

HOWIAL's 65th Anniversary

65 years Finger-Jointing Technology

From a craft-based engineering firm to a specialist in high-performance finger-jointing systems: since its foundation in 1961, HOWIAL, based in Pohlheim, Germany, has continued to develop. Today, the company combines its many years of experience in finger-jointing technology with the expertise of the MINDA Group, based in Minden, Germany.

Founded in 1961, HOWIAL is celebrating 65 years of company history this year. What began as a mechanical engineering business in Hesse has, over the decades, developed into a specialist in finger-jointing systems.

One thing has remained constant throughout: the commitment to constantly pushing the boundaries of technical solutions and setting new standards with innovative developments. In this way, HOWIAL continues to shape the technology of finger-jointing to this day.

Since its integration into the MINDA Group, this wealth of experience has been combined with the expertise of an internationally oriented group of companies in mechanical and plant engineering.

In 1961, master joiner Willi Hofmann laid the foundations for HOWIAL. The company name is composed of parts of the names Hofmann, Willi and Albohn.

Heinrich Albohn, the founder's son-in-law, was thus also immortalised in the company's name.

Continuous growth

The history of HOWIAL began in 1961, when master carpenter Willi Hofmann founded the company. The company name is composed of parts of the names Hofmann, Willi, and Albohn, with the latter coming from his son-in-law, Heinrich Albohn.

In the foundation year, the young company introduced its first finger-jointing machine, the HV-02, as well as the VP-20 gluing press. The first finger-jointing machines were developed in collaboration with the Sauter company. Two years later, the company's headquarters were moved from Muehlacker to Reiskirchen.

As early as 1969, HOWIAL expanded its product line to include the MGZ-36 feeding magazine for Weinig automatic grooving machines. Approximately 400 units of this machine type were built between 1969 and 1985.

The overall process is more important than individual steps

Following the unexpected death of the company's founder in 1974, his son Alfred Hofmann joined the company and took over as CEO. Technological development has continued steadily. In 1977, HOWIAL installed the first HV-05 finger-jointing line, combined with a VP-132-LA gluing press, at a manufacturer for glulam.

The machine processed a wood package consisting of three lamellas. The vertically oriented lamellas were profiled on their front edges. Milling machine and gluing press were linked together and worked fully automatically. The glue application system was already integrated into the press. This revealed a principle early on that would shape HOWIAL's development for decades: combining individual processing steps into a high-performance, automated end-to-end process.

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Milling, gluing, and pressing

HOWIAL took another step forward in 1983 with the HVP-10 compact finger-jointing machine. With this type of machine, the three processes - milling, gluing, and pressing - were performed for the first time with a single workpiece clamping. The pneumatically controlled press was designed to produce moldings and window trims. The pressing forces ranged from 50 to 65 kN, and the cycle rate was about four to five joints per minute.

Quality Assurance as Part of the Plant Design Concept

In addition to actual production, HOWIAL also focused on quality assurance. In 1996, the company developed the BSP-50 bending test machine for testing finger-jointed wood. Such machines are used for in-process monitoring during the production of glulam and solid KVH. The testing machine was available in various sizes with maximum test forces ranging from 30 to 250 kN. Between 1996 and 2022, approximately 150 machines were built.

In 1997, HOWIAL put the first fully automatic compact finger-jointing machine HVP-25 into operation. The machine was equipped with two milling spindles and a vertical milling unit. With pressing forces ranging from 250 to 280 kN and a cycle rate of about four joints per minute, it was designed to produce GLT and KVH.

Patented technology

In 2004, HOWIAL introduced the HVP-26, a completely redesigned compact finger-jointing machine. The patented flyback technology was the heart of the system. During this process, the milling unit is retracted during the pressing cycle and the subsequent transport of the wood. The milling unit now had one vertical and one horizontal axis. This concept also allows the integration of an innovative, contactless glue application.

New technology, new partners

In 2010, Jochen Hofmann and Michael Hofmann took over as CEO. At the same time, the company changed its legal form to HOWIAL GmbH & Co. KG.

In 2018, HOWIAL developed a new drive technology for the third generation of flyback finger-jointing machines, enabling a level of dynamic performance not previously achieved.

In 2020, Alfred Hofmann transferred all his company shares to his sons, Jochen Hofmann and Michael Hofmann.

