

# R+W Coupling Technology celebrates 25 years of interna



*For 25 years, R+W has been supplying industries worldwide with the perfect couplings – a blend of innovative designs that offer quality, reliability, and precise torque transmission. Pump Engineer visited the R+W headquarters in Klingenberg am Main, Germany. Frank Kronmüller, Executive Vice President of R+W Antriebselemente GmbH, talked about the company’s strong emphasis on research and development, The SURVIVOR disc pack couplings product line, and their plans for the future.*

*By Sarah Schroer & Kyra van den Beek*

“Our vision is to become the leading supplier for coupling technology with individual solutions,” shared Executive Vice President of R+W Couplings in Germany, Frank Kronmüller. “We want to set precise and reliable standards in the industry. We know who we are and we know what we want to do. We want to use all of our resources in order to achieve our targets. We want to be number one in precision couplings. We are known for good service, high quality products, and our high sense of innovation. Our mission is to develop couplings for the power transmission and motion control industries. It is our mission to let everyone in the market know that R+W is the number one source for couplings.”

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First founded in 1990 in Klingenberg, Germany, R+W quickly made a name for themselves in the metal bellows and elastomer couplings market. They have since grown internationally with over 200 employees in their offices in China, Italy, Singapore, the United States, and their German headquarters. There is also a manufacturing plant in Slovakia and a direct sales force in India and France. They serve over

120 industries with their innovative couplings products – their top industries including centrifugal pumps, machine tools, and automation systems.

In 2011, R+W was purchased by the automotive systems manufacturer, Poppe + Potthoff, who

## tional innovation and success



owns several other businesses, each of which holds the philosophy of independence and self-responsibility. Working for a larger company has its benefits. R+W has access to their Technology Centre where they can do material, pressure, lifetime, and X-ray testing. Research, development, and creation of prototypes takes place at the German headquarters.

“About 80 percent of the couplings tests are performed here in Klingenberg,” said Kronmüller. “We have our own test benches. We also have a very close collaboration with the universities in Germany, including the university in Aachen and in Bayreuth, which are well known for their specialization in couplings.”

### **R+W has the DRIVE to succeed**

Kronmüller shares the R+W DRIVE philosophy which stands for Dynamic, Reliable, Innovative, Versatile, and Expanding. When Kronmüller first started working at the company 17 years ago, R+W was represented in 17 countries, a number that has since grown to 65.

“I think this development in 17 years shows our DRIVE,” shared Kronmüller. “We are dynamic and



fast-paced. The values of the company are also based upon German virtues like the drive for development. We have to be a step faster than our competitors from Asia. We are constantly looking for new developments. We also try to listen to the market. We create standards for our customers. We look at applications and solve problems. If we don't have the right product in our catalogue, we will develop it.”

### **Competitive delivery times**

R+W emphasizes the importance of high flexibility, quality service, and fast delivery times, especially when it comes to their manufacturing capabilities. There is enough stock available in the United States to ensure 24-hour deliveries for most standard items. The same is true of R+W's German locations.





“The manufacturing capabilities here in Germany allow us to manufacture every single component that is used in our couplings in a very short time. Delivery time depends on the size of the coupling and how complicated the part is, but we can perform an emergency delivery in one day or three days for more complicated couplings.”

Standard delivery times for basic components ranges between a day to two weeks. More sophisticated products, such as customized torque limiters, will range between three to six weeks. But because of R+W’s manufacturing capabilities and the stock that they carry, they are able to remain flexible. “We do not have to rely on subcontractors because of our own manufacturing capabilities. We can adjust the manufacturing process if we have to meet a high demand of products or components,” added Kronmüller.

### **Made-in-Germany product quality**

“All the products, no matter where they go in the world, are assembled and at least partially manufactured in Germany,” says Kronmüller. “Our couplings are truly a made-in-Germany product. We do not sub-assemble in other countries. We want to

keep a high standard of quality and that is why all the assemblies and the last steps of manufacturing are done in Germany. “R+W products’ quality management in Germany and the USA are ISO 9001 certified. The ATEX explosion proof directive is also met for hazardous duty pumping applications. In order to achieve this certificate the couplings must have an electrically conductive insert and the hubs must be made from non-sparking materials.

