



# Festo SA: 45 years and stronger than ever

In celebration of 45 years of successful local growth and development, Brett Wallace, managing director of Festo South Africa, narrates the company's rich history, global heritage and the ongoing pursuit of new and better automation solutions for Africa.

**A**lbert Fezer and Gottlieb Stoll established Festo in 1925 in a small city in Stuttgart, Germany. The company began by creating tools for woodworking and quickly earned a reputation for providing its customers with cleverly designed and robust products. "Our products and solutions challenged conventional thinking about the woodworking industry and it is that same philosophy that underpinned the founder's approach when they recognised the potential of industrial automation and established the automation product range," says Brett Wallace, MD of Festo South Africa.

Festo South Africa opened its doors in 1973 and was at that time the company's 16th international subsidiary. "Throughout this time, we have remained committed to delivering the best possible South African expression of the global Festo mandate," Wallace continues. "This means building a presence that is dependable, sustainable and focused on achieving growth not only for our customers, but for the economy in general," he says.

"In 2015, two years after celebrating our 40th anniversary, we launched our next differentiator, investing more than R5-million in the opening of an Application Centre at our Johannesburg headquarters. This boasts state-of-the-art electric handling and vision systems allowing our customers to physically test any applications in a controlled environment, confirming important details such as

speed, accuracy and cycle time," he relates.

In addition to its South African presence, Festo has been actively present in Southern, Central, East and West Africa, supplying manufacturing industries across the continent with cutting-edge control solutions for over four decades.

With respect to its product offering, Wallace says that with more than 90 years of motivation, innovative and industrial experience, Festo has helped shape the world of industrial automation as we know it today. We constantly strive for cutting edge technological solutions to fulfil the multitude of requirements faced by a diverse, always changing and increasingly competitive global manufacturing sector. He goes on to highlight focus areas/business units that act cohesively to provide customers with single source best-fit solutions: Pneumatic Factory Automation, Electric Automation, Process Automation, Customised Solutions, and Skills Competence Development.

These focus areas enable Festo to offer automation solutions to support the widest range of industry sectors, including but not limited to: automotive, food and beverage, packaging, pharmaceuticals, chemical, petrochemical, oil and gas, water and wastewater, mining and power generation, mobile pneumatics, semiconductors and electronics, flat panel solar as well as biotechnology.

"Festo customers work with experts who



understand the industry. Our dedication, expertise and experience has paved the way to our success. We have been setting trends, inspiring and creating new concepts within automation for decades and as such, we are viewed as more than just another automation supplier. Besides having an expansive product range, Festo partners with industry, offering a full basket of value-add services. Some of these include:

- Complete support from its dedicated contact centre, technical support engineers and the global support community.
- A user-friendly online shop that takes

- purchasing convenience to new heights.
- Software tools for design solutions and detailed product specification.
- Qualified, professional and passionate people who are perceived as industry sector specialists.
- Project conceptualisation, design, simulation and validation including energy-saving solutions.



**Above:** Turnkey automated membrane filtration unit on skids enable Festo to rapidly deploy autonomous and reliable water treatment solutions.

**Left:** Festo offers automation solutions to support the widest range of industrial sectors, including, amongst many others, water and wastewater.

- An average stock holding value of R150-million and world-class logistics capabilities to ensure speedy delivery throughout the continent.
- World-leading technical education from hardware through to skills development and curriculum supply development, competency evaluation and investment return strategies ensuring increased

- productivity and employability.
- Local manufacture of a wide range of non-standard cylinders allowing individual customisation.
- Repair services to a variety of components ensuring maximised product lifecycle and cost efficiency.
- Turnkey systems ensuring optimum solutions and best total cost of ownership. □

## A Festo South Africa message of celebration: Brett Wallace

Over the past 45 years we have continued to see multiple competitors come and go. We are privileged to be able to say that we have retained our position of strength by remaining the preferred partner to both industry and educational sectors with regards to excellence in automation and technical competence.

