It is with pride and joy – and a measure of humbleness, too – that we’re celebrating the 75th anniversary of our company. An occasion to pause and look back? Yes!

It’s a pleasure to take this opportunity to pause and look back – in particular, to pay tribute to the personal achievements of our company founder, Otto Dunkel, past and present members of the management and the Board as well as all our employees in Mühldorf, in our field service and abroad.

Shortly before I became Chairman of the Board on January 1, 1993, ODU celebrated its 50th anniversary. With its 250 employees, three of whom were based in the US, and a turnover of a converted value of 16 million euros, the company was well prepared for the future. Already then, we reflected a great deal as to what was at the root of the company’s success.

The cornerstone of this success was clearly laid by our company founder, Otto Dunkel, and his ingenious invention of the “Dunkel-type connector,” which is better known today as the springwire contact, or ODU SPRINGTAC®.

His decision to start his own business at age 50 proved wise and his entrepreneurial success was not long in coming. Despite his advanced age, Mr. Dunkel decided to make a new start in Mühldorf and rebuild the company from nothing after the war. Considerable cash problems after Germany’s monetary reform forced him to take out a loan from a foreign financial group. The new partners, however, turned out to be both cunning and unscrupulous fraudsters whose goal was to exclude Mr. Dunkel as shareholder of the company.

Another decisive moment was undoubtedly when the company was saved in 1953: Mr. Dunkel came to see my father, Munich-based business lawyer, Dr. Alfred Endrös, in a desperate situation. Thanks to my father’s legal skills, Mr. Dunkel once again became the sole owner of his company on February 1, 1957. The fact that Mr. Dunkel summoned the courage and strength to weather the dispute with his opponents through various court levels is the reason the company still exists today. Securing the company’s long-term existence was his explicit wish.
In his lifetime, he created the corporate and statutory provisions for the business succession, in which the company should come first – not the shareholders, not the management, not the employees.

This maxim has since carried the company and its shareholders to success, yet demands a great deal of understanding, reason and, most of all, mutual trust, from everyone involved.

The shareholders form the foundation for this.

The future and wellbeing of the company take priority over self-interest, and the commitment to financial restraint grants the company valuable independence. This is a condition for the healthy, long-term growth of the company on its own merits. Furthermore, the shareholders agree to leave the leadership role to a strong management team.

Being given this trust allows the management to focus on what’s essential and, in the service of an overarching goal, forgo any personal craving for recognition – and grant the company’s employees independence, freedom of choice and room to maneuver. It’s the only way in which the company can inspire the best, most able employees to identify with the company for the long-term. ODU sets the bar high for all its employees, requiring them to go over and above at all times to satisfy ODU customers. But it also offers exceptional opportunities for development.

Simply maintaining these principles alone is no guarantee for success. Rather, it’s a prerequisite and foundation for implementing promising strategies in a world that’s becoming ever more short-winded and turbulent. It enables our company to remain vigorous and reconcile seemingly contradictory values, such as tradition and the acceptance of major change, long-term thinking and openness to new ideas.

The success of the past 75 years has also allowed the company to continue the commitment to social responsibility and loyalty that characterized our company founder, and to secure the future of many families by creating new jobs and apprenticeships.

Over the past 25 years alone, more than 500 apprentices have successfully completed their apprenticeships with ODU. Almost every year, some of them were awarded the Bavarian government’s state prize for their outstanding achievements. In 2009, we were able to expand our apprenticeship offering to include a dual university course of study. Today, 110 young people are participating in ODU’s educational programs – slightly more than ten percent of the total workforce in Mühldorf. We’re particularly pleased that the majority of our graduates still work for the company today.

The purpose of this anniversary publication is to ensure that things and events stay alive in our memories and are not simply forgotten.

It also serves to express the shareholders’ heartfelt thanks to everyone who has contributed to the success of the company. Let me begin by thanking all of ODU’s employees. Their commitment, knowledge and experience are the foundation upon which our company’s success is built. I’d like to thank our Managing Directors, Dr.-Ing. Kurt Woelfl and Dr. Joachim Belz, for the excellent development of the company over recent years. I’d also like to express special thanks to my colleague on the Board and former long-term Managing Director, Dr.-Ing. Wolfgang Jacobi, for the decisive contribution he’s made to this company’s success. Under his leadership and in the context of globalization, the company has grown into a globally recognized partner for top-of-the-line connector systems. Let me also thank Dr. Peter Waltl for supporting me on the Board for over 15 years now. Our customers and business partners deserve a very special thanks, as they are the ones who have trusted in the expertise of the company for so many years now. As for me, I’m personally very grateful for the opportunity to serve ODU and am looking into the future with confidence.

Dr. Christoph Endröss | Chairman of the Board
The journey all the way from Otto Dunkel setting up his business to the company in its current stature has been characterized by constant change. To have actively and successfully shaped this change—this is the distinguishing factor of ODU and its employees. It’s their readiness for change and ability to take risks in order to benefit from opportunities. And this is also where one of the crucial challenges can be found when it comes to successfully shaping change. Changes are happening in shorter time spans, the pace of change is speeding up. This often requires quicker response times and shorter development times for increasingly complex technological requirements, more flexibility in production and logistics and, most of all, a special sensitivity to the changes in regional markets—both in terms of future customer needs and technological trends.

Not only are we aware of how change is changing, we also recognize how it’s providing new opportunities for the future development of our company. And we plan on seizing those opportunities—just as Otto Dunkel would.

Some companies have the right knowhow and experience, and are so strong and courageous that they’ll never content themselves with what they have already achieved.

ODU is one of those special companies.”
For decades now, electrical connector technology has been an indispensable part of our everyday life. Without it, our smartphones and refrigerators would cease to function; cars would stand still and airplanes would remain grounded; and no heart-lung machine could even start pumping. These examples alone show that electrical connector technology requires a special degree of failure safety, dependability and longevity. Connectors are therefore technologically sophisticated products. More often than not, they’re exposed to harsh environmental conditions: saltwater, major temperature fluctuations, chemicals, pressure of up to 1,000 bar on the one hand and high-vacuum conditions, shock and vibrations on the other.

With this in mind, it becomes clear that the development, production and quality assurance of electrical connectors need to meet the highest standards. For 75 years now, ODU has very successfully met these high standards and the growing demands for ever more complex products from both the market and its customers. The company from Mühldorf is among the world’s leading manufacturers of electrical connectors, with 1,800 employees worldwide and a turnover of 165 million euros.

The cornerstone for this success was laid 80 years ago by ODU’s namesake and founder, Otto Dunkel – with his visionary invention of the “springwire pin contact.” In 1942 – a full 75 years ago – he founded the “Physics and Manufacturing Technology Research Laboratory” in Berlin.
Company identification as a core value

"ODU specializes not only in high-quality serial products from our catalog, but more specifically in tailored customer-specific solutions whose development and implementation must meet the highest level of precision, speed and flexibility, creativity, quality and reliability."

As a systems supplier, ODU offers 90,000 products, making for a wide range of industry- and customer-specific solutions. Our customers stem primarily from the following industries: medical technology, industrial electronics, test and measurement, energy, military and security as well as eMobility. The portfolio covers everything from a simple springwire pin to multi-functional connectors and integrated system solutions including cable assembly.

In order to guarantee both the high level of flexibility required to handle customer needs and top quality and delivery capacity in today’s competitive global environment, ODU is present with sales subsidiaries and specialized production sites in the world’s most important markets in North America, Europe and Asia. This enables the necessary proximity to the customer. The long-term success of ODU is ensured by our closely collaborating worldwide production network, global quality and process management and the impressive knowhow of our employees.

Teamwork for innovative system solutions

We have 950 employees at our Mühldorf headquarters alone. With its technology and development center, it is the heart of the company, bringing together under one roof decades of experience and expertise, creativity and innovative strength as well as production knowhow. Technical product designers, engineers and electrical engineering technicians combine forces in project teams to develop new connectors with materials specialists and employees from our in-house test laboratory. They also create system solutions to meet the most demanding requirements. The customer is always closely involved in the design process. Due to the enormous technological development efforts required, ODU considers it a particularly important challenge to support its customers for the long term, while at the same time continuously pushing the limits of feasibility.

One decisive advantage is ODU’s in-house possession of the skills and key technologies necessary for developing and producing connector systems – all on its site in Mühldorf: the customer-oriented Application Center, Design and Development, Toolmaking and Special Machinery Construction, Automation, Molding, Turning and Stamping as well as Electroplating/Surface Technology, Assembly and Cable Assembly and cutting-edge laboratories. At 80 percent, ODU’s high level of vertical integration means significant independence from external suppliers. It allows us to respond quickly to change, achieve desired end results faster and all at a consistently high level of quality.

