

Knitting

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Next generation

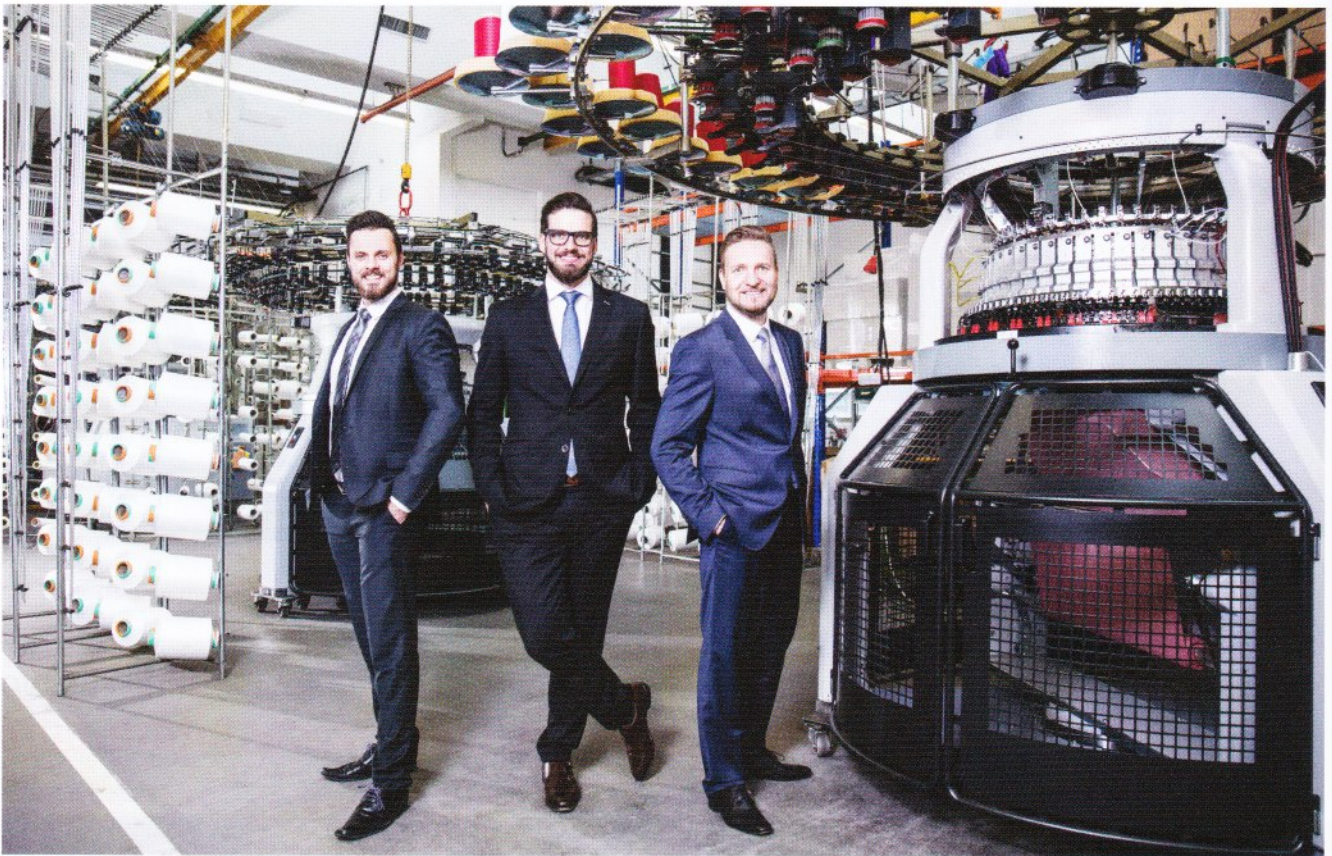
How Mayer & Cie. is staying at the top after 111 years

Knitted denim – future or fad?

Hosiery and seamfree knitting technology review

Full circle

The German circular knitting machinery manufacturer Mayer & Cie. is marking its 111th anniversary, as the company continues to maintain a leading market position through new technology developments and innovations. **Jonathan Dyson** reports.



