

# „Recognizing the Pulse of the Times“

Stavros Mitrakis, CEO of Preh Car Connect GmbH, about starting the “Modular Infotainment Kit,” lack of software developers, IAA project highlights and biggest challenges in coming years.

- INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY CLAUS-PETER KÖTH -



## About the person

Stavros Mitrakis, 47, studied automation engineering at FHTW Reutlingen. After graduating, he began his career at Harman/Becker Automotive Systems. In 13 years, he led numerous infotainment projects to production maturity and as Vice President was responsible inter alia for Harman's global navigation strategy. From 2014, he served as Senior Director R&D for Panasonic Automotive & Industrial Systems before moving to Dresden in 2017 as Managing Director of Preh GmbH and CEO of Preh Car Connect GmbH.

### » How did Preh Car Connect's sales and employee numbers develop over the past year?

With 1,200 employees, we have remained stable in terms of the number of staff, after hiring almost 200 new employees in 2017. Turnover fell slightly in 2018 compared to plan. This is due, among other things, to our customers' delivery problems in the course of introducing the WLTP as well as the delayed VW Passat production start.

### » How did year 2019 start?

We are on target for sales. It is very difficult to fill vacancies; the job market for software developers seems to be empty. Currently, we have 50 to 60 positions open. In order to make up for this, among others we have established expertise through external service providers in Best Cost Countries and entered into long-term cooperation agreements with these companies. Overall, the first half of the year has been dominated by the extremely important start of the "Modular Infotainment Building Block," MIB 3 for short, in the new VW Passat. We have contributed new developments to cloud-based navigation, voice recognition and mobile device connection. Moreover, as a system integrator we have coordinated other suppliers.

### » Was growth slowed by the lack of employee capacity?

An important new project never will fail due to scarcity of resources. That's why we have created flexibility through external service providers at very short notice.

### » Which course has been set recently?

Together with our Chinese sister company Joyson Preh Car Connect, JPCC for short, we benefit from the Chinese market's dynamic development in the areas of connectivity and vehicle-to-X (V2X) communication. Specifically, we received a production order from a young Chinese OEM for developing a V2X box with production start in 2021. We provide our platform know-how and "German Brain" in order to develop with JPCC the Chinese specifics for it. This combination is very well received. Therefore, we are confident we will be able to win follow-up orders – in China as well as in Europe and the US, where we now can point to a future series product.

### » What were your product highlights at IAA 2019?

We presented four demonstrators in Frankfurt. The focus was on our in-vehicle infotainment (IVI) concept with a true virtual office assistant – in this case Microsoft Azure. We integrate these assistants seamlessly into the entire infotainment. The IVI concept had the appearance of a car cockpit with three displays. Above all, we wanted to show the software behind this hardware: a virtual assistant who takes care of the driver, office applications and safety warnings for various dangerous situations. Cloud-based intelligence not only allows upcoming appointments to be announced via voice control. The system also can navigate to the desired location

and recognize when a meeting is not reached in time due to a traffic jam.

Furthermore, we presented with a V2X demonstrator what is new about communication between vehicles or what is possible between vehicles and the traffic

infrastructure. The core element is our connectivity box. We currently are working on networking with the 5G mobile communications standard.

### » Which exhibits attracted particular attention?

The IVI concept was particularly striking due to its size. Also, with the other exhibits we wanted to show how we recognize the pulse of the times and can provide many answers to current questions about the cloud, connectivity, car infotainment and navigation.

### » In connection with e-mobility, many new OEMs are coming onto the market – above all from China. How interesting are these companies for PCC and JPCC?

In China, projects seem to be much faster, require more flexibility, and a systems supplier needs to be a strong advisor to OEMs. With the V2X series order, we have received a lot of attention in the market and aroused great interest. As a next step, we will transfer our expertise from the MIB 3 to the Chinese market. Apart from that, our Android Embedded Module is very important, especially for China. There it needs a fast, flexible solution, such as connecting the Android World with existing infotainment kits.

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Stavros Mitrakis

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### » Automated driving offers new degrees of freedom in the interior. What products and systems do you want to use to score?

As software specialist in our specific segment of connectivity, we contribute to advancing autonomous driving and making it as attractive as possible. With our connectivity box, for example, we also can provide audio streaming, playlists, video streaming services, television programs, all Internet content as well as games and e-mails unrestrictedly and permanently.

### » In which fields do you still see possibilities or the need to expand PCC's portfolio?

Here we focus on the topics of software and application development as well as services. Within the Joyson Group, we are the integrator of sensor data, merging it and bringing it to a different aggregation level, ultimately developing products that make driving easier for the driver and passenger.

### » What is the biggest challenge for Preh Car Connect over the next two or three years?

We must evolve constantly, but at the same time take into account that the market has become extremely difficult – so to say, a tightrope walk – between investments in innovation and strict cost controlling. In this respect, we will, among other things, redefine the topic of pre-development in the second half of 2020 – together with JPCC and with an expanded focus on the Chinese market. <