R+W offers couplings under several product categories, including their disc pack couplings, called The SURVIVORS, a certain segment of which meets the API 610 standard. These are especially designed for centrifugal pump packages in the oil and gas sector. API 610 requires, in addition to

standardized dimensions and ratings, safety catches for the disc packs, and a high precision balance grade – something R+W is highly familiar with, having made couplings that run at speeds in excess of 100,000 rpm.

Elastomer couplings are another product group that R+W has for pumps. These products are used for vibration damping and absorbing shock loads. In the pump sector, metallic hubs are normally used. Kronmüller explains how five years ago, they developed a glass fiber reinforced plastic coupling that saves customers money in light duty pumping applications. “We were the first who were able to develop this plastic coupling that was able to transmit the same torque as an aluminum coupling. It was initially met with some resistance, since a lot of end users were not familiar with the use of a plastic coupling instead of a metal coupling.” Kronmüller explains. However, European markets have begun to accept this new technology as being beneficial to their applications. Another advantage of using plastic is increased damping of vibrations and reduced noise level of the entire bell housing. The elastomer couplings are available with different inserts. Red inserts are medium-hard and softer yellow inserts offer the best vibration damping for pumps. They are also available in stainless steel for use in corrosive applications.

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### Strategic partnerships keep R+W ahead of their competition

Kronmüller shares how R+W places importance on strategic partnerships across industries. “We have a lot of partners. I believe in networking because I think it is hard to be the specialist for every unique industry. A partner in this case can be either a customer or another manufacturer of components for the same market. We have a broad knowledge since we are active in several industries. However, each industry has specialists and it makes sense to partner with these specialists for joint inventions or developments.

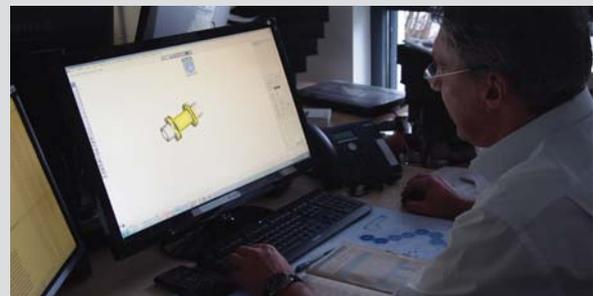
“Industries are driven by innovation,” continues Kronmüller. “It is important to be ahead of our competitors. It is our task to look at the industry, find out what is special about it, and determine what value we can add. We use our unique capabilities and knowledge to assess what is in demand in the industry. If we don’t have the right coupling, we will develop it.” R+W is working toward meeting Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), one of which includes two to four new developments each year, with one new product being launched per year.

### Expanding into international markets

R+W places great importance on their international presence, since 50 percent of their sales from the German headquarters are for export. The emphasis of machine building in the European market also makes their expansion into this market an important focus. Their German headquarters are in need of additional manufacturing space, so has plans to grow. “We are looking to increase the company. We have a very aggressive growth strategy. Therefore, we need space.”

Kronmüller also shared how their existing location in China has plans to expand. “China is obviously also a big market for pumps. But, the market for us there is limited because of the pricing situation and the local companies.”

R+W wishes to continue to grow their sales channels throughout the world. They currently have a regional manager working in South-East Asia which is one of the areas they would like to expand into in the future, along with the markets in Korea, Japan, and Taiwan. R+W also plans to open a sales office in India within the next three years.



### R+W Milestones

- 1990** Company is founded in Klingenberg, Germany
- 1993** First backlash-free “plug-in” metal bellows coupling is developed
- 1994** New miniature bellows coupling product is launched
- 1995** Development of a line shaft for spanning larger distances between shaft ends
- 1999** Entered the elastomer couplings market
- 2001** Establishment of R+W America
- 2002** Establishment of R+W China
- 2006** Created a new standard for safety couplings with the Technical Inspection Association TÜV Süd
- 2008** Establishment of R+W Italy
- 2009** Started an industrial drive couplings line
- 2011** R+W Couplings is purchased by Poppe + Pothhoff
- 2015** Celebration of 25 years in the industry