The fourth generation of Mayer & Cie. (Left to right): Benjamin Mayer, joint managing director; Sebastian Mayer, director in charge of corporate development; and Marcus Mayer, joint managing director.

Mayer & Cie., the circular knitting machinery specialist based in Albstadt-Tailfingen, Germany, is this year celebrating its 111th birthday. The company is marking the anniversary in order to emphasise its leading position in the global circular knitting machinery market.

"This is an important anniversary, not just because it's a nice number and the company can look back on an eventful and obviously long history," explains Benjamin Mayer, the Mayer & Cie. joint managing director. "For Mayer & Cie. this anniversary is important because each 1 in 111 represents the position Mayer & Cie. holds – again – today."

Benjamin Mayer says that Mayer & Cie. is "1st in the market; 1st in technology; and 1st in driving innovations."

'1st in the market'

"After all, we sell customer success and not just knitting machines." So said Rainer Mayer, Benjamin Mayer's father and member of the third generation of the Mayer family, at the 1995 ITMA in Milan.

This philosophy remains the focus of Mayer & Cie. today and helps maintain its position in the market.

In 2015, the global circular knitting machine market had a total volume of about 27,000 machines, with sales of around 300,000 machines over the past ten

years. The market is highly fragmented and there is a large number of small suppliers. However, in terms of value, Mayer & Cie.'s share of the global circular knitting machine market is around 15-20%, according to the company. Its total sales in 2015 amounted to about €100 million, with earnings from its main factory in Albstadt-Tailfingen alone reaching €91 million.

In 2015, Mayer & Cie. manufactured and sold more than 1,300 machines. In 2016, the number is likely to reach 1,500. "The order intake has reached a level the company last experienced about 30 years ago," says Benjamin Mayer. "Production capacity is thus being exceeded at all locations – in

A family-style family firm

Mayer & Cie., founded on 8 July 1905, has been a family firm for 111 years, wholly owned and managed by the Mayer family. Benjamin Mayer, the Mayer & Cie. joint managing director, notes that after more than a century, only 3% of family companies at most can lay claim to this distinction.

The family that is now running Mayer & Cie. in the fourth generation already sees itself as being responsible for and to the next generation. "That is one of the reasons for our above-average equity ratio of more than 50%," says Benjamin Mayer. "The company is to grow under its own steam, and thus to do so sustainably."

Of Mayer & Cie.'s current employees, 45% have been with the company for more than 20 years, and 58% have been members of the corporate family for at least a decade.

"This high level of employee loyalty has a long tradition. There has hardly been a year in the company's history in which Emil, Peter, Rainer, Marcus or myself has not been able to congratulate at least one member of staff on having been with the company for 40 years," says Benjamin Mayer.

Around 330 people are employed by Mayer & Cie. in Albstadt-Tailfingen and around 450 worldwide. Mayer & Cie.'s sales network comprises about 80 representatives all over the world.

This is taken from one of the first Mayer & Cie. prospectuses for circular knitting machines in 1938. In that year, Mayer & Cie. introduced its first circular knitting machines.

"With a comprehensive portfolio and a fresh range of machines, Mayer & Cie. today has a product portfolio of about 50 machines," says Benjamin Mayer. "With its wide range of machines, Mayer & Cie. covers the entire spectrum of machines required for manufacturing modern textiles."

Fabrics knitted on Mayer & Cie. machines include materials for household textiles, sportswear, nightwear and swimwear, seat covers, underwear and technical textiles.

Just over a third of the machines that Mayer & Cie. has on offer have only been in the product range since 2010 at the earliest, according to the company, with the proportion of recently

developed single jersey machines even higher – more than 40% have not been around for longer than six years or less.

"In addition, there have been continuous improvements to existing models, not to mention constant development of key components such as the drive, the cams or the oiler," says Benjamin Mayer. "That leads, inter alia, to energy benefits."

He adds that Mayer & Cie.'s current Relanit 3.2 HS requires about 30% less energy than a conventional knitting machine.