The design, construction, and commissioning of the first HOWIAL DUOZINK cycle center in 2021 marked the beginning of a new chapter in the company's history. The system was developed to produce GLT lamellas. The system consists of the HV-08 milling machine with two milling heads and the VP-150 cycle press with integrated contactless glue application.

In 2022, Robert Falch and Michael Hofmann decided to build finger-jointing machines together in the future. For this purpose, HOWIAL and MINDA Industrieanlagen signed an initial cooperation agreement. That same year, Jochen Hofmann resigned as a co-partner.

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New Location and Integration

In 2024, HOWIAL relocated from Reiskirchen to Pohlheim. There, the company moved into a newly constructed office building that had been designed specifically to meet its needs. One year later, Robert Falch and Michael Hofmann fully integrated HOWIAL GmbH & Co. KG into the MINDA Group.

Thus two areas of expertise come together: HOWIAL brings its many years of experience in the development and construction of finger-jointing systems to the partnership, while MINDA Industrieanlagen contributes its expertise in mechanical and plant engineering. The partnership, which began in 2022, laid the foundation for this collaboration.

Moving into the future with experience

HOWIAL's 65-year history is characterised by the continuous development of finger-jointing technology and a commitment to integrating individual processing steps into high-performance, automated production processes.

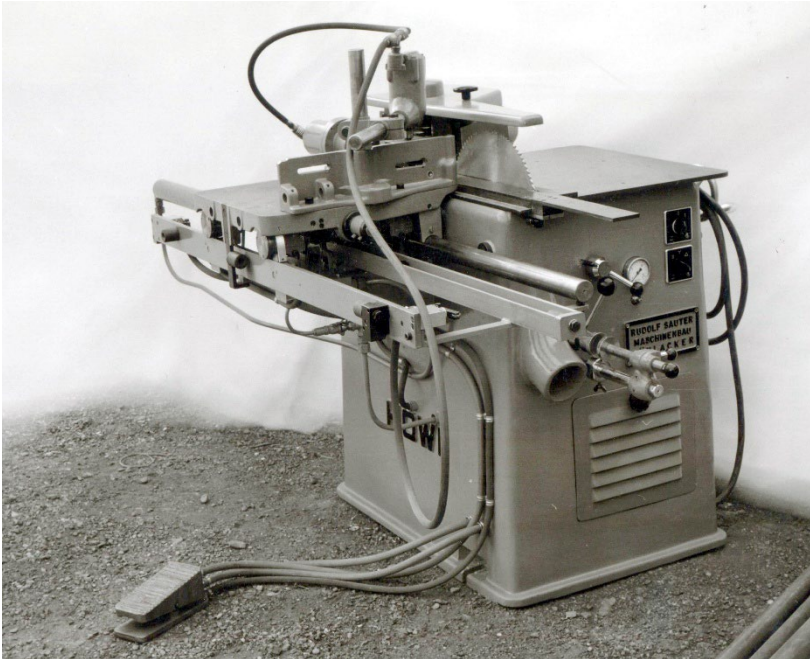
From the very first milling machines right through to modern cell production systems, solutions have been developed that increasingly integrate milling, adhesive application, pressing and material handling with one another.

With the integration into the Minda Group, the foundations have now been laid for the next phase of development. The specialist knowledge built up by HOWIAL over decades will be retained and combined with Minda's expertise in machine and plant engineering. At the Pohlheim site, 14 employees are working to translate this experience into new solutions for the timber industry. In this way, HOWIAL is combining its long-established identity with new opportunities and, after 65 years of company history, is looking to the future.