Precision and the power to innovate

"It’s not surprising, then, that the training rate at ODU lies consistently over ten percent.”

In Mühldorf, 110 young people are currently undergoing training in eight vocational professions or dual study courses. Our trainees have the special opportunity of taking art and music classes, an option introduced as early as 1975. This promotes their creativity and ability to see things from a different perspective. Solidarity within the “ODU corporate family” is promoted by special training and development programs, international experience exchanges and trainee trips along with joint staff excursions, an ODU soccer team and several financial bonuses for employees. Low employee turnover, i.e., a high level of staff continuity, ensures a continuously growing wealth of knowledge and experience for ODU. Passing on the acquired knowhow from one generation to the next happens not only in the areas of technology, applications and products, but also when it comes to the healthy attitude regarding our non-negotiable service and customer orientation.

The picture of ODU wouldn’t be complete without acknowledging the significance of ODU’s other locations. In the 1980s, ODU began a step-by-step process of tapping into and developing new market opportunities in North America, Europe and Asia – this took place in a context of internationalization and by setting up additional sales subsidiaries and production sites. These partners and subsidiaries have become closely networked, today forming an indispensable pillar for ODU. Passing on the acquired knowhow from one generation to the next happens not only in the areas of technology, applications and products, but also when it comes to the healthy attitude regarding our non-negotiable service and customer orientation.

The long-term success of ODU is ensured by our closely collaborating worldwide production network, global quality and process management and the impressive knowhow of our employees.

Company identification as a core value

Another important cornerstone of ODU’s success is the high level of expertise of our employees and their identification with the company. Even Otto Dunkel realized that creative, committed, well-trained specialist staff and high motivation count among the most important resources for success.

"It’s not surprising, then, that the training rate at ODU lies consistently over ten percent.”

In Mühldorf, 110 young people are currently undergoing training in eight vocational professions or dual study courses. Our trainees have the special opportunity of taking art and music classes, an option introduced as early as 1975. This promotes their creativity and ability to see things from a different perspective. Solidarity within the “ODU corporate family” is promoted by special training and development programs, international experience exchanges and trainee trips along with joint staff excursions, an ODU soccer team and several financial bonuses for employees. Low employee turnover, i.e., a high level of staff continuity, ensures a continuously growing wealth of knowledge and experience for ODU. Passing on the acquired knowhow from one generation to the next happens not only in the areas of technology, applications and products, but also when it comes to the healthy attitude regarding our non-negotiable service and customer orientation.

The picture of ODU wouldn’t be complete without acknowledging the significance of ODU’s other locations. In the 1980s, ODU began a step-by-step process of tapping into and developing new market opportunities in North America, Europe and Asia – this took place in a context of internationalization and by setting up additional sales subsidiaries and production sites. These partners and subsidiaries have become closely networked, today forming an indispensable pillar for ODU. Passing on the acquired knowhow from one generation to the next happens not only in the areas of technology, applications and products, but also when it comes to the healthy attitude regarding our non-negotiable service and customer orientation.
A tightly-knit company group with a global strategy

The strategic position of ODU North America Logistics in San Diego (California, USA) and ODU’s close collaboration with the production site for special connectors and cable assembly founded in Tijuana (Mexico) in 2016 enable ODU to provide excellent service to the North American market. Our logistics hub in North America manages all incoming goods from all ODU production sites. It’s also from here that delivery to all North American customers is centrally controlled.

In China, ODU has been present since 2000 with two subsidiaries. The sales subsidiary ODU Shanghai Trading processes and serves the biggest market for electrical connectors in the world. In its early years, ODU supplied its products mostly to European and American companies manufacturing in China. Today, however, the local Chinese customer, i.e., the local market, has clearly moved into the foreground, both in terms of volume and turnover.

ODU Shanghai Manufacturing has also grown into a competence center for cable assembly as well as the production site that is globally responsible for manufacturing the ODU MEDI-SNAP® circular plastic connector.

The latter is also true for ODU Romania. In Sibiu, the company from Mühldorf manufactures application-specific cable assemblies of the highest technical sophistication, particularly for customers in Europe. Although when the site was established in 2006, the focus of ODU Romania Manufacturing remained on assembling circular metal connectors, the Sibiu team has developed a genuine second mainstay over the past two years with cable assembly.

Bavarian prize for medium-sized companies

In addition to technology and experience, the motivation and performance of employees, effective and efficient processes, high-quality products and satisfied customers, the financial independence of the family business is another guarantor for long-term success. Otto Dunkel recognized this and paved the way for financial independence for his successors. To this day, ODU continues to grow by its own efforts and is independent of any third parties when it comes to investment decisions. Such investments are based on the long-term company strategy and not on quarterly results. In 2008, ODU was awarded the Bavarian prize for medium-sized companies for “great commitment to innovation” and “new directions in vocational training.” This goes to show that ODU is being given social recognition for its entrepreneurial efforts as an internationally active family business firmly rooted in the region.
The fact that ODU’s 75-year success story continues to this day is also thanks to the people who led the company with visionary force, strength of character, a flair for markets and entrepreneurial skills through difficult times – all the way to the age of globalization. This chapter is devoted to them.

First and foremost among these people is Otto Dunkel, whose name and spirit continue in the ODU company signet to this day.

Born in 1891 as the son of a farmer in the East Prussian district of Königsberg, he first trained as a commercial clerk and tool-maker before studying mechanical and electrical engineering. As the director of the research laboratory of the Reichspost (the German postal service) he earned his first merits, among others, during the TV transmission of the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin. A trailblazing invention became decisive for the later part of his life, however. He made this invention in the context of the first ionosphere transmitter: While looking for a way to remedy annoying contact disruptions, he noticed a man in the courtyard of the Reichspost sweeping up the fallen leaves with a broom. From this inspiration, he derived his idea for a springwire pin contact, which he had patented on November 12, 1938. The connector was constructed in the research lab of the Reichspost and built into ionosphere transmitters in Germany, Spain and Italy, thereby enabling the transmitters to function smoothly.

In 1942, at age 50, Otto Dunkel became self-employed when he founded the “Physics and Manufacturing Technology Research Laboratory Otto Dunkel” with an associated engineering office in Berlin. One year later, due to the bombing of Berlin by the Allies, he moved the company to Niedercunnersdorf, in Saxony. By the end of the war, the turnover he made with electrical products had risen to 14.4 million Reichsmark and he held 48 patents.

As part of a large project for airplane production in the Mühldorfer Hart forest, Otto Dunkel came to Upper Bavaria during the final days of the war. After his company had been confiscated and the 54-year-old had been interned in Moosburg by the Allies, he made a modest fresh start under humble circumstances.

By dismantling armaments by order of the “State Registration Association for Public Goods” (STEG) and constructing radio units for the Bavarian Police, Otto Dunkel laid the foundation for a new orientation of his company. On December 10, 1947, he registered his former research lab under the new name “Otto Dunkel — Electrical Engineering, Factory for Electrotechnical Devices” in Ampfing, where he established a sales office and a factory floor. Further “branches” were set up in Herbertingen and in nearby Mühldorf am Inn, where he also rented rooms on Herzog-Friedrich-Straße in 1947. Only a few months later, the headquarters were moved to Mühldorf, where the company began to trade under the name “Otto Dunkel Company, Manufacturing Company for the Production of Electrotechnical Devices and Component Parts.”

In the post-war turmoil, the company founder’s seemingly realistic hope of leading his company into calmer waters upon his first lucrative jobs proved deceptive. The cancellation of major contracts led to bankruptcy proceedings being opened by the Mühldorf Local Court in February 1950. At nearly 60 years of age, Otto Dunkel had nothing left and considered selling his company. Salvation seemed to appear in the form of his former business partner, Heinrich Hamm. He offered to establish a connection together with a well-known businessman, Baron Karl Hermann von Kondratowicz, to the international financial scene. In this way, the means were to be raised for settling the compulsory settlement and terminating the bankruptcy proceedings. A third person, Rudolf Scheideler, a friend of Hamm’s who was employed by an auditing company, offered his services as Otto Dunkel’s personal advisor and assumed an increasingly key role.

