

GERRESHEIMER

A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO PHARMA INDUSTRIALISATION PARTNERING

As a company offering contract services at every stage of drug delivery system development, Gerresheimer has a wealth of expertise and history in industrial-scale production. Here, Michael Wiglenda, Global Senior Director Technical Competence Center & Moldmaking Germany, explains Gerresheimer's industrialisation offering in detail.

INTRODUCTION

The gulf between a drug delivery system concept and a mass-produced product ready for market is a vast one. Gerresheimer knows this well, as a full service provider for drug delivery systems that operates at every phase, from initial idea development through to full industrial manufacture. Gerresheimer handles:

- Concept development
- Concept studies
- Ratings and cost analysis
- Industrial design
- Product development
- Process and manufacturing equipment design
- Mould making
- Automation engineering
- Production (clinical sample, small batch, large batch)
- Product Assembly (manual, semi-automated, automated)
- Product finishing
- Pharmaceutical assembly and filling
- Sterilisation
- Packaging
- International distribution.

With this full suite of services available, Gerresheimer is a one-stop-shop for getting a pharmaceutical product to market. The company has experience across a spectrum of delivery routes, including inhalers, pen-injectors, autoinjectors and prefilled syringes. In co-operation with its customers, Gerresheimer develops and manufactures both primary and secondary packaging for diverse drug products, ensuring

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that a product is convenient, patient-friendly and delivered to where it is needed quickly and efficiently.

Customers starting a project with Gerresheimer will find a plethora of flexible options available, whether they are looking to develop an existing project or begin from an initial idea. However, as this article will discuss, Gerresheimer is also a partner for industrialisation of completed drug delivery device projects, working with finalised designs and taking them through to mass production. Projects and products looking to be optimised for polymer process are managed by Gerresheimer's Technical Competence Centers (TCCs) in Wackersdorf and Bünde (Germany), Peachtree City (GA, US) and Dongguan City (China).

TECHNICAL COMPETENCE CENTERS

The TCCs are the "Technical Heart" of Gerresheimer Medical Systems, with regard to both products and processes (Figure 1).



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Figure 1: Inside a TCC.

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MOULD MAKING

The mould-making department at Gerresheimer Medical Systems has a long history and strong tradition. As early as 1958, the department started manufacturing sophisticated injection moulds, primarily for cleanroom production. Gerresheimer’s precision injection moulding tools are designed to meet the high requirements of the pharmaceutical industry relating to precision and size accuracy, surface quality and high output quantities. They are characterised by 100% repeat accuracy, durability and optimised temperature control for short cycle times (Figure 2).

For drug delivery systems, Gerresheimer uses moulds with needle valve nozzles to avoid the formation of strands, i.e. there is no particle formation during separation and removal of the sprue from the mould. It also builds moulds out of rust-proof steel

Using the simultaneous engineering method, a TCC maps the entire development process of a product all the way from where they pick the project up through to full-scale industrial production. In the TCCs, designers, engineers and technicians work hand in hand, resulting in drug delivery systems characterised by high quality, functional reliability and capacity to be mass produced in a fashion specifically designed for plastics. For example, TCC engineers ensure that all the individual parts of an inhaler can be easily assembled into a solid product to ensure optimum functionality.

This care and attention extends to pre-production, applying the highest standards to material selection and assembly technique, as well as the drug delivery system functionality. The TCCs’ capabilities include:

- Small batch production with an ISO 14644-1 Class 8 cleanroom
- Pilot plant
- Qualification and validation for moulds and special-purpose machines
- Quality laboratory, including its own measuring room with product-specific test equipment

- Functional testing lab
- Mould making and optimisation
- Special-purpose machinery manufacture.

As well as providing design and engineering expertise for polymer components, the TCCs are able to handle production during development, after which full-scale production takes place at Gerresheimer’s international production facilities in North and South America, Asia and Europe.

