

Press kit

Facts & Figures

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Business model:	Full-service industrial auction house for used machines and factory equipment (focus: wood and metalworking)
Foundation year:	1999
Current number of employees:	around 200
Managing directors:	Ulrich Stalter, Michael Werker & Ghislaine Duijmelings
Platform:	Surplex.com Mobile Apps for iOS and Android
Surplex in numbers (per year):	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 55,000 sold items• 50 million views• 500 auctions• 125,000 registered buyers

About Surplex:

Surplex GmbH is an internationally successful e-commerce company that trades in used industrial machinery and factory equipment. The focus is on the metal and woodworking industries. The 200-strong team works at the headquarters in Düsseldorf and in subsidiaries and representative offices in twelve European countries, including Spain, Italy, France and England. Surplex combines the advantages of Internet trading with a comprehensive service and organises all phases of buying and selling processes for its customers.

20 Years of Surplex GmbH: From a dot-com start-up to a leading industrial auction house



Managing directors Michael Werker, Ghislaine Duijmelings and Uli Stalter (from l. to r.)

Nothing seems as powerful as an idea whose time has come. But if the idea comes too early, you need to let the time ripen if you want to make the most of it! This is roughly how the 20-year history of Surplex can be summed up. The company starts in October 1999 as Surplex.com AG, becomes the star of the New Economy, disappears with the dot-com bubble for many years in the niche, reappears in 2009 as Surplex GmbH and stands today stronger than ever before.

At the turn of the millennium, the Internet was still in its early stages. But some visionaries were already trying to implement what will only be possible 10 years later. The founding generation of Surplex, and especially Bruno Schick, intended to disruptively change the trade in used capital goods. From this perspective an online marketplace should make all processes faster, simpler and more transparent. But neither the technical nor the psychological prerequisites existed yet. The high-speed Internet has not yet been invented. And hardly any prospective buyer was willing to pay five or six-digit amounts online.

Therefore Surplex.com AG could not escape the dot-com crisis. Sales were stagnating and no further venture capital was forthcoming. The company closed all its local branches and dismissed the majority of its staff. Nonetheless, Surplex remained in the market but lost its independence. From 2004 to 2008, it will be run under the umbrella of a sales company by Michael Werker who will then consolidate it together with Uli Stalter.

The new leading duo remains firmly convinced that online auctions are the sales format of the future. They are among the first to invest in a powerful auction platform. Yet at the same time, they realise that it is not enough to offer purely digital services. This is why they also rely on analogue services, which over the years have been developed into a holistic ISO-certified solution. Surplex now personally supports and advises its customers, prepares expert appraisals and assesses machines. Once the goods have been purchased, the company takes care of disassembly, transport, customs and payment procedures. In this way, Surplex combines the best of two different worlds into an attractive overall package. Michael Werker and Uli Stalter founded Surplex GmbH with this strategy at the beginning of 2009, i.e. during the financial crisis and took the first step towards a new independence.

The response of the market exceeds all expectations right from the start. Already from 2009 to 2010 the GmbH records two-digit growth rates. Of course, there are some

industrial auction houses on the market that organise online auctions. However, they lack competent service, especially in the after-sales area. And vice versa, many classic machine dealers are strong in service, but they do not offer the strong growing online auctions. Surplex ventures right into this gap, which leads to explosive expansion. From 2009 to 2019, the number of employees rises from 15 to over 200, and sales climb to over 100 million euros.

In the year 2013, the step towards internationalisation follows. Surplex S.r.l. (Italia) is the first branch office outside Germany to be founded. By 2020, twelve more will be established, bringing Surplex to thirteen European countries, including Spain, France and the UK. In addition, Surplex now provides customer support in over 20 languages. When it comes to auctioning used metalworking and woodworking machinery, Surplex is No. 1 in Europe.

The core of the success story remains the auction platform surplex.com, which is available in 20 languages and records more than 55 million-page views each year. Over 500 online auctions were held in 2018, with more than 55,000 capital goods sold.

The year 2020 marks the beginning of a new era for Surplex. The Dutch-born manager Ghislaine Duijmelings joined Michael Werker and Ulrich Stalter as the third managing director. With her extensive experience in international sales, especially in eCommerce and B2B business, Ghislaine provided strong impulses for further expansion and additional growth from the very beginning. The new management trio intends to expand Surplex leading market position in Europe.