During the debt enforcement process however, Scheideler began to pursue a different goal altogether, having recognized the economic potential of Dunkel’s contact system. He planned
Otto Dunkel’s rights in the partnership agreement were systematically curbed. He spoke of a “systematic and planned impairment of my asset interests violating the fiduciary duties accepted by Hamm and Scheideler.” Afflicted with a life-threatening disease, Dunkel was as good as forced to agree to the proposed settlement on his sickbed in April 1952. In the period that followed, Hamm and Scheideler systematically conceived new means of pressure in order to destroy their managing director, who was eventually forced to retire in 1954.

However, the 63-year-old chose not to accept his degradation and the evident looting of his company and its intellectual property without legal resistance. He found help in Munich-based business lawyer Dr. Alfred Endrös.

After examining the matter, Dr. Endrös decided to use legal means to put a stop to the fraudulent venture. He could not have guessed, however “that the three and a half years until the matter was concluded [...] would stretch me to my mental and physical limits.” Otto Dunkel and Dr. Endrös took legal action again and again in an effort to regain the ground that had been lost. To prove that the two managing directors, Hamm and Scheideler, had committed criminal offenses, even the state criminal investigation office of Bavaria got involved.

In June 1955, Dr. Endrös and Otto Dunkel lodged a claim against Managing Director Heinrich Hamm and Chairman of the Board Rudolf Scheideler before the Munich district court, for “serious breach of trust of a company organ, [ … ], betrayal of business secrets abroad [ … ] and embezzlement” among others.

With a designated temporary managing director as his secret trump card, Dr. Endrös subsequently engaged in a high-risk strategy to have Hamm and Scheideler removed from office during a general meeting of the company, against the statute of the Otto Dunkel GmbH. What played into the hands of the lawyer was that Baron von Kondratowicz had sided with Otto Dunkel due to a disavowing of Hamm and Scheideler for a serious reason.” Dr. Endrös, however, managed to leverage this conspiracy with a legal coup de main, the so-called “Jägerhof trick,” on September 23, 1955. He spontaneously called the shareholders together one hour before the meeting so as to effect the dismissal of Hamm and Scheideler for a serious reason of his own. The trick worked, also thanks to the presentation of the new temporary managing director, engineer Dr. Clemens Mayer-Schuchard. As a result, Otto Dunkel returned to being the sole owner of his company in February 1957. The continuation of the Otto Dunkel GmbH was secured, and Dr. Endrös joined the advisory board.

Otto Dunkel later appointed Dr. Endrös as the fiduciary for managing the company heritage. His son, Dr. Christoph Endrös, followed in his footsteps from 1993 onwards as Chairman of the Board.

Hamm tried to preempt the removal by quickly calling an additional meeting on the day before the planned general meeting, in an attempt to effect “the dismissal of managing director Otto Dunkel” and the “exclusion of Otto Dunkel and von Kondratowicz for a serious reason.” Dr. Endrös, however, managed to leverage this conspiracy with a legal coup de main, the so-called “Jägerhof trick,” on September 23, 1955. He spontaneously called the shareholders together one hour before the meeting so as to effect the dismissal of Hamm and Scheideler for a serious reason of his own. The trick worked, also thanks to the presentation of the new temporary managing director, engineer Dr. Clemens Mayer-Schuchard. As a result, Otto Dunkel returned to being the sole owner of his company in February 1957. The continuation of the Otto Dunkel GmbH was secured, and Dr. Endrös joined the advisory board.

Looking back at the history of ODU

Even as these disputes were happening, threatening the existence of the business, the company also had to hold its own in the electrical-technical product markets, which were rapidly expanding as part of the “economic miracle” taking place in Germany in the 1950s. With its technically sophisticated niche program, offering heavy-duty connectors in addition to single contacts based on the springwire principle, ODU supplied its products to the booming heavy-duty industry, railroad construction, and increasingly regained a foothold in the armament and aviation industry. Otto Dunkel benefited from his many contacts with companies, associations and ministries. Engineer Gerhard Neumann and business manager Hans Ramisch joining the company in 1962 meant that Otto Dunkel was unburdened from operations.

While Gerhard Neumann knew how to deepen the technical expertise of the company, Hans Ramisch established important milestones in the form of a rigorous accounting system, disciplined controlling and the development of the stamping technique.

Under their direction, and after founder Otto Dunkel died in 1971, ODU increasingly opened up to new business areas and profitable mass markets based on stamped contacts. In the mid-1970s, for example, the industrial and custom connectors with turned contacts were complemented by electronic connectors with stamped contacts. Vertical production was increased too, and in 1992, the company invested in its own electroplating for surface refinement with selective plating technology. The decision to serve mass markets with standard products initially paid off in the 1980s. Turnover doubled from 10 to 20 million D-Marks between 1977 and 1983.

The company made good profits with the ODU-CARD series (“The card on the cable connector”) and the FLAKAFIX program for computers and measuring devices which was complemented with stamped contacts. However, ODU still had no cost structure, production capacity or sales organization in place to compete with the giants of the mass product market for the long term. After a rollercoaster ride on the mass markets, the new management opted for a new product strategy course in the 1980s, fully geared towards globalization.

A new duo headed up ODU as of 1985, with Paul Rainer Molitor as Technical Director and Dr.-Ing. Wolfgang Jacobi as Commercial Director, and had to grapple with completely new competitive markets and challenges.
Looking back at the history of ODU

Dr.-Ing. Wolfgang Jacobi, Managing Director from 1985 to 2006, then member of the ODU supervisory board, traces the most important stages of globalization and internationalization.

"Back to the future" was ODU's motto after the rollercoaster ride on the mass markets in the mid-1980s. Under your leadership, a general change of strategy in the course of globalization became apparent. Dr.-Ing. Wolfgang Jacobi: Let me briefly recap the initial situation to start with. After the war, ODU was limited to Germany with the specialty business developed by Otto Dunkel. The only exception were countries who'd not been war opponents, such as Finland and Sweden. In the 1950s, a completely new situation arose: Europe had turned into a large single market, the USA was the largest single market in the world, and in the 1980s, China started to grow strong and emerged as a new global player.

What were the concrete consequences of this development?

Dr.-Ing. Jacobi: With the triad of Europe, the US and China, a world market came about in which goods, capital and knowhow moved freely. This opened up huge opportunities, as well as a completely new competitive environment. If you wanted to stand your ground in this world market, you needed products that could compete worldwide, too.

What was ODU's situation?

Dr.-Ing. Jacobi: ODU had clearly focused on PCB connectors during the 1970s and 80s, cheap mass products, for which there was a huge market. We were successful with that. When the Chinese began to offer those commodities for a third of the price, our markets broke away. That was the situation I was faced with when I joined ODU. Which is why we reduced production for our electronics business by more than half and focused on markets which were much more technologically sophisticated – with customized products.

What areas in particular?

Dr.-Ing. Jacobi: We supplied the French reprocessing plant in La Hague, British submarine production and equipment suppliers for oil rigs. We also got a foot in the door of medical technology and supplied a great deal for military equipment.

This included extremely sophisticated special developments as well, such as in 1993, when ODU created a 264-pin connector for a submarine that could withstand 1,000 meters of immersion depth pressure.

Dr.-Ing. Jacobi: Those were completely new developments indeed. This also included the smallest connector in the world for an animal testing lab. We did many different things, but initially without a clear strategy. We survived, collected knowledge and found out that the farther away the end customer was from Mühldorf, the lower the chances of an order for a customer-specific solution. So it became clear that we also needed products that could compete around the world and where we could apply our knowhow and then turn those products into catalog products. The first such product was the ODU-MAC®, with which we make over 30 million euros in turnover today – that’s 20 percent of our overall turnover.

At the time, did the company already possess the wide range of focused knowhow to implement customer-specific solutions quickly and with precision?

Dr.-Ing. Jacobi: ODU has always been a flexible high-performing company. Yet, we still lacked market knowhow on the global stage. After the success of the ODU-MAC®, and with our solid financial and technological substance, we aimed at further developing sought-after products for the global market. We succeeded in the early 1990s with a Push-pull connector, which up until then had been supplied almost exclusively by two Swiss companies. This technically outstanding product had mostly been used in medical and measurement technology. But the customers were unhappy with the price, delivery times and lack of compatibility.

We developed our ODU MINI-SNAP® Push-pull connector and have continued to refine and expand this particular range to this day. Our second pillar in the form of a sophisticated serial product, i.e., a catalog product that requires explanation, the ODU MINI-SNAP® and its subfamilies make up a good 46 percent of our turnover – that’s around 70 million euros.

Where you successful with the ODU MINI-SNAP® from the start?

