



Photos (2): Stefan Weich

Philipp Halbach (left), Managing Director Fleischhauer Datenträger, in conversation with Marko Ruh, Chief Editor of Parking Trend.

## Interview with Philipp Halbach, Fleischhauer Datenträger GmbH

# “Parking tickets are little works of art“

The Fleischhauer Datenträger GmbH celebrates its 150th anniversary this year. In an interview with Parking trend international, Managing Director Philipp Halbach traces the company's rich history and takes a look at the present and future of the specialist for tickets, cards and RFID products.

### *Mr Halbach, 150 years is a proud number, how did it all begin?*

The beginnings of our company are those of a newspaper printing plant. Fleischhauer started in 1869 as a printer and publisher for the Wattenscheider Anzeiger. The original location of the company was Bochum-Wattenscheid. By the way, many of our employees still come from Wattenscheid today. The connections to the roots of our company have thus remained so to speak.

### *What milestones have shaped your company history?*

Over the decades, many technological as well as market-related changes have taken place. Newspaper printing was the first focus of the company's activities. Later, another milestone was the production of punched cards, the first machine-readable medium. The company name 'Fleischhauer Datenträger' has remained the name of the game to this day because our current tickets, cards and RFID products for access systems are also modern media. They transport information.

### *How did the punch card get you into the parking industry?*

Perforated cards were a medium from the very early computer age. At that time it was the core business of Fleischhauer. A little later the magnetic accounts followed, which developed very strongly in the 1960s. The

era of automated parking systems began at the end of the 1960s.

### *So you have always been open to new technologies?*

This is a survival issue for us in rapidly changing markets. We also feel the pressure to change very strongly, but by no means have it exclusive with our industry environment. Just look at how much automotive companies are currently changing, just to give an example. Of course, over the long distance of 150 years, but also over the past decades and years, we have had to critically review how sustainable our business model and our product focuses are in relation to market developments of the coming years.

### *How do you celebrate your company anniversary?*

We try to bring it to life for our customers. We used the PARKEN in Wiesbaden for this pur-

pose. We would also like to infect our customers worldwide. However, the jubilee is no reason to relax and just enjoy the past, but it is an incentive and aspiration for us to continue the story successfully and to retain the necessary adaptability and willingness to change.

**How do you see yourself positioned at the moment, in times of digital disruptions?**

The age of paper ticket applications seems to be coming to an end in the course of digitalization. The reality today, however, is a different one if you look at the availability of digital applications in the parking Market. The potential successor technologies for parking tickets were not invented in the last six months. And that's why there are empirical values on the significance of these in relation to ticket-based access systems.

**Your evaluation?**

We're seeing some change in the market right now. System operators are opening up to new technologies without awarding this healing quality. I believe that in the coming years it can be assumed that ticket-based and ticketless access systems will increasingly be used in parallel. Last but not least, acceptance by parking customers will then decide on the further significance of the various technologies.

**So you're not afraid of digitization?**

We don't want to be the paper ticket's hymn singing in the hope that things will stay the way they were. We realistically assume that other technologies will be used more and more. Everything else would be a somewhat naive notion.

**Do you therefore believe that parking garage operators should drive on several tracks?**

We hear from our customers that they do not expect a broad change to 'ticketless' in the short term. At the same time, however, experience is gained as to how parkers deal with the technologies. In Germany, data protection law is also playing a role. If you want to remain anonymous and do not want to leave a digital footprint in the future, you will be better off with a ticket and cash at the pay station than if your number plate is registered at the entrance or if you pay cashless

at the machine. So it's also a question of user preferences. Parking garage operators, who take this into consideration, will have different technologies available.

**Which international preferences do you observe?**

There are quite big differences in mentality. Cash culture and data protection are important aspects, but also technical questions of system networking. The rate of change is therefore very different in different markets. We serve customers in 60 countries worldwide with parking tickets. This gives us a relatively good view of the developments in various regions and of the opportunities with our products.

**Also through special know-how?**

The parking ticket is often an underrated product. If it were a trivial product, we would not be able to market it successfully outside our home market. From this alone it can already be deduced that you are dealing with a high degree of specialization. This includes, among other things, a particularly deep knowledge of the system requirements, which are at the same time very heterogeneous. The technological competence has developed in close partnership with the equipment manufacturers. Our specialization in the processing of thermal paper also allows us to cope with the different climatic conditions at the place of use of our products and to support the device manufacturers in the further development of their parking applications.

