



30 years ago, dSPACE accelerated the introduction of mechatronics and electronic control units by means of fast control technology. Since then, dSPACE tools have become a fixture in development departments all around the world. Soon-to-be-leaving CEO, Dr. Herbert Hanselmann, explains his career path.

Did you ever imagine that you would be the CEO of dSPACE for 30 years?

No, I did not. Back in the days, I did not have this type of vision. My first idea was to provide other engineers with a then unique technology. Growing the company from 4 to 20 employees seemed attainable and entirely sufficient at first.

Did you have a back-up plan in case dSPACE would not work out?

All the founders probably could have found a good career as engineers somewhere. In my head, I had already said goodbye to my position as a lifetime civil servant-type associate at the university to either start working in the industry or to become a full professor. There were plenty of alternatives.

How did you come up with the name dSPACE?

At dSPACE I am known for my love for

acronyms. Digital Signal Processing and Control Engineering described what we wanted to do. Back then, everybody knew the database software by the catchy name dBASE. From there, it was a small step to come up with dSPACE. Today, I would choose a different name. The constant assumption that we work in space flight gets old after a while as does continuously having to spell out the name. In the early days, I had a collection of letter



Being the CEO of dSPACE
for 30 Years – A Retrospective

envelopes that had a funny address on them. My favorite was: "Dora Siegfried Paula Anton Cesar Emil, followed by the street address", etc. We received those because this is how we spelled our name on the phone.

You have had so much success. Were there any failures? You can admit it now.

Thankfully, nothing ever went really wrong. There was one product that was not all that successful despite our extensive market research. We would have had to challenge a competitor in the market, for which we were too late. We also underestimated the inertia of customers. If a customer is not happy with a product, yet it works somehow and the competitor quickly fixes certain deficits, the newcomer does not stand much of a chance.

There are reports that you might have successfully fixed a squeaky shopping >>



cart with your car's oil dipstick. How much of an engineer can or must a CEO be?

It was not a shopping cart. It was the dolly for some measuring equipment that I had to wheel into the Ritz Carlton in Detroit. But some time later, I soldered something for a customer in Japan. In the past, customers often used to say that it was noticeable that the company had an engineer CEO. It was meant as a compliment, but this was years ago. With the current size of the company and the large number of talented technical leaders, an engineer CEO is no longer as important.

In your opinion, what were the oddest customer projects that used dSPACE

equipment for testing?

Our dSPACE Magazine always provides great exotic examples. One is the childbirth simulator, another one a tool for cutting into the human skull bone. I also fondly remember the hydraulic seismic damper on a skyscraper roof in Japan. Or a ride in Disneyland. There is nothing odd about cars, however. Everything about cars is serious.

What is the secret to the dSPACE success?

At the beginning it was particularly important that we, the mechatronic engineers, spoke our customers' language. We sometimes even helped them solve problems along the way that were a long way from the focus of our product range. It was always

important to combine multiple disciplines, namely control engineering, electronics, software, and physics. We earned the reputation that our equipment worked and did not require much post-engineering to finally do what it was supposed to do. Mistakes happen, but we always do our utmost to not leave our customers out in the rain. Good support is not a cost item, it is a matter of engineer ethics and of winning customer loyalty. A decisive factor is also that we are not afraid to put a lot of work into our tools to give the customer the best technology and that we do not slow down our efforts to constantly invest in our product portfolio. This last point is currently becoming very important again in view of the great technological changes.

Examples of dSPACE's presence in the early days and what became of it

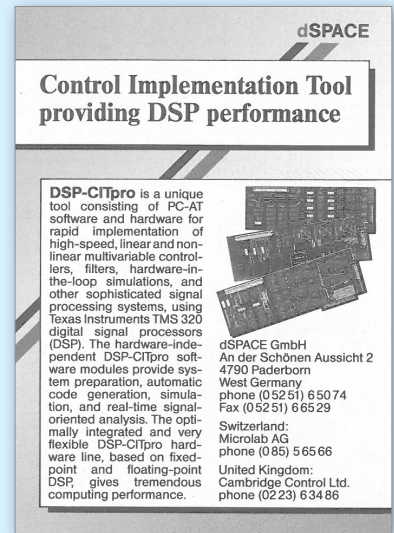
The first paper by dSPACE



In the early days: dSPACE messages and product promises 30 years ago.