Dr.-Ing. Jacobi: The first contract arose from a project at Siemens in Karlsruhe. They were looking for a connector for...
ODU’s corporate strategy has always depended in part on the business strategies of our biggest customers. They’d recognized the growing significance of China in the 90s as a cost-efficient location for work-intensive production. It became clear that the connector industry would also become considerably more important for the Asia-Pacific economic region because of its high population density and accelerated technological development in everyday life. Through our customer Ericsson and our intense involvement in the mobile communication business, we managed to take the leap and open a sales subsidiary in Shanghai in the year 2000. In 2002, we were able to enter the Chinese market thanks to a project for Ericsson and our founding of ODU Connectors Manufacturing Ltd. We were one of the few companies able to make money right away, enabling us to be present in all three major markets as of the year 2000.

Over the course of globalization, many companies cut back on staff or moved jobs abroad. ODU, however, has consistently increased its staff – in Mühldorf, too.

Between 2004 and 2016, ODU’s workforce grew from 400 to 1,650 at the Mühldorf site. How do you explain this expansion?

Dr.-Ing. Jacobi: Our employee numbers have grown in quite a linear fashion, but it’s their qualification that’s undergone a major shift. This is an interesting aspect when it comes to globalization, too. Generally speaking, if you can automate production, you can produce any product, even a mass product, almost as well in Germany as in China. The problem with mobile telephony, for example, was that innovations were arriving at such a fast pace. To get a new assembly machine up and running takes nine months here. The Chinese were able to adjust in just one or two months through manual assembly at cheap hourly rates. It would have cost ten times as much here. And for this reason, we suddenly found ourselves looking for more and more tool makers, engineers and designers for automation. To cater to speedy manual assembly, we established our Romanian location in Sibiu in 2006. Today it counts 400 employees. Thanks to training, qualification and quality control, we’re achieving excellent results there.

ODU has sites in Romania, China and the US. Is there a division of labor? Specializations or joint input from the foreign subsidiaries in the development of new products?

Dr.-Ing. Jacobi: That’s an interesting question and the answer is yes – we do receive such input. Initially it came from the US. Remember, in 1984 all technical documentation was still hand-traced and sent through the post. There were no fax machines. Our contact person, Ralf Eberlein, drew our attention to the importance of the internet early on. It simply revolutionized it all – the communication, documentation and order process. Another point is the cable assembly for the connectors. In the US, this business was taken up early on and did well. It encouraged us to follow in that direction, too. And all our subsidiaries have experience that we can use here, too. In manual assembly and cable assembly in Romania, our employees have come up with solutions that didn’t even occur to us here at our headquarters.

What development trends are you anticipating?

Dr.-Ing. Jacobi:

I’m glad that in the connector business we’re not faced with the radical changes that many other areas are having to deal with. Basic technology doesn’t change. It’s “only” about improving existing technologies. There will always be connectors.
1937/38  
**INVENTION OF THE SPRINGWIRE CONTACT**  
Malfunctions during the construction of a new transmitter for the Reichspost lead Otto Dunkel to invent a “spring pin”. On November 12, 1939 it receives a patent, which is recognized again in 1955.

1942  
Otto Dunkel founds his first business in Berlin-Schönhausen: “Physics and Manufacturing Technology Research Laboratory – Otto Dunkel (ODL).”

1945/47  
The business moves from a bunker complex in Niedercunnersdorf (Saxony) to Mettenheim near Mühldorf. It gets a new start in Mühldorf on Herzog-Friedrich-Straße.

1955  
Together with Munich lawyer Dr. Alfred Endrös, Otto Dunkel thwarts an attempt by rivals to drive him out of the company. This happens at the last minute at the Hotel Jägerhof. For the first time, the company has its own booth at the Hannover Messe trade fair.

1960  
Turnover exceeds one million D-Marks for the first time, and the number of employees reaches 140.

1971  
Otto Dunkel dies at age 80, and shared company management is assumed by Hans Ramisch and Gerhard Neumann.

1975  
With the introduction of art classes during the apprenticeship process, ODU becomes a pioneer in professional training.

1985  

1987  
FOUNDING OF ODU UK

1988  
ODU USA INC. IS FOUNDED AS A 100% SUBSIDIARY OF ODU

1992/1999  
FOUNDING OF THE ODU FRANCE SUBSIDIARY IN 1996, FOLLOWED BY THE PRODUCTION SUBSIDIARY ODU SCANDINAVIA MANUFACTURING IN 1999

2000  
FOUNDING OF THE SALES SUBSIDIARY ODU SHANGHAI TRADING CO., LTD  
Collaboration with Philips Medical systems in the field of magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), which becomes a great success.

2001  
FOUNDING OF THE MANUFACTURING SUBSIDIARY ODU SHANGHAI TRADING CO., LTD  
At 6 million D-Marks, the “Transrapid” project in China becomes the single largest contract in the history of the company.

1986  
ODU SPRINGWIRE CONTACT – TODAY: ODU SPRINGTAC®

1959  
HEAVY-DUTY CONNECTORS for the harshest environmental conditions

1975  
PCB board connectors: PCB stands for printed circuit board connectors, ODU CARD

1986  
Modular rectangular connector system ODU-MAC® and ODU DOC, robust docking frame for testing and industrial applications

1990  
ODU MINI-SNAP® with Push-pull locking

2000  
ODU MINI-SNAP®, PC  
Push-pull rectangular connector with plastic housing
2004
Founding of ODU Automotive GmbH for customer-specific connectors in the automotive industry.

2006
FOUNDING OF ODU ROMANIA MANUFACTURING S.R.L. IN ROMANIA FOR ASSEMBLIES.
Founding of ODU Montage GmbH.

2008
ODU offers for the first time a dual-study program that combines studies in mechanical engineering with training as a technical draftsman. Expansion of electroplating at the Mühldorf location with a chromium electroplating plant. Awarded the Bavarian prize for medium-sized companies for its commitment to innovation and new directions in training.

2009
The first application of an ODU battery connector system in a Mercedes hybrid vehicle opens the door to the eMobility sector. ODU enters the market for renewable energy with the SMA project for a leading manufacturer of inverters for photovoltaic systems.

2010
Expansion of production capacities and the introduction of a professional environmental management system at the Mühldorf site.

2011
ODU has over 1,000 employees worldwide and an annual turnover of 100 million euros.

2014
SUBSIDIARY COMPANIES ODU DENMARK APS. IN COPENHAGEN AND ODU ITALIA S.R.L. IN BOLZANO firmly establish the ODU Group on the European connector market.

2015
THE CORPORATE GROUP FOUNDS THE JAPANESE SUBSIDIARY ODU JAPAN K.K.

2016
ODU OPENS A NEW PLANT IN TIJUANA, MEXICO
The production and cable assembly in Mexico serve the North American continent, together with ODU North American Logistics in San Diego.

2017
− 75 YEARS
1,800 EMPLOYEES WORLDWIDE
165 MILLION EURO TURNOVER WORLDWIDE

2002
ODU MEDI-SNAP®,
Push-pull rectangular connector with plastic housing for medical applications

2007
ODU-MAC® LC,
Versatile modular rectangular connector system

2010
ODU-GEN2, two-pin, high-voltage connector system for hybrid and electric vehicles,
ODU CATS, extremely rugged connector for a high rate of data transmission in railway technology

2011
ODU AMC®,
extremely rugged metal Push-pull circular connector for military and security technology

2014
ODU AMC® High-Density,
miniatruized Push-pull circular connector with high contact density

2016
ODU-MAC® Blue-Line,
hybrid manual mating solution with spindle locking and a high degree of transmission versatility
Whether for the transmission of power, signals, data or media: Today, many applications require new possibilities from connection technology. When it comes to solving even the most sophisticated questions for connectors and system solutions, ODU has consistently been at the forefront of the technically possible.

What’s more, experts can look back upon numerous milestones in the development of innovative high-tech products.

Let us present you with four examples of such milestones.
The patented ODU SPRINGTAC® system constitutes one of the world’s most reliable contact principles for the transmission of power, signals and data, even under the harshest conditions.

Its origins date back to Otto Dunkel’s invention of the springwire contact.

This contact offers a high number of contact surfaces even in small diameters – thanks to the individually suspended springwires. Even with the smallest contact design at 0.76 mm in diameter, 15 springs are mounted with direct contact with the pin. This provides outstanding reliability even under adverse conditions, allowing up to 1,000,000 mating cycles.