**What is the significance of quality management?**

For many years now, certifications have been our benchmark for standardizing our processes with regard to quality, environment and



**Modern printing processes enable high-quality and individually printed parking tickets.**

sustainability, also in the area of energy efficiency of manufacturing processes. As we are constantly subject to audits, we ensure that we have an external view of the organisation.

**What are the specific characteristics of the product?**

Parking tickets can be little works of art today. In principle, we can produce tickets with an endless number of different layouts, depending on the customer's requirements. For example, we can individualize individual tickets in a cassette in order to link them to refund systems or competitions, for example.

**Is this a novelty?**

This variability and quality would be inconceivable without state-of-the-art printing and processing methods. Whenever individuality and special printing requirements are required, we have the corresponding possibilities.

**What about the RFID media you produce?**

We manufacture RFID products in the form of chip cards, but also as flexible RFID media such as e-tickets, which are used as tickets in passenger transport or as admission tickets. In the parking sector, RFID plays an important role, especially in long-term parking applications. Inside the card there is a transponder consisting of a chip and an antenna. Long-term parking cards are the standard medium for a contactless access to the parking garage. With these RFID applications over the years there have been many developmental steps in close cooperation with equipment manufacturers. Currently, you can see efforts in the market, to create interoperability between systems of different manufacturers, and to create media that functions system-neutral. This is especially important for large car park operators. This is important for operators who use different systems. With such hybrid cards several chip types are accommodated in one card, which ensures compatibility with various enabling infrastructures.

**Is this worth the effort?**

There is already a certain contradiction between the conscious technological competition of systems on the supplier side and the desire for the most homogeneous handling

possible on the customer side. But this is a contemporary requirement, and I believe that this has long been clear to equipment manufacturers.

**And where will you be in 25 years?**

Today I cannot say with certainty what significance parking tickets, parking cards and parking ticket rolls have for our company in 25 years in relation to other product issues. To date, we see good development opportunities in these product areas by further expanding them worldwide. The indirect answer to this question is that we trust in the adaptability of our company. In addition, we have the technological competence as well as creativity and future orientation of our team. From all that I gain a great deal of confidence that we will be able to take a good spot in the applications and the markets of tomorrow and can live up to our main claim in the future, which is to be an important partner for our customers. ■

## 150th anniversary of Fleischhauer Datenträger

From its founding in 1869 to today, Fleischhauer has been dealing with print media. In the first decades of its history, as a newspaper printer in Wattenscheid, the information medium of that time was produced. Later was the company from the Ruhr area was one of the first in Europe, which dealt with the production of punched cards, the first machine-readable media. According to own data Fleischhauer was the first producer for tickets and park tickets with magnetic stripes at all. These were invented in cooperation with device manufacturers. To date, the company has been developing and producing ticketing and identification technologies. The portfolio includes magnetic stripe, barcode and RFID media. As a member of the Halbach Group, Fleischhauer Datenträger is part of a family business run by Philipp Halbach and Thomas Halbach in their sixth generation. With two production sites in North Rhine-Westphalia, subsidiaries in Germany and abroad and more than 300 employees, the Halbach Group is one of the largest ticket manufacturers in Europe.

## Zagrebparking

### Exhibition presented in a parking garage in Zagreb

The Croatian parking space operator Zagrebparking, a subsidiary of Zagreb Holding Ltd., has cooperated with the most trophic Croatian basketball club KK Cibon Zagreb with the intention of displaying the parking garage Tuskanac in Zagreb as a meeting place. In September 2019 the photo exhibition "Tuškanac wolves" has been set up in the public parking garage Tuskanac in Za-

greb. The garage is located on the edge of a nearby forest.

In 2008 was declared as the most beautiful newly constructed European garage by the European Parking Association. The reason for the collaboration is the first matchfield of KK Cibona that was located at the present location of the parking garage. After the construction was finished, Cibona's

matchfield was re-installed in the old location, but this time on the roof of the new public garage.

The main concept of the exhibition is based on photographs taken at the Tuskanac matchfield, but the exhibition itself contains many other significant photos from the history of the basketball club. The exhibition is located in the stairwell of the parking garage and contains 54 photographs of Cibona's legendary players such as Drazen Petrovic, Kresimir Cosic, Nikola Plecas and many others. Cibona's legendary basketball players Drazen Petrovic, Kresimir Cosic and trophy coach Mirko Novosel are also members of the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame. The exhibition was presented in the presence of current players and management of basketball club Cibona, representatives of Zagrebparking and Mr. Milan Bandic, Mayor of the city of Zagreb. Also club legends, former basketball players and former trophy coach Mirko Novosel visited the exhibition. ■



Photo: Zagrebparking