Legendary machines

The OVJA 36, launched by Mayer & Cie. in the late-1960s, was the first overknit jacquard machine that could produce jacquard-patterned fabric for sale by the metre up to a fineness of E 24. It quickly became the 'knitter's favourite' and about 7,000 machines

Albstadt-Tailfingen, Vsetin and Shanghai."

A new factory in the Czech Republic with a floor area of 5,000 square metres is scheduled to open within the next few months.

In China, Mayer & Cie. CN has been at home in larger and more representative premises since May 2015. In January 2015 Mayer & Cie. introduced a second machine manufactured specially for the Chinese market – the MDC 2.2, the double jersey counterpart to the MSC that was already available.

Mayer & Cie. customers

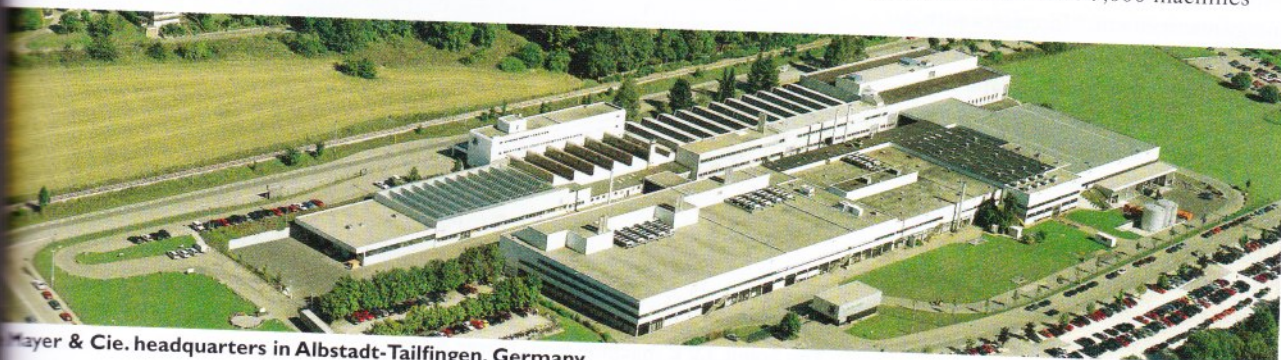
"Satisfied customers and longstanding successful cooperation are the basis of our success," says Benjamin Mayer.

He explains that Mayer & Cie. has an estimated 2,000 to 3,000 regular customers, who order and reorder from the company and whose machine park consists mainly of Mayer & Cie. machines. "They include a number of customers who have been with Mayer & Cie. since the middle of the last century," he says.

Hans-Jürgen Speidel, works manager at Speidel in Bodelshausen, Germany, a Mayer & Cie. customer for several decades, says: "We appreciate the consistently high quality, the high level of machinery expertise and the continuity at Mayer & Cie. Special requirements we have of our machines are reliably implemented."

Invest in technology'

Our circular knitting machines ... provide you with a means of production that does justice to the highest requirements. They are not just 'knitting machines as well' but new machines designed meticulously from scratch in terms of work using the most up-to-date means of technology and manufactured by the best specialised employees."



Mayer & Cie. headquarters in Albstadt-Tailfingen, Germany.

were sold. "The OVJA 36 became world-famous and remains legendary to this day," says Benjamin Mayer.

Meanwhile, since its market launch in 1987, 10,000 Relanit machines have been sold, amounting to one in seven of all Mayer & Cie. machines ever sold. "Although the patent protection for these single jersey machines with their relative movement technology expired in 2003 there have been no imitators yet – and that is unlikely to have anything to do with the machines' popularity," says Benjamin Mayer.

He adds that 60% of all Mayer & Cie.'s circular knitting machines ever sold are still in the market. The company has so far sold more than 70,000 machines, which means that around 42,000 of its machines are still knitting all over the world. Statistically, they must include 6,000 Relanit machines and over 4,000 OVJA 36s.

