

# JÜRGEN GRÖSSLER RETIRES AS SORG'S GLASS CONDITIONING MANAGER

As the world leader in glass melting and conditioning technology, SORG can optimise a glass plant remotely and instantly. But it has not always been like that, as SORG's Head of Department, Jürgen Grössler, witnessed.

Having helped develop some of the solutions that shaped the industry for 40 years, Grössler is now retiring. In this interview, he talks about the highlights of his career and shares his views about the glass industry's past and future.

## 1. What initially drew you to the glass industry and SORG?

It was mainly my interest in getting to know a new industry. I initially worked in the mechanical engineering field. SORG offered me an excellent opportunity to use my engineering knowledge in a new economic sector, working in a small team with big ambitions.

## 2. What are you most proud of over your time at SORG?

I am most proud that my department, who are the leaders in glass conditioning. We had to endure a lot of restructuring during the last four decades, and seeing SORG rise to be a worldwide leader.

## 3. What has been your favourite project and why?

As I have worked on more than 2000 assignments, there is not one sole project that outshines all the others. However, the exclusively electrically heated projects were interesting and demanding for me.

## 4. What was the biggest challenge you've faced?

Two challenges come to my mind. Firstly, the takeover of the whole forehearth sector of the former US competitor Emhart in July 2006. We had to transfer its technical and commercial knowledge from Owensville, Missouri, to Lohr am Main, in Germany. We did it in record time of only a couple of weeks. Our department also immediately started working on offers and projects. Since then, we have sold more than 400 forehearths based on the former Emhart design.

Secondly, always being technically up to date with the whole glass conditioning process, especially with our second development, the 340S+ forehearth.

## 5. What was the biggest change SORG has gone through during your time?

Until the mid-90s, it was only possible to contact someone via landline network, Telex (I guess many people don't even know what this is) and later via telefax. Today, mobile phones, e-mails and almost daily video/teleconferences are completely normal. Furthermore, in 1982 most of the designs were done by hand on a drawing board with designs via computers and 3D models being introduced much later.

## 6. What will you miss the most?

Probably the daily personal contact with my SORG colleagues, customers and suppliers. And I guess I will miss the travelling a little bit as well.

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**7. Tell us about your favourite memory.**

There are plenty of great memories, often associated with travelling to distant countries. Having worked in many different positions, I have travelled a lot – about 40 days each year. In the end, I have been to over 50 countries. I will also be looking back on my time as a manager and player in the SORG football team.

**8. How has the industry changed since you started 40 years ago?**

We were not and had no need to be available 24/7 in the past, and nobody was expecting a solution to their problem on the same day because there are also specialists in the plants. Electronic systems, controls and automation have also greatly increased the available data per system.

On top of that, nowadays a lot of value is placed on using less energy and far fewer staff in the glassworks. The demand for employees with more production-specific expertise has also increased.

**9. What's the biggest challenge SORG and the industry will face in the future, and how prepared are we to meet that challenge?**

The industry must constantly be innovating and investing in intelligent automation. We also have to reduce the use of fossil fuels and gas emissions. SORG is very well prepared for this.

**10. What is the biggest misconception people have about the glass industry?**

Some people think that glass is just a material for bottles, jars or windows when it's so much more. It's not without reason that the UN has proclaimed 2022

as the International Year of Glass. There are many signs that glass is becoming the material of the 21st century.

**11. What are your hopes for the industry over the next 40 years?**

I hope the glass industry develops just as positively as I have been able to experience, observe and shape since 1982.

**12. What is your greatest accomplishment in your 40 years with SORG?**

Being able to hand over a motivated, well-trained and experienced specialist department.

**13. Looking back at your career, knowing what you know now, is there anything that you would do differently?**

Maybe I should have been more relaxed and less emotional about some things. It would also have been helpful to speak another language in addition to German and English.

**14. What advice do you have for anyone starting their career in the glass industry and at SORG?**

Always be realistic and optimistic. Work out solutions as a team. And in the event of problems, have a plan B and possibly a plan C ready.

**15. What are your plans for retirement?**

Take things easy. Probably travel to some cities of which I only know the airports so far. And teach my grandson proper football.

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