In 1988, an article in the Elektronik magazine first drew attention to the newly-founded dSPACE company. Topic: "Control of fast mechanics with DSP".

Product display 1990



One of the first dSPACE product ads. The offer: An integrated solution that consists of system software, processors, and I/O for particularly demanding control tasks.

Today: Current user statements about the solutions offered by dSPACE.

Avid Amthor from the TU Ilmenau explains what this means in practice today: "The dSPACE hardware and software helped us achieve the high sampling rate needed for fast, nanometer-precise positioning."

It is good to know that users appreciate us and our products. Franz Hangl from IABG: "The seamlessly integrated development environment from dSPACE lets us carry out projects efficiently."

Your successor as CEO is Martin Goetzeler, somebody who has vast experience in managing a company. How did you eventually choose him?
I had an idea of a succession plan. And I wanted to start implementing it in 2018. Yet, I changed my plans when I saw the opportunity to get Martin on board. I have known him for 15 years. He is not an engineer, but this is not important. dSPACE has enough engineers. Martin is an experienced expert in managing technology companies. I expect he will make the company even more professional, start pushing topics that have been on the backburner, and continue growing the company.

How hard is it for you to let go? What will life after dSPACE look like?

Ask me about letting go at the end of the transition phase, that is at the beginning of 2019. But it is already very nice that I no longer have to deal with certain tasks on my own. Martin has really rolled up his sleeves and got to work. Life after dSPACE will not be idle for me, because I am not leaving the company entirely. I am only leaving my position as the CEO of dSPACE. The company will continue to be family-run, which means there will be sufficient jobs for me to do as the owner and in supervisory roles. Moreover, we also want to introduce the next generation of the family to the company. I am sure I will not be bored in my private life either. I have gone without much traveling, boating, and relaxing for way too long. Okay, we will have

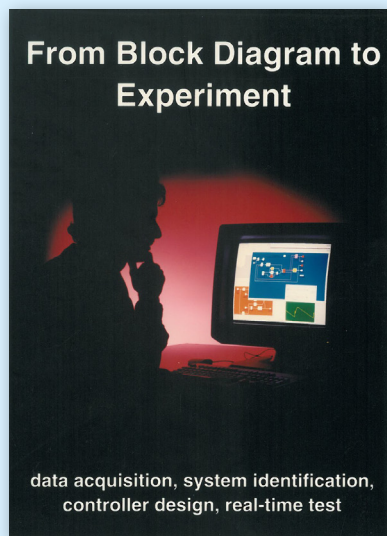
to see about the relaxing part.

What is your wish for the future of dSPACE?

That we can further expand our market position and grow in line with market requirements. I would also like to see the company gain some new momentum. But most of all, I want to keep our good reputation or even improve on it. ■

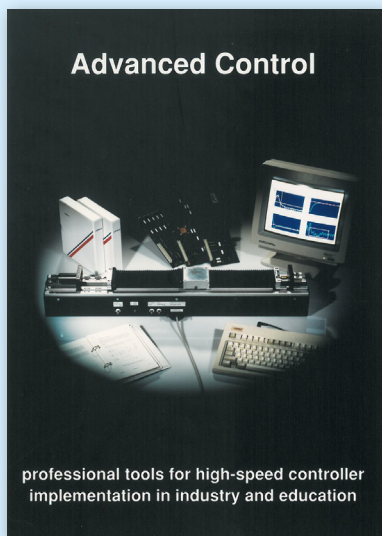
Thank you very much for the interview.

Poster for a trade fair



How to get from design to implementation as quickly as possible? One of the first trade show posters focuses on one of the most important tasks for dSPACE tools.

The performance message



When good is not good enough. dSPACE messages and products have always been aimed at those who simply expect more.

From customers, for customers



The first issue of dSPACE NEWS in 1992. dSPACE regularly lets its customers share their experiences in the magazine and report on exciting projects.

Prof. Trumper of Massachusetts Institute of Technology summarized it as follows:

"By facilitating rapid experimental implementation of controllers, dSPACE tools allow us to focus on the research challenges without becoming bogged down in implementation details."

A statement by Kay Kochan, Helmut-Schmidt-University Hamburg:

"With the modular hardware concept from dSPACE, we can tap into computing performance with virtually unrestricted scalability, and use it to develop systems that can be executed in real time despite high sampling rates."

We received the following opinion in the 2017 reader survey:

"I am very happy with the customer magazine as well as the dSPACE products and their product support."