'1st in driving innovations'

"We will take care to ensure that we stay at the top with our new developments." So said Emil Mayer in a 'Talgang-Nachrichten' interview on 7 July 1965, three years before the presentation of the OVJA 36.

According to Benjamin Mayer, Mayer & Cie. invests 5-6% of its sales revenue in research and development – an above-average percentage for the industry. About 7% of its employees work in development and design. "It is they who ensure that Mayer & Cie. will continue to be a step ahead of the competition," he says.

Entrepreneurial vision

Mayer & Cie. has invested in the German start-up GridSystronic Energy, acquiring a majority shareholding in the company, which works mainly in smart energy management. "Interfaces with our company, as a circular knitting machine manufacturer, are intentional and exist," says Benjamin Mayer.

"An important component of the GridSystronic Energy solution is the possibility of connecting machines of all kinds and maintaining them remotely. For an engineering company whose knitting machines are to be found all over the world that is a decidedly relevant aspect."

Patents

Mayer & Cie. holds around 320 patents and design patents.

Mayer & Cie. was granted its first patent for circular knitting machine construction in 1938.

One of the most recent Mayer & Cie. circular knitting patents is for its SENSO BlueRS oiler system. Used needle oil is cleaned inside the machine and returned to the cycle. Depending on the type of machine, the use of fresh needle oil is reduced by up to 30% as a result, according to Mayer & Cie.

In connection with Mayer & Cie.'s spinitystems technology, the patent application for the so-called fancy module was published in June 2016. It is a process for use on the Spinit machine to knit totally new kinds of patterns.

Certifications and awards

Certifications

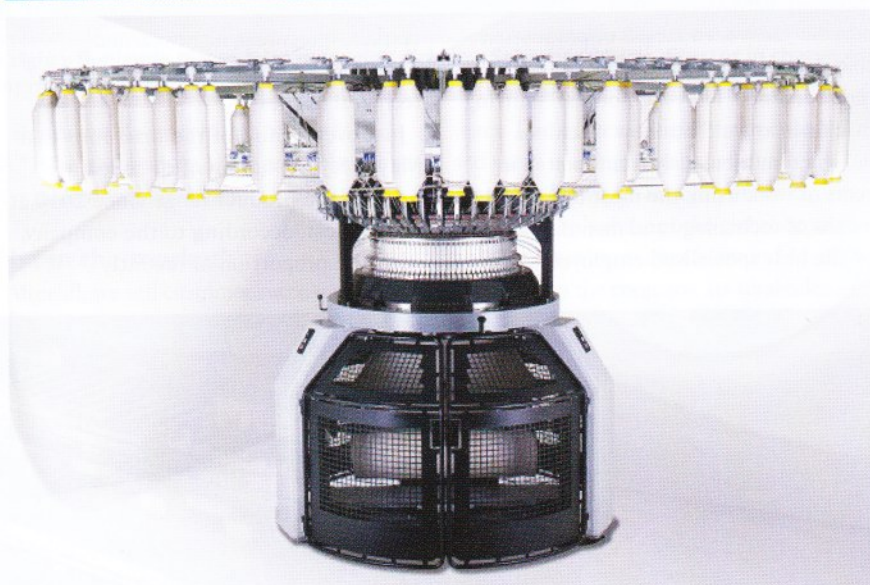
- ISO 9001:2015 for quality management.
- ISO 50001:2011 for energy efficiency.
- Member of the Blue Competence Initiative for sustainable solutions that harmonise with the economy, ecology and society.
- CE mark.
- Coface creditworthiness certificate.

Awards

- 2013 Turnarounder of the Year (Impulse) for the management duo Rainer Mayer and Josef Kleebinder.
- Constantinus Award (won by Advicum Consulting for Mayer & Cie. in the Management & Consulting category).

Innovation awards

- Top 100: On 24 June 2016 Mayer & Cie. was awarded for being one of the most innovative firms in Germany.
- ITMA Sustainability Award 2015: Mayer & Cie.'s spinitystems spin and knit technology was one of the best three.



The Spinit 3.0 E machine from Mayer & Cie.