ODU SPRINGTAC® is used in all areas of application demanding a particularly high number of mating cycles, e.g., medical equipment, test and measurement technology, industrial electronics as well as contacts for welding current transmission.

Advanced diagnostics require the latest technology.

Since the first presentation in 1986, ODU has continued to develop the ODU MAC® modular connector system into a true all-rounder, and has expanded it to include 3 product lines.

Thanks to its modular structure, the ODU MAC® can have a nearly unlimited variety of configurations, enabling it to be combined for application-specific hybrid solutions. It thereby simultaneously ensures the reliable transmission of energy, signals, data, or even other media such as compressed air or various gases. The ODU MAC® has modules for both copper wire and fiber optic technology, with the additional option of being made available for manual mating or automatic docking. The ODU MAC® is characterized by high packing density, mating cycles, contact reliability and longevity as well as its unique spindle locking.

Its areas of application include test and measurement technology or fully automated production lines, railway technology, or MRIs and laser devices for various testing purposes.
ODU HIGHLIGHTS

ODU AMC®/ODU AMC® High-Density

The extremely rugged and watertight metal circular connector of the ODU AMC® series has been developed especially by ODU for use under harsh environmental conditions in military and security technology.

Lightweight, it combines high reliability and durability with easy handling and high-speed data transmission. The ODU AMC® also has a long service life. With the ODU AMC® High-Density miniature connector, ODU proves that top functionality and premium quality can fit in the tightest of spaces. Especially developed with weight and space constraints for applications under adverse environmental conditions, this light, compact connector has outstanding performance features. Housing diameters of 10 mm to 18.5 mm and up to 40 contacts allow this watertight (IP 68) connector numerous configurations for individual, application-specific power supply and signal or data transmission. Areas of application include high-speed data technology, military and security communication technology as well as sensor and medical technology.

ODU GEN2

With the ODU GEN2 connector system, ODU provides a high-performance, two-pin product for high-voltage use that meets all requirements for application in hybrid and electric vehicles.

Designed as a connector for use in high-voltage batteries and inverters, equipped with the efficient ODU LAMTAC® contact technology and proven in accordance with the strict LV215 automotive industry guidelines, the ODU GEN2 is the ideal response to the challenges of eMobility.

In addition to its outstanding electrical properties, this connector impresses with its high shielding attenuation, compact construction and reliable central locking system.

Areas of application: eMobility, battery connectors.
FROM IDEA TO PERFECT CONNECTOR

Whereas Otto Dunkel was the sole inventor of the springwire contact, today, innovations at ODU are thanks to the work of experienced, highly qualified teams.

The Mühldorf company is continuously pushing the limits of the technically feasible by developing new connection technology options. This is made possible by combining and supplementing a variety of factors: employees’ many years of expertise, networking with research institutes and universities, ODU’s significant level of vertical manufacturing and cutting-edge production technology, investments and, last but not least, results-focused processes.

The individual development and production steps involved in making a typical ODU MAC ® connector at the Mühldorf site are illustrated in the following example.
TOOLMAKING

Once the development of the product has been completed, the order goes to Tool Design, which had already been involved at an early stage of the process. It’s here that the tools for injection, stamping and even assembly are subsequently made. Interestingly enough, the workshop for technical trainees has been integrated here at the very source of technology, so to speak. The company’s own toolmaking workshop has, for example, the latest multi-axis CNC machines as well as a climate chamber in which individual parts can be made at an accuracy of 1/1000 mm. However, ODU makes more than just high-precision tools for its products – it also makes special assembly and testing equipment along with fully automated production systems with optimized cycle and setup times.

INJECTION SHOP

The insulators for the electrical contacts and the housing for some connector families are primarily made of plastic. In the injection molding process, ODU draws on numerous high-tech plastics with various physical and chemical properties to fulfill special customer requirements – from high-temperature resistance, high-voltage strength and sterilizing capability to resistance against specific chemical substances. The 30 plastic injection-molding systems manufacture shaped pieces that range from 0.03 to 150 grams. They are made of plastic and, in some cases, are reinforced with glass fiber. For the 60 million individual parts produced each year, the machines directly dry, melt and inject 130 tons of plastic granulate into the shape (the tool) at up to 2,500 bars. The output of the dimensionally stable material follows a defined cool-down period, and is then forwarded to the next process step (usually contact assembly).
For reasons of protection against corrosion, changing physical properties (conductivity, contact resistance, friction, wear and soldering suitability) or for decorative reasons, metallic surfaces are finished in the electroplating shop. This all applies to connectors, particularly to the turned and stamped contacts and metal housings. Most noticeable is the gold plating of contacts, which accounts for 150 kilograms of gold per year. For this, the thickness of the finish layer is only a few ten thousandths of a millimeter. Silver coating can often be the right answer, too, when it comes to the requirements of the contact system. Three different procedures are available for the process itself: bulk, rack and reel-to-reel plating. The shape and quantity of the parts to be electroplated play a decisive role in the selection of the respectively suitable process. The finished parts are then well prepared for processing in assembly. Surface technology is among ODU’s core competencies, and over the years has ensured a leading position on the connector market.

ASSEMBLY

All of the preliminary products presented here can then be found in assembly: finished contacts, insulators, plastic or metal housings. Assembly is one of the most complex departments at ODU with approximately 220 employees, some of whom work in three-shift operation. The spectrum ranges from fully automated machinery for the large series production of connectors for control technology and single-contact machinery for the smallest of diameters (0.76 mm with 15 individual springs) with visual control, to assembly requiring protective clothing in the climate-controlled cleanroom for high-quality special potting. For non-magnetic components, a specially protected work area with airlock has even been set up for connector assembly in the area of medical technology. Assembly by hand remains indispensable, particularly for the cable assembly or the assembly of customer-specific plugs, the coupling plug assembly and the assembly of application-specific connectors for the automotive industry (Automotive Team). Continuous process audits and optimization as well as mandatory documentation ensure the very highest quality standards.
With customers requesting ever shorter development times, simulation programs with forecasting reliability are becoming an important aspect of competitiveness. The proper application of these tools does not simply reduce the development time. It also positively affects costs and provides preventive quality assurance. Over the past years, ODU has increased its investment in the creation and expansion of simulation procedures with forecasting reliability, and today possesses outstanding expertise in their application. Parallel to this, the ODU laboratory has been carrying out ongoing measurements as part of development and production in addition to testing for mechanical, physical, electrical and even chemical parameters. This involves raw materials (plastics, metals), intermediate products (contact systems, insulators) as well as complete connectors including cable assembly (connection technology). Measurements for temperature behavior, current-carrying capacity, high-voltage strength, high-frequency behavior, the indispensable mating-cycle test and even tightness testing, are included in product standard and quality assurance.

The previously described processes are embedded in supply chain management. In this case, it begins by providing the individual production steps with the necessary materials. This extends from ordering the raw materials (80 tons per month) to supplying them to the machines to combining the components in assembly. The end is the timely delivery to the customer. The focal point is the central high-bay warehouse with over 14,000 storage locations and 50,000 subsections. The storage and retrieval of up to 1,500 stock items per day is automatically processed by several robots, thereby achieving access times of under one minute per item. This clearly shows that what is called “random storage” in professional jargon is anything but random. It is extremely efficient and enables ODU to achieve a high degree of delivery reliability and capability.

ONE DETAIL, INDISPENSABLE FOR THE PAST 75 YEARS, THE SPRINGWIRE CONTACT. TODAY: ODU SPRINGTAC ®
**QUESTION:**

*WHY DO YOU THINK ODU IS THE BEST COMPANY TO WORK FOR IN THE WORLD?*

**ODU CHINA**

"Tina Cao (age 34), Sales Engineer: I feel honored to work for ODU. I’m learning a lot on the product side as well as what it means to be part of a great team."

"Cathy Chen (age 36), Deputy Finance Manager: I have been with ODU China for 11 years, and I’m proud of growing with the company. ODU is a big, warm family."

"Tim Wang (age 34), Molding Manager and Training Instructor: ODU has a long history with a good corporate culture that provides opportunities for each hardworking staff member."

"Sarah Cheng (age 36), Strategic Purchasing Supervisor: I have been working with ODU since 2010. ODU performs well and is an excellent employer. I’m very proud to work for ODU."

**ODU MEXICO**

"René Vizcarra (age 47), Operations Manager: I’m a new member of the ODU family in North America and I already feel very committed and proud to belong to a company with a 75-year tradition."

"Israel Oliva (age 29), Engineering Supervisor: I belong to the latest generation of the ODU family in North America and I’m so excited to be working in a multicultural company."
ODU NORTH AMERICAN LOGISTICS, INC.

