

Company History



1961
1970
1980
1992
1997
2001
2002
2004
2008
Today

1961

In 1961 the physicist Bernhard Schaeffer founded the family enterprise primarily producing an amusement machine that he had designed and developed - the Dynamometer.

In the 1960s and 1970s approx. 10,000 units were manufactured on the premises and marketed throughout Europe.

1970

At the end of the 1970s Bernhard Schaeffer designed another amusement machine, the original model of the Power Rocket, which can still be found today in many of Berlin's amusement parks.

1980

The company's products changed in the 1980s and the owner developed and manufactured measuring instruments for fundamental thermodynamic research in universities.

1992

In 1992 Bernhard Schaeffer's two sons Jörg (technical computer scientist) and Kai (physicist) joined the company. Together they formed a KG (Kommanditgesellschaft – limited partnership). The sons brought electronics and software with them into the company.

When manufacturing the requested measuring systems in small production runs, the Schaeffers repeatedly faced the same problem:

Customized front panels had to be made over and over again by hand using files and drills, before the first

front panels could be produced using CNC milling and engraving technology. Production itself was simpler, however the steps from drawing the front panel via the programming right up to production remained laborious and time-consuming.

1997

Thus the idea for the “Front Panel Designer” came about in 1997/98. The family-owned business developed a CAD/CAM system adapted to the production of front panels, which would allow individual customer wishes to be quickly and efficiently transferred to a CNC machine.

The knowledge that many other engineers were facing the same problem speeded up the decision to make free CAD software downloads available to customers on the Internet. This move gave the company a completely new orientation:

The demand for customized front panels was so great that the Schaeffers withdrew completely from the measuring equipment business and have since given themselves over to the production of customized front panels. Jörg and Kai took over the management of the company, leaving the founder Bernhard Schaeffer more time to spend on his own research projects.

The annual increases in turnover and order numbers meant that the original premises in Berlin - Zehlendorf soon became too small. In the meantime 4 CNC machines were in operation.

2001

In Spring 2001 the Schaeffers rented 450m² in a building near the original site and with 5 employees moved within Zehlendorf to Hohentwielsteig.

2002

Following on from the rapid growth in Germany, Schaeffer Apparatebau KG, with the support of a co-operation partner, set up a partner company in mid-2002 in Seattle, USA, the Front Panel Express, LLC.

2004

In 2004 the brothers Kai and Jörg Schaeffer changed the corporate form of the enterprise to an AG (Aktiengesellschaft – stock corporation). At the same time they rented an additional area of approx. 500m² in the same building.

2008

2008 Relocation to new premises in Marienfelde, total area in use approx. 2500m².

Today

Today, with a team of 45 employees, the company produces customized front panels and housings economically and in small production runs on 10 machines. The German market is well covered. The Front Panel Designer is being continually enhanced. The next stage will allow TrueType fonts to be engraved as well as freehand outlines to be milled.