This is not a privilege that we take for granted but one that we continually strive to enrich. Our success as an organisation has been propelled by hard work and commitment, coupled with a determination to understand market trends as well as the current and future needs of our customers.

Despite the economic challenges that businesses and individuals alike have been faced with in the past five years, we are pleased to announce that our proactive visionary strategy has allowed us to grow

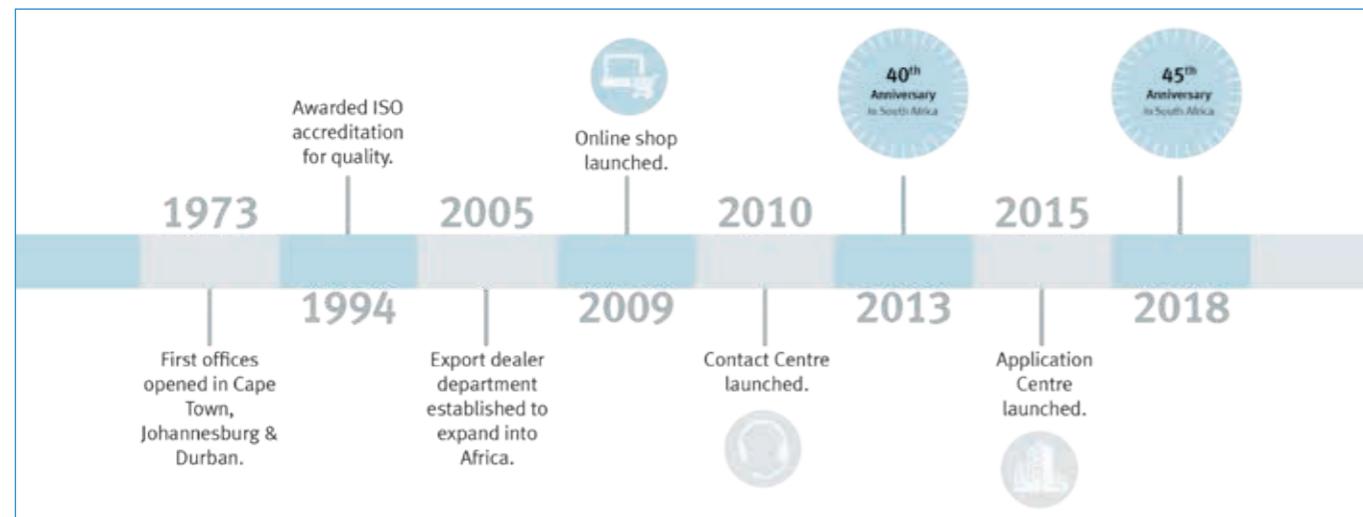
our revenue, market share and our sales volumes across all existing and new sectors. This is testament to a customer-centric business model that is flexible and adaptive to market requirements, business processes that leverage global efficiencies, and a dynamic and competent team of motivated employees.

Being a global driving influencer at the forefront of Industry 4.0 has further enhanced our productivity, profitability and employability. Festo takes a holistic view of the changes within the realm of automation, whilst considering non-technological aspects such as the interaction between humans and machinery as well as the critical need for training and qualification. We embraced this new revolution and look forward to the creative opportunities that such disruptive technologies promise to bring.

In these 45 years, we have completed only a short part of our journey. With a strong vision, we continue investing in Africa, its industry and its economy. Our position of strength is attributed to our products, services and people. Importantly, this strength is further enhanced by the loyalty of our dedicated customers and their desire to increase levels of competitiveness and profitability, without compromising quality.

Our passion for innovation, combined with a dedication to learning and skills development has kept us in the lead. This attitude has not only been beneficial to us as an organisation but to the thousands of people who make use of our technology and solutions every day.

To all of you, we humbly extend our gratitude and look forward to many more years of shared successes. □



Since opened its doors in 1973 as the global company's 16th international subsidiary, Festo South Africa has remained committed to delivering the best possible South African expression of the global Festo mandate.