationally successful. It is not only known for its high-quality products but also for its trend-setting technologies. While the idea of standardisation had at first been ridiculed, it was to revolutionise international control and switchgear manufacturing within just a few years. Nowadays, Rittal products are used in all lines of business such as car manufacturing, machine and plant construction, IT and telecommunications, the chemical or food industries and in energy technology.

This is partly because Dr. Friedhelm Loh has not been complacent about his success with standardised enclosures. “Standstill means retreat”, is one saying the entrepreneur has often used. Instead of individual or bayed enclosures enclosures, customers can now equip their factories with complete systems from Rittal. The highly sensitive control electronics for machines and production lines is protected in enclosures that are resistant to heat, dust and water, and powered by intelligent power distribution systems with climate control provided by cooling units. The enclosures are available in earthquake-proof versions for use in the most far-flung

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parts of the world or for microbe-free applications in the food industry. There are also software solutions, IT racks and entire data centres, which the company supplies to Microsoft and Facebook, as well as to banks, industrial businesses or hospitals for instance.

Recognising trends and discovering opportunities

Steel and plastic are used at Rittal. Therefore it was only logical for Dr. Loh, the busy entrepreneur, to expand the Friedhelm Loh Group's value chain by adding the Stahlo steel service centre and the plastics specialist LKH.

Today, only a minority of the goods supplied and manufactured by Stahlo and LKH are used by the companies of the Friedhelm Loh Group; their trade has expanded to meet the demands of well-known car manufacturers or the construction industry.

The fact that IT and software have always fascinated the passionate entrepreneur as future technologies was demonstrated by his early entry into digital electrical planning. At a time when the symbiosis of IT and industry was still in its infancy, Dr. Loh got involved in Eplan, a software specialist. 1986 therefore marked the beginning of the digitization of enclosure controls. Today, electronic equipment planning is just as important as the real product. In fact, it plays the lead role in the value chain of the Friedhelm Loh Group and its customers: Its enclosures made of steel only exist because their data pass all process – from engineering, manufacturing and machining, through to commercial processes. Starting with just three employees, Eplan and Cideon have grown rapidly and now have a workforce of more than 1,100 people under the umbrella of Rittal Software Systems. Now, one in ten employees at Rittal is a software engineer.

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Recognition from industry, business and politics

With his good contacts in trade bodies, politics and business, he has shaped social change: “His voice is clear, audible, and it is listened to – even in the world of politics!” says the managing partner of the connector manufacturer Walter Mennekes, who has followed the birthday boy on his path for many years. When Friedhelm Loh retired two years ago after completing his eight-year presidency of the ZVEI (German Electrical and Electronic Manufacturers’ Association), it became clear that the association did not want to do without Dr. Friedhelm Loh, and so appointed him Honorary President for life. Joe Kaeser, Chief Executive Officer of Siemens, emphasised Loh’s contribution to the German electrical industry and saluted his call for speed in structuring social change: “If you stand still, you will be overtaken.”

“Inquisitive creators and initiators like you make us confident that we can master the challenges to come”, Dr. Klaus Mittelbach, CEO of the ZVEI said recently at the ceremony to confer Friedhelm Loh with an honorary doctorate from the Technical University of Chemnitz. And at this year’s Hanover Fair, US President Barack Obama provided a succinct assessment of the company created by Dr. Loh and his staff – “This is a fine company!”

A doer who has helped to shape change

Knowledge, skills and deeds – Dr. Friedhelm Loh has made this trinity his goal. The then 55 year-old decided to found the Loh Academy based on the firm belief that education and lifelong learning form the basis for work and thus for a fulfilling life. Meanwhile, more than 2,400 employees now take part in training every year. Dr. Loh has also been instrumental in founding Studium Plus, a sandwich course programme, and invests approx. 10

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million euros every year in training and further education of its employees.

Providing work as the basis for a fulfilling life

Wherever he appears, he stands out through his exceptional social commitment. In addition to supporting numerous social and Christian institutions within the region, Dr. Loh continually brings dynamism through his Christian identity and his willingness to assume responsibility: “We are the largest employer in the region and must make a difference in the community in which we live and work”, he says. One more reason to look back in gratitude for his parents, family and all the good work of his employees.

In spring 2015, he launched a ground-breaking pilot project to train refugees. As one of the first companies in Germany, the Friedhelm Loh Group is providing young refugees with well-structured internship and training opportunities. The project is now a model for many integration initiatives, And it was only consistent for Dr. Loh to create an endowment chair “Refuge and Asylum” at the International YMCA University of Applied Sciences (IYU) in Kassel, Germany.

“You are a doer to the core who has helped to bring about change”, summarised Dr. Markus Kerber, President of the Federation of German Industries (BDI): “Where others see risks, you can recognise opportunities.” Anyone looking for further proof for this will find it here: Dr. Friedhelm Loh has just decided that Rittal will invest €250 million in the re-orientation and digitalisation of its manufacturing environment in Germany and that Stahlo is to invest €30m in a new Steel Service Centre in East Germany – the largest investment in the company's history!

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Caption(s)



Firma Dateiname.jpg: Dr. Friedhelm Loh at 70: He has inspired and influenced the electronics industry both in Germany and abroad. With his fine instinct for trends and developments, he has been driving digital transformation forward more than almost anyone else, both within his own company and within the industry. He is a standard setter with his social commitment, while others are just talkers. His driving forces are courage, his willingness to work and his faith.

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Friedhelm Loh Group

A global player, the Friedhelm Loh Group (F.L.G.) invents, develops, and makes made-to-measure products and integrated solutions for manufacturers, distributors and other businesses. Member companies of the Group lead their respective industries in innovation and quality. They include the world's leading provider of modular platforms for enclosures, power distribution, climate control and IT infrastructure

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(Rittal); Europe's number one supplier of software solutions for plant engineering, general engineering, and manufacturing; and a specialist in integrated manufacturing with state-of-the-art materials – steel, aluminium, and plastics.

The family-owned company maintains a worldwide presence, with 18 production sites and 78 subsidiaries. Managed by founder Dr. Friedhelm Loh himself, the Group employs over 11,500 people and generated revenues of approximately €2.2 billion in 2015. It was named one of Germany's Top Employers in 2016, for the eighth year in a row. Within the scope of a Germany-wide survey, Focus Money magazine identified the Friedhelm Loh Group as one of the nation's best providers of vocational training.

For more information, visit www.friedhelm-loh-group.com.