

„Consistently oriented to the megatrends“



About the person

Jochen Ehrenberg, 52, has been the Chief Technology Officer (CTO) of the Preh Group since 2012. Ehrenberg is a graduate mechanical engineer and also has a degree in business and an MBA. He started his professional career as an officer in the German army. He has been active in various management functions for Preh since 1997 and, among other things, built up the project management before he took over the overall management of the product development process.

The supplier Preh has had to reorganize its product portfolio several times in the past 100 years and ultimately reinvent itself as a company. Jochen Ehrenberg, CTO of the Preh Group, on current innovations, the largest areas of activity and cooperation within the Joyson Group.

- CLAUS-PETER KÖTH CONDUCTED THE INTERVIEW -

» **Mr. Ehrenberg, which innovations are you using to meet the megatrends of connectivity, autonomous driving and E-Mobility?**

We have continually oriented ourselves to these megatrends in the entire organization in the past years. Preh Car Connect offers a wide range of technologies in connectivity, in E-Mobility we have already been producing battery management systems for several years and in the Car HMI business field we

dedicated ourselves early on to the new trends in the interior. Evidence of this is our comprehensive range of products with haptic feedback, touch functionality or integrated displays.

» **What were your two biggest areas of activity in 2018?**

After we were very successful in the previous years and could win numerous new projects, our focus was initially on industria-

lization and globalization in the product development process.

» **Which “ramp up” are you anticipating for new products in the E-Mobility business sector?**

While the production numbers regularly remained below the forecasts for many years, E-Mobility is now taking off significantly. For us the “ramp up” still gets additional momentum through the fact that in the meantime we offer a broader product range with 48-volts and high-voltage components, and that we could significantly broaden our customer base - notably in China, not least through our association with the Joyson Group.

» **At which locations will the E-components be produced?**

After the production of the first product generation in Bad Neustadt, we are also now successfully on the market in China with our production and development location in Ning-

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bo. Further start ups at other locations are currently being implemented. Medium to long-term our goal is to be able to produce E-components in all regions.

» Which learning curves could you take with you for the development and production of future E-components?

Basically we are in the process of establishing our development processes even more globally. That is not a topic specifically for E-components, however it is especially important in this business field due to its fast growth. With our development processes, which have significantly been shaped in the Car HMI sector, we are also equipped for development of safety-relevant products in E-Mobility. One challenge is definitely the new production processes and supplier chains, which came along with the newest high-voltage applications. In addition, the systems design is more and more important for us and further expanded.

» Which potential does the digital process chain offer?

They are driven by the globalization and through the deadline pressure in the projects. With simulation of functions already in the early phases of development, we can omit one or the other development loops and reach a faster time-to-market and a higher degree of maturity for mass production start up.

» You presented a 3-D landscape operating concept at the Shanghai auto show. What are its special features?

The main goal is to make touch operation from the consumer world suitable for automobiles - this most of all means reducing distractions for the driver. Concepts that give feedback, such as the 3-D landscape, help with this. Finding and selecting individual functions is made easier for the driver, because he receives haptic feedback and his gaze must not leave the traffic.

» How close to series production is the operating concept? What do you see as USPs?

It can go into mass production immediately. The required hardware has already been installed in various vehicles and can be integrated relatively simply with the appropriate software. Basically we can implement the idea into different concepts. As USPs we see our high vertical integration of production and the fact that we already have a very broad spectrum of products with haptic feedback and touch surfaces on the market.

» In Shanghai Preh Car Connect (PCC) also presented a study for the combination of infotainment and driver assistance. This emphasized the cooperative work between Preh, PCC and the Chinese subsidiary JPCC. How is this designed specifically?

We start right at the beginning of the development process in order to quickly realize potential synergies in the advanced development. This is through intensive exchange and teamwork of all Joyson Group companies. This holistic approach is very popular with our customers, so we are frequently invited together as the Joyson Group to present our technologies and concepts for new vehicle generations; also because there is hardly anything on the market comparable to this expertise in its entirety.

» Will we see such total concepts strengthened from your company in the future?

Yes, because for new concepts in the interior, at times radical, it is absolutely necessary to combine the know-how of several suppliers. A good example of this are the so-called "Smart Decor Surfaces". Here, decor parts become control and display elements. In certain driving situations information can be displayed and also be hidden, if necessary. You can make certain function icons invisible if you are driving autonomously or add icons for function selection if you are driving yourself, or vice versa. At the same time this example shows that new systems and concepts only happen in close cooperation with the technologies of several suppliers.

» To what extent will the role of the development and production in Bad Neustadt change?

Bad Neustadt will remain our headquarters. From there the critical impulses for innovative products and processes will continue to come. At the same time we must forge ahead on our course of internationalization even in product development. Here we profit as a group from the foreign locations, not only through the additional capacities in the product development process. With their competencies the foreign locations also have become engaged actively in new concepts.

„We are frequently invited together as Joyson Group.“

Jochen Ehrenberg, CTO, Preh

» How close is the cooperation with other companies of the group - such as Joyson Quin or Joyson Safety Systems?

We have already worked together on a few projects. Synergies occur mainly in the exchange of advanced development topics, a broad range of customers and in material purchasing. Various activities have been started in all business sectors. However, it also remains clear that all companies of the Joyson Group operate independently on the market.

» Is there a concrete example from Preh where "Innovation through cooperation" worked well?

If you look at the "adaptive interior concept" shown in Shanghai, then it quickly becomes evident that we can offer within the Joyson Group innovative products precisely through the combination of our technologies. Furthermore, along

with these key words, our intensive exchange with various universities in Germany, Romania and China must be mentioned - especially in the sectors of Car HMI and E-mobility. This exchange enriches both sides.

» Which topics and markets currently have the highest relevance for Preh?

Sustainable and long term success is in the foreground for us. That requires keeping up our innovative strength - in all business sectors and markets and also in the future even stronger in China. Preh Group as a whole has an excellent product mix at all locations. With parts for various automobile manufacturers we serve more and more global vehicle platforms and through this, generally, can well balance production. <