Dipl.-Ing. (FH) Markus Eckhardt
Managing Director of Brunel GmbH

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Important Investments in the Auto Industry

If you ask me, much of the talk about a crisis in the automotive industry stems from a misunderstanding: Prompted by new trajectories in propulsion concepts, we are witnessing the transformation of a whole branch of industry. Electric and autonomous vehicles, for example, create different load spectrums to cars with internal combustion engines. They have fewer parts and more software. In the medium term, vehicles will become autonomous, connected and perfectly safe entertainment systems powered by electricity that is delivered by battery or fuel-cell technology. They will comprise far more standard components than today's cars do.

And this fundamental change in the vehicular landscape, on the one hand, is presenting major challenges to OEMs and suppliers alike – all the more so given that new players, such as Apple, Google and Sony, are benefiting from this paradigm shift and now gaining a foothold on the market. On the other hand, external circumstances confront companies with problems over which they have only limited control: customs disputes, the uncertainties surrounding Brexit and economic fluctuations in strong sales regions such as China, all of which put pressure on the markets. The coronavirus too must be mentioned at this point, even if there is no way to reliably forecast its impact at the present time. To summarize: 2020 will be a year that this industry will remember for a long time to come.

As this transitional phase unfolds, external service providers will in future be more important than ever to the automotive industry. They help companies adapt flexibly to changing conditions: Engineering service providers, for example, are tasked with making experts and services available in the right place and at the right time. To meet this challenge, we at Brunel are taking various approaches. Our Talent Acquisition Centers in Frankfurt/Main, Amsterdam, Mechelen and Manchester, for example, help us ensure that specialists are approached at an early stage, even across national orders.

We are also involved in Formula Student Germany, have a presence at universities and support our existing employees with individual training and development. One topical issue is Brunel Car Synergies' move from Bochum to Dortmund, where we are investing in a larger, more modern and very well connected facility. That will let us sharply ramp up our work contract business for the automotive industry. In the future, we will have 3700 m² in which to perform environmental simulations to validate electric mobility and autonomous driving components. At the same time, optimized test object logistics at the new site will ensure that orders are processed faster, more efficiently and more accurately in line with cutting-edge lean methods.