

From garage business to world leader: igus founders celebrate 90th birthday

igus founders Günter and Margret Blase jointly laid the foundation for the breakthrough of industrial motion plastics in 1964.

In 1964, Günter and Margret Blase founded a small business called igus in their garage in Cologne-Mülheim, Germany. Fast forward to 2021 and the company is a global brand, supplying customers worldwide with lubrication-free and maintenance-free motion plastics, robots and cable assemblies. The company is now celebrating the founding couple's joint 90th birthday.

When Günter Blase visited igus on his 90th birthday, the company's co-founder had a full view of the latest progress of the new factory building being constructed next to the headquarters in Cologne Porz-Lind, seen from miles away by the striking yellow pylons. igus manufactures motion plastics, high-performance polymers for dynamic applications. The tribopolymers igus that develops makes moving parts lubrication-free, quiet and light and are used all over the world – from theatres to mountain bikes and office furniture, as well as in offshore drilling rigs, crane systems, ships and space rockets.

This success was unthinkable back in 1965, a year after its foundation, when the very first motion plastics were manufactured in a 55m² garage. Günter had recognized the huge potential of plastic early on and how injection moulding made scaling up possible and profitable. After eight years at a plastics company, he set up his own business. His wife Margret, who also turned 90 in April, supported his idea and as a tax accountant, took over the finances of the new company, while Günter focused on production.

For six years, the newly formed "igus" produced motion plastic components from this garage, as a contract manufacturer for a handful of industrial customers.

"We must always adjust to minus 50 and plus 50 per cent"

Roll-on 56 years to the 90th birthdays of the founding couple, today an exact replica of the garage stands in front of the 90,000m² igus factory campus,

designed by architect Sir Nicholas Grimshaw in 1994. Inside the replica garage are some milestones of the company's history, such as the first injection moulding machine Günter used. Much has changed since these humble beginnings: the igus range now comprises 200,000 parts from stock, from online predictive energy chain systems to intelligent 3D-printed special parts, to robot components for low cost entry into automation.

With more than 4,500 employees and 35 companies worldwide, every day igus customers can improve their manufacturing and machining technology and save costs with motion plastics. To this day, igus and our employees heed Günter's original maxim, which is today more relevant than ever: "We must always plan for minus 50 and plus 50 per cent," referring to the ebbs and flows of the manufacturing world. It also refers to the capacities of igus machines and raw material warehouses during the pandemic, ensuring comparatively fast delivery times in this phase of rapid economic recovery. With the new factory building nearing completion, much greater activity is expected in the future.



igus congratulates Günter and Margret Blase on their 90th birthdays with a replica of the original garage, where the company was born, in front of today's factory campus in Cologne.

The terms "igus", "Apiro", "chainflex", "CFRIP", "conprotect", "CTD", "drygear", "drylin", "dry-tech", "dryspin", "easy chain", "e-chain", "e-chain systems", "e-chains", "e-chain systems", "e-skin", "e-spool", "flizz", "ibow", "igear", "iglidur", "igubal", "kineKIT", "manus", "motion plastics", "pikchain", "plastics for longer life", "readychain", "readycable", "ReBeL", "speedigus", "triflex", "robotlink" and "xiros" are legally protected trademarks in the Federal Republic of Germany and possibly also internationally.