Adam Rumage [age 31], Quality Manager:
For the nearly 10 years I have been with ODU, it has been a company where I continue to learn new skills, face new challenges, and grow. The cooperation and comradeship between our global teams is a unique and great experience to be a part of.

Jorge Hernández [age 37], Warehouse Manager:
I have only been with ODU for less than one year and already I feel proud to be part of this growing global company. I enjoy the great work environment and the sense of collaboration within the ODU team.

ODU DENMARK

Mads Haastrop [age 55], Regional Sales Manager, Denmark:
With my 30+ years in the interconnection industry, I can only say this: ODU is by far the most customer-oriented, flexible and innovative connector manufacturer I know. I salute my visionary and foresighted management and my brilliant service-minded colleagues.

Per Jelstad [age 60], Key Account Manager:
I’ve been with ODU for a year and a half now. I chose to work at ODU because of our high-quality products and very strong management team. Everybody on the team is working together for the success of ODU.

ODU USA

Dana Stoica [age 41], Head of Marketing, North America:
A 75-year legacy is a significant milestone. ODU represents for me commitment towards its employees and towards the community, progress and innovation, reliability and steady growth. All these great values are part of the ODU culture and they are by now a tradition that each ODU employee has a moral responsibility to carry on. THANK YOU ODU!

John Hauger [age 30], Project Manager, Contact Technology:
I enjoy working at ODU because I get to work with individuals who are passionate about the quality of service that we provide in our product, to our customers, and to our fellow employees. It is a privilege to work with such talented people that continue to teach and inspire me to improve how I conduct myself and share the knowledge I have gained.

Sara Spires [age 27], Sales Analyst:
This esteemed organization is made strong by the people who dedicate themselves to its success. I have a deep respect and appreciation for my peers and superiors. Their intelligence, their work ethic, and their comradeship are what makes ODU the only company I want to work for in the world. Cheers to 75 years, and may there be many more!

ODU FRANCE

Murielle Fréchin [age 55], Customer Service Assistant:
I no longer think that ODU is the best company I’ve worked for and for whom I’ve enjoyed working since 1998. Today I know that it is.

ODU ROMANIA

Aurica Gherman [age 52], Subassembly Assembler, workstation: visual and electrical check within the Cable Assembly section:
I have been working for ODU Romania for more than 11 years now, and I am grateful for the opportunity I received here, to be part of a very welcoming team. I am growing with ODU. I was and still am motivated to work within this company, because ODU has offered me an exceptional professional training and the chance to learn new things and constantly work on new products. A further reason is that a great part of the products that are produced here at ODU are used in the medical industry, a fact which makes me become more and more aware of the responsibility I carry. Thank you, team ODU!

Cristina Francu [age 35], Supply Chain Manager:
I joined ODU Romania 11 years ago. It is a decision that I will never regret, because ODU Romania has not only given me the chance to do what I like, but it has also enabled me to develop myself in a professional and friendly environment. What I really appreciate is that here at ODU we are all part of one big ODU family. We are a team of reliable, results-oriented people. That is why working at ODU is always challenging and a new experience every time. Thank you for everything, ODU Romania!

ODU GOES GLOBAL
Fausto Comi (age 59), Regional Sales Manager ODU Italia S.R.L.: In my career, I’ve had the opportunity to work in several companies, including large multinationals and small companies – but what I found at ODU is unique. ODU is a company with true values, where every human being counts and interactions between colleagues always have a constructive approach. On top of that, I have never had to spend time soliciting the delivery of a confirmed order because it is not necessary. ODU is very reliable in delivery, likewise for the product quality. I’ve never had to spend my time managing a customer complaint. In short, ODU is a reliable partner for customers, respects commitments, is flexible and customer-oriented, offers high-quality products with solid technological content and is a nice place to work.

Haruka Mikami (age 35), Administration Manager: When I visited ODU headquarters, I got the strong impression that the company is well organized and the staff is diligent and proud of their own work. It’s no wonder that the employees’ passion creates excellent products which provide our customers great value.

Carl Moser (age 33), Representative Director of ODU Japan K.K.: It is always a good feeling to go to the customer knowing that I can introduce high-class connector solutions to demanding Japanese customers. And what’s more, it’s great to know that despite Japan being “at the other end of the world,” there are nice, supportive colleagues overseas (whether in Mühldorf or Shanghai) who are always willing to help put ideas into practice. That makes me feel proud to represent ODU, a hidden champion, here in Japan.

Question: Why do you think ODU is the best company to work for in the world?
Andreas Hansmeier (age 39), Works Committee Chairman and Training Manager for Cutting Machine Operators:
ODU is a company that depends on its skilled and motivated employees. The possibilities of development for employees and the promotion of the solidarity of the entire “ODU family” are points that make it easy for me to feel comfortable at ODU. Since my apprenticeship began at ODU 23 years ago, I have always had new opportunities to develop myself, make use of my strengths and prove myself. At the same time, I have always worked with friendly and motivated colleagues who appreciate the positive work environment and gladly work for the success of ODU.

Manuela Weiss (age 31), Assembly Clerk:
ODU is good for me because ODU made it possible for me to do a second apprenticeship as an industrial mechanic. In addition to doing my regular job, I go to school for mechanical engineering after work. I’m happy to have been at ODU for nearly 11 years now, and to have witnessed the positive growth of the company. I like going to work, my tasks are multifaceted and varied – there’s never a dull moment there.

Stefan Franzl (age 44), Segment Manager in the MDS area:
Connectors are used in nearly every area of our daily environment, and it’s hard to believe how much know-how is in these – typically small – interfaces. Together with a young and motivated team at ODU, I have been able to develop new ideas and concepts for our customers over the course of 15 years. Particularly as an engineer, it’s always exciting and fun to be a part of the future.

Gerd Winter (age 35), Department Manager, Injection Molding:
I’ve been impressed by the positive work environment and the solidarity for the past 20 years. ODU promotes its employees and is constantly growing. Our future-proof products and solutions make for an attractive place to work.

Marina Neumeier (age 32), Customer Center Manager:
I’ve worked at ODU for 16 years – soon to be half my life. ODU is like a second family to me. Super team, nice colleagues, a good boss – the work environment is just right, which is the most important thing for me since you end up spending a large part of your life at work. My job here at ODU in Customer Service is quite varied and interesting. We support customers from a wide variety of countries, each has different requirements – it never gets boring.

Andreas Hansmeier (age 39), Works Committee Chairman and Training Manager for Cutting Machine Operators:
ODU is a company that depends on its skilled and motivated employees. The possibilities of development for employees and the promotion of the solidarity of the entire “ODU family” are points that make it easy for me to feel comfortable at ODU. Since my apprenticeship began at ODU 23 years ago, I have always had new opportunities to develop myself, make use of my strengths and prove myself. At the same time, I have always worked with friendly and motivated colleagues who appreciate the positive work environment and gladly work for the success of ODU.
WITH A PIONEERING SPIRIT AND IDEAS
AT THE FOREFRONT
FOR 75 YEARS

Managing Directors Dr. Joachim Belz and Dr.-Ing. Kurt Woelfl shed light on ODU’s success factors in the worldwide competition for top-quality connectors.

It takes a lot of courage, strong ideas, a pioneering spirit and highly motivated employees for a medium-sized company such as ODU to assert its leading position over the course of decades in a competitive, contested worldwide market.

In 1938, company founder Otto Dunkel revolutionized the telecommunications of the Reichspost with the invention of the springwire contact. How much pioneering spirit from that time still exists at ODU today?

Dr. Joachim Belz:
A great deal, and in several respects. We’re naturally always looking for new products in order to overcome the challenges that are important for customer success. At the same time, it’s not unusual for us to go to the very limits of what is technically possible. These limits have clearly shifted over the course of the past decades, and they will continue to move on and on. Hardly anyone 20 years ago was thinking about 10-Gbit data transmission via copper cable. In addition to pioneering work for products, we’re always thinking about new markets and applications, too. Take for instance the areas of regenerative energy or eMobility.

Dr.-Ing. Kurt Woelfl:
Take a look at the future market of eMobility, which we consider extremely important. The battery technology is indeed making progress. Yet far more decisive is a fast-charging technological solution for reaching certain battery capacities within minutes. This naturally occurs via the charging connection. Despite the high current and associated heat generation, it must be ergonomically manageable, suit the overall concept of the car and preferably look “stylish” as well. It must combine functionality and design in a minimum amount of space. ODU is working on innovative solutions to accommodate an integrated cooling system into the connection. So we’re connecting the cooling circuit with the electrical circuit. Otto Dunkel would have loved this pioneering spirit.
Again and again, ingenuity and this pioneering spirit have obviously helped ODU respond to market changes, economic crises and new technology as well as to its continuing growth, wouldn’t you say?