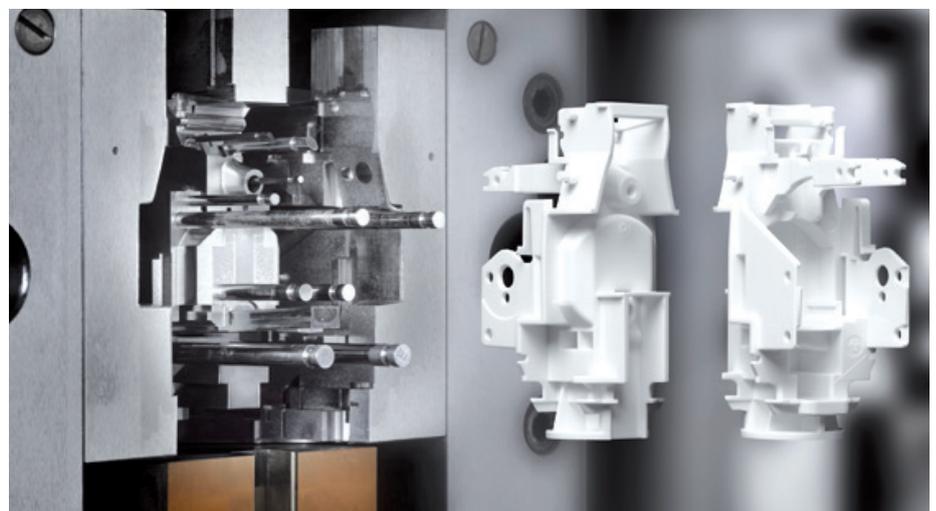


Figure 2: A hot runner mould.

for use in a cleanroom environment and ensures that there is good ventilation for the moulded parts in the cavities, preventing burn-up and the collection of deposits. Production is fat-free due to the smooth coating of all movable parts, as well as clean and material-appropriate part removal, achieved via inclined removal surfaces that avoid abrasion.

The mould making department represents an efficient method of operation, ensuring a fast and smooth production of moulds by a segmented structure in mould production and modification, examining potential changes with test moulds. Furthermore, the department works with replaceable mould inserts for short maintenance and repair times without the need for additional adaptations. Data consistency from the design to all machines and workbenches, as well as the direct link to quality assurance (QA), ensures that moulds are of the highest quality.

Quality Assurance

Uncompromising QA has the highest priority across the entire production process. Precision moulds are ultimately the prerequisite for excellent product quality. As such, only the latest measuring equipment and techniques, for example computer numerical control (CNC) image processing, are used in the internal measurement lab.

Modern Mould Technologies

More than 65 specially trained employees produce:

- Low- and high-cavity injection moulds, up to 128 cavities, with precision in the micrometre range
- Single- and multi-component moulds
- Indexing plate moulds
- Hot-runner injection moulds
- Moulds for insert moulding (needle and lancet encapsulation)
- Stack moulds.

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Award-Winning Mould Making Department

The irrefutable quality of Gerresheimer’s mould-making department was recognised by its top placement in the renowned “Excellence in Production” competition, which is organised by the Laboratory for Machine Tools (RWTH Aachen University, Germany) and the Fraunhofer Institute for Production Technology (Aachen, Germany). In 2014 the TCC of Gerresheimer Regensburg GmbH claimed first place to become “Mould Maker of the Year 2014”.

PILOT PLANT

The TCC pilot plant is the practice-oriented competence centre for all injection moulding processes. Here, Gerresheimer prove moulds to check performance and measure, optimise and qualify moulds. Moulds are sampled using special machinery under near-series conditions and are subjected to comprehensive application and processing tests to get them ready for large-scale production.

The sampling and mould optimisation process in the pilot plant forms the basis of the entire component verification. An important stage during this process is the setup of stable parameter settings for injection moulding, based on a fractional factorial design of experiments (DoE). Additionally, it is at this point that the optical and dimensional component measurements take place in the certified measuring lab, which are then documented in a comprehensive sample test report. Machine and process-capability documentation and mould trials over set time lengths (e.g. 4 or 24 hours) complete the pilot plant phase.

ANALYSIS AND TESTING

Quality Laboratory

When it comes to drug delivery systems, safety is of the utmost priority. The pilot plant therefore carries out extensive testing in the areas of materials, geometry and function. Gerresheimer has a measuring lab for the geometric measurement of components, assembly units and finished products, a lab for material analyses and a lab for functional testing with product-specific testing equipment.

