

From the Garage to a Hotbed of Technology



Eager interest in the practical demonstrations (photo: Frimo)

Anniversary. At the end of September, Frimo Group GmbH, a manufacturer of production systems for the international automotive industry, celebrated its 50th anniversary in Lotte, Germany. The fourth Frimo Forum was held at the same time. The talks and practically oriented technology exhibition provided an information and communications platform on topics of importance to the industry.

Hans-Günter Bayer, CEO of the Group, opened the event in front of 450 participants with a historic retrospective: In 1962, working in a rented garage with three employees, the company founders, Fritsche and Möllmann, laid the foundations for a company that has since become an international organization employing 1,200 people at 15 sites, with sales of EUR 150 million last year. At that time, not even its founders could have dreamt that the small specialist supplier of models and tools for polyurethane technology would develop into an internationally successful company. The Group is now among the most important suppliers of manufacturing systems for the automotive industry and is also active, with small market shares, in the aero engineering and furniture construction industries.

Lightweight Construction and Surfaces

The series of talks consisted of two parallel blocks of topics, which were held in parallel: “Lightweight Construction and New Technologies” and “High-Quality Surfaces and Economic Processes.” How-

ever, lightweight construction had already been the focus of two very informative plenary talks. Thus, Claus Haverkamp, head of body concepts/lightweight construction technologies at Audi AG, talked about lightweight construction as a future concept and challenge for the industry. It became clear that Audi relies on multimaterial solutions for body construction, so that the correct material for the corresponding loads is used. The major challenge here is how to join these different materials, explained Haverkamp.

It is hardly surprising that lightweight construction technology is also extremely important for aircraft engineering. With the example of the A350 XWB, Axel Deters, head of parts production Bremen at Premium Aerotec GmbH (a subsidiary of Airbus), spoke about highly automated CRP thermoplastic production. Airbus required reproducible processes for this. Frimo’s production line was able to meet these requirements and, because of the small lot sizes, product exchange was possible within 2 min thanks to the automatic tool changing system.

In the two parallel series of technical talks, Lightweight Engineering and Surfaces, external partners and Frimo employees presented relevant topics in a total of eight presentations. This block of events included speakers from Benecke-

Kaliko, BMW, Mubea Carbotech, JSP, RWTH Aachen, Schuler and Wiesmayer.

Theory Meets Practice

The second day focused on global topics and technologies. It was opened by Prof. Dr. Ferdinand Dudenhöffer, with his talk “Global Future Mobility – an Industry on the Move.” The companies Faurecia, Johnson Controls and Huntsman then gave their presentations with global topics as seen from the perspective of Tier 1 and the material manufacturer. Ernst Schwanhold, state minister (retired), closed the series of talks with a look at sustainability in a global environment.

Another focus of the second day was the practically oriented technology exhibition with numerous presentations. All the technology areas in which Frimo is active were presented – from PU processing, through flexible cutting and punching, pressing and forming and thermoforming, laminating and edge-folding, through to joining. In this exhibition, numerous partners also presented their innovations. The exhibitors included AT Automation Technology, Akzo Nobel, BASF, Benecke-Kaliko, Eschmann, Galvanoform, Huntsman, Isowood, JSP, Ridea, Schuler, Senoplast and Sika Tivoli. ■

Gerhard Gotzmann, editor

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