Dr. Joachim Belz: That’s right. It’s a matter of combining pioneering spirit or creativity on the one hand with a genuine sense for technological and market changes on the other. This ultimately leads to success. A decisive factor for the economic success of the past 75 years has surely been the ability to recognize future opportunities, to assess them, and then to resolutely use them as well.

The ability to respond to market changes and new developments in a timely manner, and to draw the correct conclusions – these are signs of good management. Was ODU’s management-level continuity another obviously important component of its sustained success?

Dr. Joachim Belz: Continuity is important, and steady continuity in management does not mean that everything remains at it was. Frequent changes in management, along with the regular changes in strategy that accompany them, are not really healthy for any company. Our customers expect predictability and reliability, and the necessary trust in a business partner can only be established if there is stability at the management level. Likewise, this applies to the internal relationship, meaning with our employees. If the chemistry is right, then even periods of difficulty can be managed. Familiarity and experience create trust.

Has the financial independence from banks and investors also helped to preserve ODU? This is rather unusual for companies of this size, in view of the stock market boom.

Dr.-Ing. Kurt Woelfl: I'd emphasize that. Financial independence naturally allows for quick, flexible responses to be made, and for us to be able to make quick decisions and invest in the future – all in keeping with the pioneering spirit. However, responsibility towards the shareholders is also just as high.

“With its approximately 90,000 products and system solutions, ODU is already established in forward-looking growth markets such as medical technology, military and security technology, eMobility and energy technology as well as established industries such as industrial electronics or test and measurement technology.”

Does this reduce the business risks?

Dr. Joachim Belz: Yes, that reduces risks for the company. It is seldom for all industries and markets of the world to simultaneously shrink. And if it does come to pass, as in the years 2008–2009, then all market competitors are affected in the same way. The trick is to strike a balance between the company’s necessary focus and the maintenance of various key areas. Ultimately, it’s a question of resource management and the use of synergy effects between the industries. We achieve the latter, for instance, via our product platforms.

As a high-tech company that collaborates worldwide with leading companies of the respective industries, the ability to be innovative is a core competence for long-term customer relationships. Using cross-department planning and development teams right from the start – on the path from the idea to the product – is quite obviously an ODU success factor, even when developing a recipe for solving the apparently unsolvable.

Dr. Joachim Belz: Since we have all the necessary in-house technology to develop and produce connectors, or at least have immediate access to it, we can quickly and easily bring all our experts together – in the case of customer special requests – and start by developing new ideas. That’s a part of the company’s creativity that particularly characterizes us on occasion. If the individual from Production, who is later to successfully use a highly complex injection-molding or stamping-bending tool, is included during the design of the tool, then this is sure to be an advantage.

Dr.-Ing. Kurt Woelfl: This cooperation, which is also included early on in development and in our laboratory, also gives us the opportunity, for example, to make intelligent use of new high-performance plastics with special physical properties. This allows contracts to be packed with greater density.

An additional milestone is the production of connectors and PCBs with non-magnetic contact metals or the integrated development of connectors and PCBs with a special design. About 100 of our employees are working in the area of design and development to come up with solutions to sophisticated questions regarding design and technology.

In view of the most complex tasks and intended uses, today’s customer expects high precision and quality in production and has the highest expectations when it comes to durability. How does ODU respond to such concerns?

In other words, we produce quality rather than having to check it for quality after the fact.
Digitalization and Industry 4.0 characterize today’s world of work. To what extent does this influence ODU?

Dr. Joachim Belz: This question can be answered practically as well as philosophically. I’ll begin with the practical part. Our product portfolio has naturally continued to develop with the new requirements of Industry 4.0 in view. We offer connectors and entire systems that are perfectly suited for transmission at high data rates in high-speed quality, therefore for the networked industrial world. In this sense, we’re providers of products. On the other hand, we carefully check where we can increase the efficiency of our own production through the use of Industry 4.0 concepts. This is where we become the user. Both aspects influence our thinking and actions.

Dr.-Ing. Kurt Woelfl: In addition to individual customer solutions, a very decisive question for us is flexibility. This means that one of the objectives we pursue is to make the “Item 1” price the series price by means of corresponding automation in combination with optimized processes. Take the 3D printer: You enter the design and obtain the samples overnight. Another example: Today, we use automatic lathes here that have 60 or 70 tools. In the past, a tool setter needed six to eight hours on the machine to prepare the contacts for production. In order to make it profitable, several thousand pieces had to be manufactured. Today, the contacts are preset and – after a retooling time of only ten minutes – even variants with ten or twenty pieces can be manufactured, as long as the basic setting has been programmed once.

Does this also mean that Industry 4.0 is therefore a vehicle for returning production to industrial countries?

Dr.-Ing. Kurt Woelfl: Much more is yet to come out of the complex. The flexibility of hand assembly is shifting once again because IT systems have become better and faster, we can control the production to a greater degree based on requirements, and our orientation no longer requires forecasting models.

ODU has invested in its own test and measurement laboratory, a technologically pioneering electroplating plant, systematic environmental management, comprehensive internal testing procedures and a vertical range of manufacturing. In addition, we pursue is to make the “Item 1” price the series price by means of corresponding automation in combination with optimized processes. Take the 3D printer: You enter the design and obtain the samples overnight. Another example: Today, we use automatic lathes here that have 60 or 70 tools. In the past, a tool setter needed six to eight hours on the machine to prepare the contacts for production. In order to make it profitable, several thousand pieces had to be manufactured. Today, the contacts are preset and – after a retooling time of only ten minutes – even variants with ten or twenty pieces can be manufactured, as long as the basic setting has been programmed once.

Does this also mean that Industry 4.0 is therefore a vehicle for returning production to industrial countries?

Dr.-Ing. Kurt Woelfl: Much more is yet to come out of the complex. The flexibility of hand assembly is shifting once again because IT systems have become better and faster, we can control the production to a greater degree based on requirements, and our orientation no longer requires forecasting models.

ODU has invested in its own test and measurement laboratory, a technologically pioneering electroplating plant, systematic environmental management, comprehensive internal testing procedures and a vertical range of manufacturing. In order to make it profitable, several thousand pieces had to be manufactured. Today, the contacts are preset and – after a retooling time of only ten minutes – even variants with ten or twenty pieces can be manufactured, as long as the basic setting has been programmed once.

Dr. Joachim Belz: It’s by no means luxury. These are highly important components of our corporate strategy that enable the development and production of competitive products, even in Mühldorf am Inn. These measures, or key factors, ensure our technological advances. As a German medium-sized company, we need them to score points on the world market. Over 50 percent of our turnover involves customer-specific products. This, in turn, presupposes flexibility in production and cutting-edge technology.

The high degree of employee identification with the company, employee promotion and qualification as well as team-spirit building at many levels are very central qualities at ODU. From one end of the country to the other, companies are complaining about a shortage of specialists. ODU’s numerous groundbreaking initiatives have already positioned it as an attractive employer for apprentices and students. A strategy for the future.

Dr. Joachim Belz: Yes, it has a future and it’s the only way to go. We develop and manufacture extremely sophisticated products. We need employees who are well trained and qualified for this. We’ll probably need them more urgently tomorrow than today. The surest way to recruit and retain these employees is to train them yourself and get them interested in ODU. This has worked well up until now. It will also work in the future.

ODU has had the company’s registered office in Mühldorf since 1947. Despite being internationally active, the company headquarters – with 950 of its 1,800 employees worldwide – remains in the city center. What is the region’s role for ODU as an employer?

Dr. Joachim Belz: One could also turn the question around: What does ODU as an employer mean to the region? From my perspective, each means a great deal to the other and there are mutual benefits. It’s important for the region to have economically viable companies, since they offer young people employment prospects. If this isn’t the case, the exodus soon begins and the region experiences over-aging.

On the other hand, the employees from the region are very down to earth, loyal to the company, and they won’t move to large cities that are supposedly more attractive, at the drop of a hat. That’s very important for ODU, since longstanding experience that has been, is and will be a decisive success factor and a future.

From one end of the country to the other, companies are complaining about a shortage of specialists. ODU’s numerous groundbreaking initiatives have already positioned it as an attractive employer for apprentices and students. A strategy for the future.