Optical & Tactile Measurement Technology and Industrial Computer Tomography

By using a measurement lab with the most modern measuring equipment (Figure 3), Gerresheimer ensures that complex mould inserts and filigreed injection moulding parts or assembly units can be measured to extreme levels of precision. The complete set of component measurements are documented in an initial sample test report. The measurement equipment includes:

- Various multi-sensor coordinate measuring machines for optical and tactile component measurements
- Universal coordinate reading microscopes
- An industrial computer tomograph for the destruction-free measuring and testing of individual drug delivery components or entire assemblies.

Material-Specific, Physical and Chemical Analyses

The material analysis lab is responsible for the inspection and approval of incoming goods and raw material worldwide. The standard



Figure 3: Measuring lab in the Wackersdorf TCC.



Figure 4: Fully automatic assembly line in an ISO 14644-1 Class 8 cleanroom.

spectroscopic and thermal analyses are:

- Fourier-transform infrared spectroscopy (FTIR)
- Melt mass-flow rate (MFR)/melt volume-flow rate (MVR)
- Differential scanning calorimetry (DSC)
- Thermogravimetric analysis (TGA).

In addition to these, Gerresheimer's extensively equipped lab also offers the possibility of a physical-chemical analysis of viscosity, residual moisture and density, as well as an infrared spectrometer and a thin section microscope. In-house expertise enabling development and execution of customer-specific methods rounds off Gerresheimer's analysis portfolio.

Product-Specific Functional Testing

In the functional testing lab, Gerresheimer develops and qualifies test methods to guarantee compliance with product-specific requirements. It ensures enhanced safety for patients via comprehensive testing of the physical product characteristics, product-specific performance tests and statistical data analysis during the product development cycle.

Individual Qualification Packages

The pharmaceutical and medical product industry requires proof of process capability and the reproducible production of an injection mould. QA is therefore given critical importance in both national and international laws and guidelines, signifying a requirement for increased effort and expense with respect to the qualification and validation of moulds in the development and industrialisation phases. As a result of these regulations however, there is less

wear on moulds and a higher quality of parts overall, resulting in less waste. Mould qualifications are, however, time and cost intensive. This is why Gerresheimer offers its customers various mould qualification levels depending on the product, its area of application and regulatory requirement level.

AUTOMATION ENGINEERING

Together with the development and construction of the special-purpose machines associated with the moulds, Gerresheimer Medical Systems offers its customers high-performance automation solutions (Figure 4). In the pharmaceutical and healthcare industries, automation co-ordinated precisely with the product, project and processes has a decisive influence on the quality and economic efficiency of production. The technicians, mechanics, electricians, designers, qualification experts and programmers from the automation engineering department are responsible for this task at the TCCs.

The automation engineering department:

- Provides automation competency
- Develops automation solutions
- Specifies, designs, builds, procures and qualifies:
 - customer and parts-specific assembly lines
 - testing robots (pressure, flow rate, optical features, force deflection systems)
 - rotary table systems
 - linear systems
 - robots to insert and remove parts
 - packaging systems
 - pre-production equipment
 - pharmaceutical assembly systems.

All the production systems produced by Gerresheimer meet good automated manufacturing practice (GAMP) requirements, as well as US FDA 21 CFR Part 11, and are designed for production in cleanrooms in accordance with ISO 14644-1 Class 7/8 or GMP Grade C/D, globally standardised to a high quality level. Being an international manufacturer, Gerresheimer also monitors and assists the start-up of its production equipment on the customer's site.

The assembly steps and inspection of the modules are done by intelligent camera and inspection systems. As an example, a respiratory patient must be able to easily determine how many doses remain in their inhaler in order to avoid the risk that they unknowingly don't have their medication available. To facilitate this, Gerresheimer designed an assembly system where the dose-counter function is checked both with a camera inspection system (camera control of the tab position) and a position sensor in the display element after a simulated number of doses, all of which was fully automated.

Automation is an integral component of Gerresheimer's product and process development, and leverages its expertise and know-how throughout the concept and design phase. This means that Gerresheimer don't wait until mass production to develop automation solutions, but develop them in the prototype and pre-production phase, resulting in much time saved.

SMALL BATCH PRODUCTION

Prior to series production, pharmaceutical and medical technology products run through an exhaustive approval process, for which small numbers of units need to be produced repeatedly. For example, these



Figure 5: Small batch production includes its own measurement lab.

small batches may be required as clinical samples, development samples or stability batches. With its TCCs, Gerresheimer offers customers its own production systems for this task, which are capable of quick and uncomplicated production of development samples, clinical samples or small series at any point in the project (Figure 5). These facilities include the aforementioned Class 8 cleanroom and some of the injection moulding machines have integrated laminar flow covers to create a Class 7 cleanroom environment in the injection moulding area. Project-specific assembly units and specific measuring technologies complete the equipment.

