



# REFLECTION OF THE TIMES

How Albrecht Reimold, the Porsche AG Executive Board member in charge of production, is guiding the company's employees and sports cars into the future.

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INTERVIEW WITH ALBRECHT REIMOLD

# “WE’RE MAKING THE WORK EASIER”



**P**orsche's main site in Stuttgart-Zuffenhausen is changing with the times. Plant 1, with the red brick building at its core, will remain. That is Porsche. Tradition. But a new world is arising all around it. That too is Porsche. Innovation. Sports car production is facing its greatest transformation ever. The site facilities—right in the middle of the mixed residential and industrial Zuffenhausen district of Stuttgart—have doubled their surface area in just three years to 614,000 square meters. Since 2010, the site has also doubled the size of its workforce. By 2020, yet another 1,400 people will be hired for the Mission E, the first sports car with purely electric drive. Porsche is investing 700 million euros in Zuffenhausen alone for this project. Albrecht Reimold, the Executive Board member in charge of production, is bridging two worlds: he wants the best of both tradition and modernity. And he leaves no doubt that this synthesis will succeed.

#### **What are you working on right now?**

**Albrecht Reimold:** Porsche has set itself high goals with its Strategy 2025. Together with my colleagues, I am working on achieving them. We are placing a huge focus on digitiza-

tion. Our goal is not necessarily to have the most modern production system in the world, but rather the one best suited to meet our customers' requirements. The goal is to make a product that brings all of its power to the road while at the same time offering a high degree of individualization. And to do that efficiently in a short period of time. Porsche has long since made that the core of its approach. But the transformation now underway in the automotive industry is changing our production methods, and also our products—sports cars.

#### **How so?**

Well, with the exception of GT cars and special series like the 911 R, many of our customers will not accept absolutely purist cars in the future. Connectivity and intelligent driver assistance systems are here to stay. And we are working on new drive systems. They're needed because of new environmental regulations, but we would want them anyway. Electric drives are capable of great performance. And the first Porsche with purely electric drive should be able to do everything that Porsche embodies. We don't want any compromises in the design, the chassis, or the range. The Mission E is destined to become a new icon—like the 911.

#### **You are building a lot of facilities for this new icon ...**

Yes, we're preparing the main production facilities so the electric sports car can enter series production by the end of the decade. We're building a combined body shop for the Mission E and our other sports cars. We're also setting up a new paint shop. And I'll be able to see the new assembly hall from my office. Everything is linked by sophisticated conveyor routes. And don't forget that we're incorporating all of this into an existing site—while it continues to operate.

#### **Wouldn't it be easier to build a plant from scratch?**

Electromobility and digitization are ushering in a new age. There's no better place to start than right here—Zuffenhausen and Porsche are inseparable. Here, where you can feel all the tradition, it simply makes sense for us to keep making history. What's fascinating about Porsche in Zuffenhausen is how people work together, as well as the high degree of identification that each person has with the brand, and of course with the products themselves. This is where the two-door sports cars are made that everyone immediately associates with Porsche. The new production facilities will let us make the Mission E highly efficiently with modern technologies. But we will also be guiding the existing parts of the plant into the digital age.

#### **Are digital technologies compatible with a site that has so much tradition?**

Very much so. Zuffenhausen has shown itself to be extremely capable of change in the past. Furthermore, digitization is not a revolution, but an evolution—one which started many years ago with the introduction of computer systems in production, modern control methods at the body shop, and electronic screwdrivers in assembly. We're now pursuing that course more comprehensively with the Porsche Production 4.0 vision to guide us. Again, we're not doing this just for the sake of having new technologies. What we're looking for with every new application is efficiency.

#### **How can you be sure that this will produce more than just hype?**

We always test our new ideas in pilot trials, and make the decisions on how to proceed together with employee representatives. One thing is clear: we are a company that has to make money. But there are many areas where digital technologies are of major benefit. That starts with ergonomics. Wherever people are under time pressure, joint human-robot efforts can help. That makes things easier for our employees. Moreover, Porsche production is known for high levels of both individuality and complexity, and digital visualization systems help to make sure the right components are consigned. Digital techniques also help with documentation.

They, too, make work easier for our employees. It's always crucial to have your people on board.

#### **Could you tell us how you do that?**

Together with Porsche Consulting, we held an innovation and technology marketplace in 2016 at which suppliers of digital technologies presented their products to our employees. That was very well received, and it was important because it gave employees themselves the chance to see how new technologies actually work. That in turn helps to eliminate unfounded fears. When people talk about Industry 4.0, they're often frightened by the notion of fully automated plants without any human employees. That will simply not be the case.

#### **But shouldn't modern factories be self-optimizing?**

Automation and control are an important component of Porsche Production 4.0. But even the self-regulating effect that we seek to achieve in the near future will continue to require human action. We need employees to shape the processes. The point of digital technology is not to replace people, but to make their work easier. Porsche production will therefore be even more user-friendly in the future than it already is today. ←

**EXPERTS FROM PORSCHE CONSULTING ARE WORKING WITH THE SPORTS CAR COMPANY TO PUT PORSCHE PRODUCTION 4.0 INTO PRACTICE. HERE ARE THE MAJOR STEPS:**

- 1. Providing fresh impetus**  
Openness to outside ideas
- 2. Generating guiding principles**  
Orientation via an overarching vision
- 3. Promoting employee enthusiasm**  
Experience with new technologies dispels fears
- 4. Connecting and prioritizing applications**  
Overall concept instead of isolated solutions
- 5. Turning prototypes into successful scale-ups**  
Prompt generation of visible results