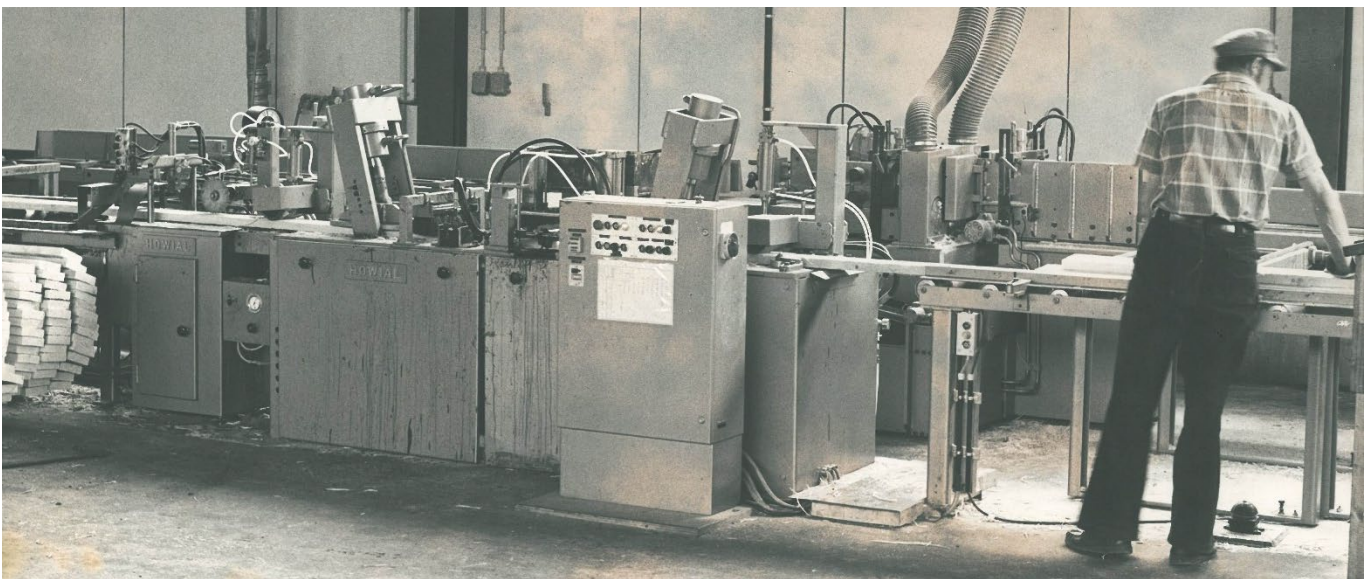


In 1961, master carpenter Willi Hofmann founded the company in Muehlacker.

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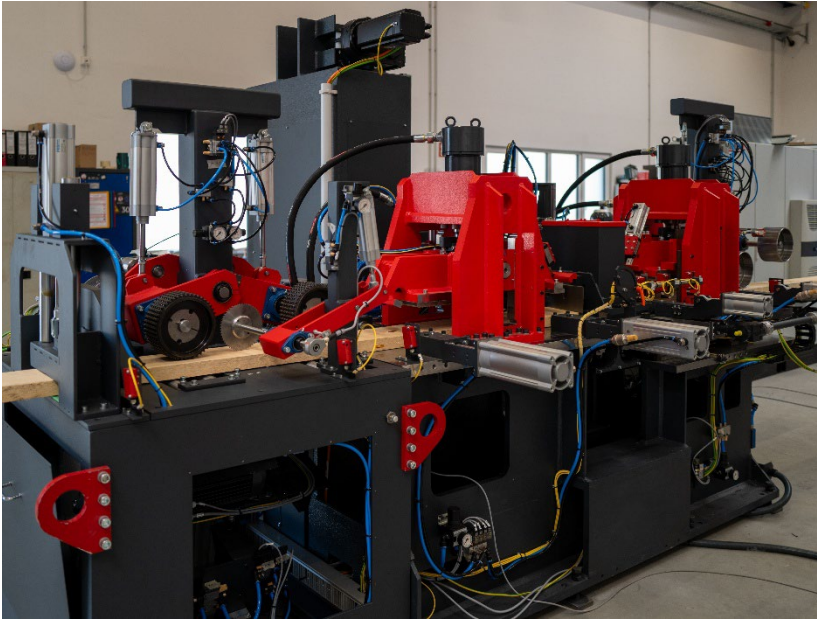


The first HV-02 finger-jointing machine from the year HOWIAL was founded



1977: First HV-05 package finger-jointing line in combination with a VP-132-LA gluing press

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Compact Finger-Jointing Machine Flyback HVP-28: Flyback technology is a prime example of the continuous development of finger-jointing technology at HOWIAL.



2024: Relocation of the company's headquarters from Reiskirchen to Pohlheim

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2025 Robert Falch (right) and Michael Hofmann integrate HOWIAL into the MINDA Group



2026 a proud team celebrates its 65th anniversary