Dr. Joachim Belz: Yes, it has a future and it’s the only way to go. We develop and manufacture extremely sophisticated products. We need employees who are well trained and qualified for this. We’ll probably need them more urgently tomorrow than today. The surest way to recruit and retain these employees is to train them yourself and get them interested in ODU. This has worked well up until now. It will also work in the future.

ODU has had the company’s registered office in Mühldorf since 1947. Despite being internationally active, the company headquarters – with 950 of its 1,800 employees worldwide – remains in the city center. What is the region’s role for ODU as an employer?

Dr. Joachim Belz: One could also turn the question around: What does ODU as an employer mean to the region? From my perspective, each means a great deal to the other and there are mutual benefits. It’s important for the region to have economically viable companies, since they offer young people employment prospects. If this isn’t the case, the exodus soon begins and the region experiences over-aging.

On the other hand, the employees from the region are very down to earth, loyal to the company, and they won’t move to large cities that are supposedly more attractive, at the drop of a hat. That’s very important for ODU, since longstanding experience that has been, is and will be a decisive success factor and a future.

From one end of the country to the other, companies are complaining about a shortage of specialists. ODU’s numerous groundbreaking initiatives have already positioned it as an attractive employer for apprentices and students. A strategy for the future.

Dr. Joachim Belz: Yes, it has a future and it’s the only way to go. We develop and manufacture extremely sophisticated products. We need employees who are well trained and qualified for this. We’ll probably need them more urgently tomorrow than today. The surest way to recruit and retain these employees is to train them yourself and get them interested in ODU. This has worked well up until now. It will also work in the future.

ODU has had the company’s registered office in Mühldorf since 1947. Despite being internationally active, the company

"Our products may be relatively small, but they’re full of technology and 75 years of experience."
Dear readers,

On the occasion of the 75th anniversary of ODU, I’d like to offer my personal congratulations as well as those of the district of Mühldorf! As an international provider of connectors, since 1947 ODU has been an important driver of our regional economy in the district of Mühldorf. ODU is known as a top employer and training provider in our district and beyond. As a highly successful global player that currently has approximately 1,800 employees worldwide and is a pioneer in its field, ODU’s heart is in Mühldorf and it is deeply rooted in the region. The particular closeness it has to its employees, the outstanding work environment it offers and the appreciation it shows to its team are the typical trademarks of ODU. This is not least due to the fact that the company is a family business and embodies the family-friendliness that characterized our district. I’m also particularly appreciative of the excellent work done training our young people and introducing them to professional life. They are trained so outstandingly and with so much commitment at ODU.

One again, let me congratulate ODU on its 75th anniversary, and for the coming years, I wish you all the best, much success and many innovative ideas!

Best regards,
Georg Huber
District Administrator

To mark the 75th company anniversary

I would like to offer my sincere congratulations and to thank the ODU, this internationally active company, for remaining loyal to its location. It was 70 years ago that Otto Dunkel GmbH – today ODU – brought a company to Mühldorf am Inn that has substantially shaped the district seat as a business location to this very day. Particularly in the postwar period in which Mühldorf was severely shaken, ODU created jobs, thereby giving many families a livelihood. Today, with the nearly 1,000 jobs the company provides, it is the largest employer here. The training program for young people is outstanding – an example that shines beyond the frontiers of Bavaria. ODU’s incredible levels of performance and its innovative products that are known and appreciated around the world have also made Mühldorf indirectly famous. As a city, we have always been concerned with meeting the challenges of further development: from flood protection to the expansion of our land area. This trusting cooperation shapes the sense of togetherness of the economy and city. It also leads to the success of our business location. At this point, I would like to offer my sincere thanks for this openness and the excellent cooperation.

The starting point of the company was an invention by Otto Dunkel: a connector with a steady electrical transfer resistance. Around this core product, ODU has developed many impressive technical solutions over the course of the decades. Today, connectors from Mühldorf are sought-after quality products worldwide. In order to successfully assert itself on the international market, technical ingenuity and entrepreneurial courage were necessary. Added to this was the indispensable foundation of professional expertise, diligence and perseverance. Skillful management is as much a part of it as is qualified and motivated employees. All of this has led ODU to success over the past 75 years. And everyone involved can be proud of this.

I wish all of you continued success in your work and all the best for your personal futures.

Best regards,
Dr. Marcel Huber
Member of the Landtag
Head of the Bavarian State Chancellery and Bavarian Minister of State for Special Projects

Yours,
Marianne Zollner
First woman mayor of the City of Mühldorf am Inn

Dear Dr. Woeßl, Dr. Belz, and colleagues of ODU GmbH & Co. KG, I would like to congratulate you upon the 75th anniversary of the founding of your company.

After the war, it was a stroke of luck for our hometown that the company went from the Spree to the Inn, from Berlin to Mühldorf. Since that time, ODU has been a powerful force in shaping the region’s successful economic development.

I am particularly thinking of the creation of attractive jobs and, not least, the achievements in the training of young professionals. That deserves thanks and recognition.

The starting point of the company was an invention by Otto Dunkel: a connector with a steady electrical transfer resistance. Around this core product, ODU has developed many impressive technical solutions over the course of the decades. Today, connectors from Mühldorf are sought-after quality products worldwide. In order to successfully assert itself on the international market, technical ingenuity and entrepreneurial courage were necessary. Added to this was the indispensable foundation of professional expertise, diligence and perseverance. Skillful management is as much a part of it as is qualified and motivated employees. All of this has led ODU to success over the past 75 years. And everyone involved can be proud of this.

I wish all of you continued success in your work and all the best for your personal futures.

Best regards,
Dr. Marcel Huber
Member of the Landtag
Head of the Bavarian State Chancellery and Bavarian Minister of State for Special Projects

Yours,
Marianne Zollner
First woman mayor of the City of Mühldorf am Inn

Dear readers,

On the occasion of the 75th anniversary of ODU, I’d like to offer my personal congratulations as well as those of the district of Mühldorf! As an international provider of connectors, since 1947 ODU has been an important driver of our regional economy in the district of Mühldorf. ODU is known as a top employer and training provider in our district and beyond. As a highly successful global player that currently has approximately 1,800 employees worldwide and is a pioneer in its field, ODU’s heart is in Mühldorf and it is deeply rooted in the region. The particular closeness it has to its employees, the outstanding work environment it offers and the appreciation it shows to its team are the typical trademarks of ODU. This is not least due to the fact that the company is a family business and embodies the family-friendliness that characterized our district. I’m also particularly appreciative of the excellent work done training our young people and introducing them to professional life. They are trained so outstandingly and with so much commitment at ODU.

One again, let me congratulate ODU on its 75th anniversary, and for the coming years, I wish you all the best, much success and many innovative ideas!

Best regards,
Georg Huber
District Administrator
Providing training to the upcoming generation has special significance at ODU. It ensures that the challenges of tomorrow will be met with the highest degree of quality consciousness and commitment to innovation. ODU’s apprenticeship rate lies consistently above ten percent of the 950 employees at its headquarters.

ODU trains future specialists in eight professions as mechatronics engineers, cutting machine operators, toolmakers, industrial mechanics, process mechanics for plastics technology, surface coating technicians, technical product designers and industrial management assistants. Additional professions in logistics and assembly will be added in the future.

Young men and women are equally suited for all of the training professions. As part of a dual-study program, ODU also offers engineering studies in conjunction with an apprenticeship as a technical product designer or tool mechanic. The place of study is the Mühldorf campus of the Rosenheim University of Applied Sciences.

The special significance of apprenticeship at ODU is becomes clear through the numerous special features it offers. Over the past decades, for instance, additional music and art studies have provided an opportunity to promote and learn about the creative side of one’s personality as well as to view things from various perspectives. This promotes personal initiative, imagination and innovative awareness.

In soccer teams or on the educational tours organized every two years by the apprentices themselves, team awareness and personal contacts are strengthened – even to company newcomers in subsidiaries overseas. Meanwhile, the local company apprentices also benefit from the high standard of German apprenticeship training at the locations in Sibiu, Romania as well as in Shanghai, China. ODU is currently introducing the dual-study program for tool mechanics or process mechanics for plastics technology.

This ensures the globally focused quality management of the Mühldorf family business. The promotion of continuous training and international knowledge-sharing make up additional components of this.
ODU CONNECTS TOGETHER PERFECTLY

ODU’S LETTNGAUDI PARTICIPANTS
Muddy buddies for a good cause.