Expansion Into Glass

Gerresheimer is expanding its Wackersdorf TCC. The company is investing tens of millions in creating 3,000 square metres of additional space for the development and industrialisation of glass products, such as syringes and cartridges. The task area of the TCC is thus being expanded to include working with glass. Construction began recently, and the project should be completed by the end of the year.

One focus of the expansion is the establishment of small batch production for prefillable glass syringes and cartridges. Once the project is complete, it will be possible to produce pre-series modules from glass forming to ready-to-ship, washed and siliconised ready-to-fill systems. The focus is on syringes and cartridges for sophisticated,

biotechnologically manufactured medication, clinical samples for approval or prototypes for process and technology development.

At the same time, glass competence is also being established in the automation systems area (special machine engineering) in order to develop innovative technologies for glass forming and automation. In the future, new generations of glass forming lines for syringe production will originate in a cooperation between Gerresheimer's Bünde and Wackersdorf locations, with small batch production and automation

systems in Wackersdorf and large batch production in Bünde. This expansion is set to greatly improve Gerresheimer's capacity to develop, optimise and produce innovative glass-based drug delivery systems.

CONCLUSION

Utilising the equipment and latest technologies in its TCCs, Gerresheimer is an expert pharmaceutical industrialisation partner. Gerresheimer is able to join at any phase of drug delivery system development, from initial concept through to final design, and optimise the product for mass-production with specialist knowledge and highest-quality processes and facilities.

ABOUT THE COMPANY

Gerresheimer is a leading worldwide partner to the pharmaceutical and healthcare industries. Gerresheimer Medical Systems produces customised injection-moulded plastic assembly units, as well as primary packaging made from glass and plastics, worldwide. Gerresheimer works with global players in the pharmaceutical and medical technology industry, producing drug delivery systems across the spectrum. As a full service provider for drug delivery systems, Gerresheimer handles all the phases of the value-creation chain, beginning from the first idea development through to mass production.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

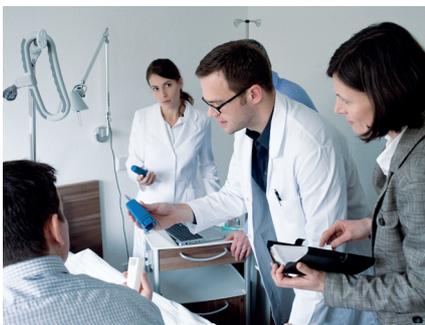
Michael Wiglenda holds a Dipl-Ing FH in Mechanical Engineering and has more than 20 years of management experience in the plastics processing industry. Mr Wiglenda heads the Technical Competence Centers of Gerresheimer Medical Systems in Germany, China and the US as a Global Senior Director. He was responsible for the creation of the international competence centres as well as for the extension of the German competence centre with a pharmaceutical small batch production. Additionally, Mr Wiglenda is Senior Director of Internal Tool Making.

Deliver your active substance safely on target!

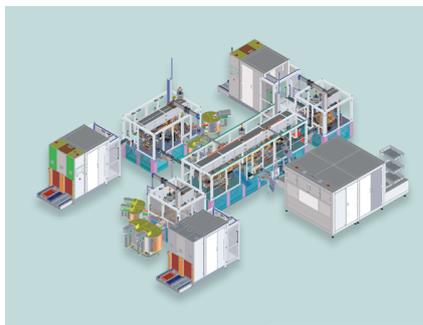
Gerresheimer Medical Systems offer assistance with customized drug delivery systems

With Gerresheimer Medical Systems as your partner, you profit from more than forty years of experience in the development, industrialization and contract manufacturing of customized drug delivery systems. Each year, we produce over 100 million inhalers which meet the full requirements of modern pharmaceutical packaging. As a system supplier, Gerresheimer develops patient-friendly products that are easy to use, provide precise dosing, and efficiently transport the active substance to its target site. Prior to production, we apply demanding quality standards to material selection, assembly technique and device functionality.

Contract Development



Industrialization



Contract Manufacturing