An excellent starting position for the next 20 years! Unlike in the dot-com era, Surplex is now expanding sustainably. The company is pushing ahead with the digitalisation of the machinery trade. It implements the founders' visions, though this time on solid foundations because the time has come.

Our development

1999

A bold idea

Bruno and Florian Schick, Rory Devlin, and Sean Glodek founded Surplex in Düsseldorf in 1999 - a typical start-up company of the dot-com era. The bold idea: with the aid of an online marketplace, the buying and selling of used machinery should become faster, more transparent and easier.

2000

In the stock market fever

The fever of the New Economy drives the newly founded Surplex.com AG to dramatic growth. International venture capital consortia such as the Carlyle Group invest tens of millions. Prominent private investors, such as Lars Schlecker and Fiat President Paolo Fresco, are also investing in Surplex. Surplex grows to over 130 employees at 12 locations, including Berlin, London, Paris, Moscow and Bahrain.

2001-2003

The bubble bursts

As soon as the bubble bursts, Surplex also gets into turbulence. Weakening growth ultimately leads to the closure of all offices except for Düsseldorf. The business model suffers in particular from the lack of confidence of market participants in online trading: nobody wants to buy high-quality machinery on the Internet at the turn of the millennium. The "Surplex.com AG" is renamed into "Surplex AG". The number of employees in Düsseldorf drops to around 30.

2004 -2008

Out of the crisis with full service

Consolidation begins under managing director Michael Werker. However, the company loses its entrepreneurial independence. It has been run under the umbrella of a sales company since 2004. Uli Stalter successfully expands the trade with used woodworking machinery. The company becomes a full-service provider with a growing auction business - the recipe for success in the upcoming years.

2009

Who dares wins

At the beginning of 2009, in the middle of the financial crisis, Michael Werker and Uli Stalter dared to take the leap into a new entrepreneurial independence. Surplex GmbH was founded with 16 employees on board. Despite a difficult economic

2011

On a steady road to success

From 2011 to 2013 the ascent is steep. The turnover is growing, and more than 45

people are now working for Surplex. The company offers its customers all the services of the traditional used machinery trade: consulting, valuation, appraisal, dismantling, customs and payment modalities, and much more. Surplex rises to become the leading German online auctioneer in the wood and metalworking sectors.

2014

Machine trade in ten languages

The online marketplace is constantly being expanded and improved. The web platform is now available in ten languages. Besides German and English, also Spanish, Italian, French, Russian, Polish, Turkish, Romanian and Hungarian are available. New services such as transport and online payment ensure even better service.

2019-2020

Our 20th anniversary

In 2019 Surplex celebrated its 20th anniversary with almost 200 experts from eleven European countries. Another reason to celebrate was the move to a larger and more modern building at Theodorstraße 105 in Düsseldorf, which is now our new home port. In 2020 Surplex opened two new offices (Netherlands and Austria). Surplex is now represented in thirteen European countries. In addition, the auction platform www.surplex.com will from now on appear even more user-friendly with a new design and many new features. Have a look at it!

policy environment, further stabilisation has been achieved. A new web platform with an integrated auction interface is a success: the auction business is growing rapidly.

2013

To Italy and further

The combination of technical innovation and an all-round service is increasingly attracting foreign customers. At the end of 2013, for example, www.surplex.com had more than 130,000 visitors from over 150 countries every month. The first subsidiary outside Germany is founded: Surplex S.r.l. (Italy) underlines the international orientation. From 2012 to 2013 the turnover increases by about 70%. In the meantime, more than 50 employees have joined Surplex.

2014-2018

Continuing growth

Surplex opens further offices in Belgium, Great Britain, France, Poland, Romania, Switzerland, Spain, Serbia and Hungary and is now represented in 11 European countries. Surplex is the only company in Europe to offer dismantling, loading and customs clearance from a single source and has become the market leader in auctions of used metal and woodworking machinery.

2021...

2020

From a leadership duo to a leadership trio

The internationally experienced manager Ghislaine Duijmelings, with her extensive knowledge in international sales, especially in B2B business and eCommerce, joins Michael Werker and Ulrich Stalter as Surplex third managing director. This is indeed a strong indicator for further expansion and additional growth.

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