

The Pulse of Innovation

productronica and Ersa

A review

50 years with productronica – A review and an outlook

Your company has been part of productronica from the very beginning – do you have any memories of your company/team's first participation in 1975?

Vision, commitment, and continuity from the very beginning

Ersa GmbH, then still *ERSA Ernst Sachs GmbH & Co KG*, was already an exhibitor at Electronica. Its slogan, "ERSA and soldering – a household name!" stood not only for manual soldering, but also for machine wave soldering, so it was no question for entrepreneur Dipl.-Ing. Ernst Sachs, Junior, to take the initiative in November 1974 to join forces with other exhibitors to bring to life the vision of a new trade fair as a platform for electronics manufacturing. As a counterpart to the existing *electronica*, the leading trade fair for electronic components, systems, and applications, *productronica* was created in 1975 as a practice-oriented event with a new concept that enabled exhibitors to set up "demo zones" on stands open on all sides and present their portfolio of machines and equipment for the manufacturing industry live to visitors.

The concept was a success, and the first *productronica* was a hit and developed steadily—alternating annually with *electronica*—to become the world's leading trade fair.

Ersa's commitment also remained constant. Not only has the company been an exhibitor in Munich without interruption since then, but Ernst Sachs also served as a permanent member of the trade fair advisory board before proposing Dipl.-Ing. Rainer Kurtz, partner of the family-owned company of the same name, which Ersa had acquired as a wholly owned subsidiary in the same year, as his successor in 1993.

At *productronica* 93, Rainer Kurtz, who was also appointed to the management board of Ersa GmbH in 1993, was accepted into the advisory board, and the commitment—from old entrepreneur to new entrepreneur—has continued virtually seamlessly to this day.

In the 50th anniversary year and "his" 17th *productronica*, the current advisory board member of the Kurtz Ersa Group, who has also been chairman of the committee for many years, looks back with pleasure. They look back on great experiences, interesting people from all fields, innovative technologies, and the tremendous development of *productronica* from the plank-floored Theresienwiese to a highly professional event of international significance with perfect infrastructure. The move to the new exhibition ground in Munich-Riem marked a decisive turning point, and Rainer Kurtz can still vividly recall the political "sparring" between the speakers from "black" Bavaria and "red" Munich at the opening ceremony.

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What has motivated you/your company to be part of productronica year after year?

productronica is the world's most important marketplace for technology and innovation in electronics manufacturing. It's like a family reunion for everyone involved in the industry.

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Which moment from the last few decades has particularly stuck in your mind?

The Ersa stand parties have been a highlight of the trade fair for many years, and in 2021, the party celebrating Ersa's 100th anniversary was particularly special. Back in 2021, with the pandemic still raging, the party was no longer allowed at the trade fair stand, so it was held in the nearby Wappenhalle instead. It was the last real party before the protective measures and restrictions were tightened again and larger events were no longer allowed.

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How has your company developed over the decades with the trade show?

Ersa has developed very successfully in recent years, particularly internationally. This is due to the Kurtz Ersa Group's global footprint strategy, which also anticipates further growth in the coming years. productronica is an integral part of this internationalization and a reliable marketing partner, not only in Munich, but also in important future markets for electronics manufacturing with productronica China and productronica India.

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How do you see the future – what are your hopes for the next 10 years of productronica?

No one can stop the trend toward increasing digitalization. Nevertheless, we believe that productronica will continue to enjoy a high status worldwide over the next 10 years. From the very beginning, it has been a "hands-on" trade show and will remain so. Trust in manufacturers and their employees cannot be completely digitized, so as long as people make decisions, trade shows like Productronica will continue to exist. As an important marketplace for the development of electronics manufacturing.

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Looking back on the last 50 years, is there a product, technology, or historical milestone that we should highlight in particular?

The triumph of VERSAFLOW selective soldering systems, which began at productronica and made Ersa the global market leader in inline selective soldering, is certainly a milestone worth mentioning here. The selective soldering process, which originally emerged from wave soldering, has now developed into an important production technology for THT-assembled electronic components, as the latest VERSAFLOW systems not only offer high flexibility, but also ensure maximum throughput at high speeds.

The success of Ersa's hybrid rework systems also began its triumphant advance in Munich. The continuously developed portfolio for all repair tasks is now in use thousands of times around the globe to maintain added value in defective or incorrectly assembled electronic assemblies. This pays off twice for users: it saves costs, especially for large and complex assemblies, because they can be used after repair, and it is sustainable because resources are conserved. Depending on the system, the processes run semi-automatically or fully automatically, can be reliably reproduced and tracked.

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