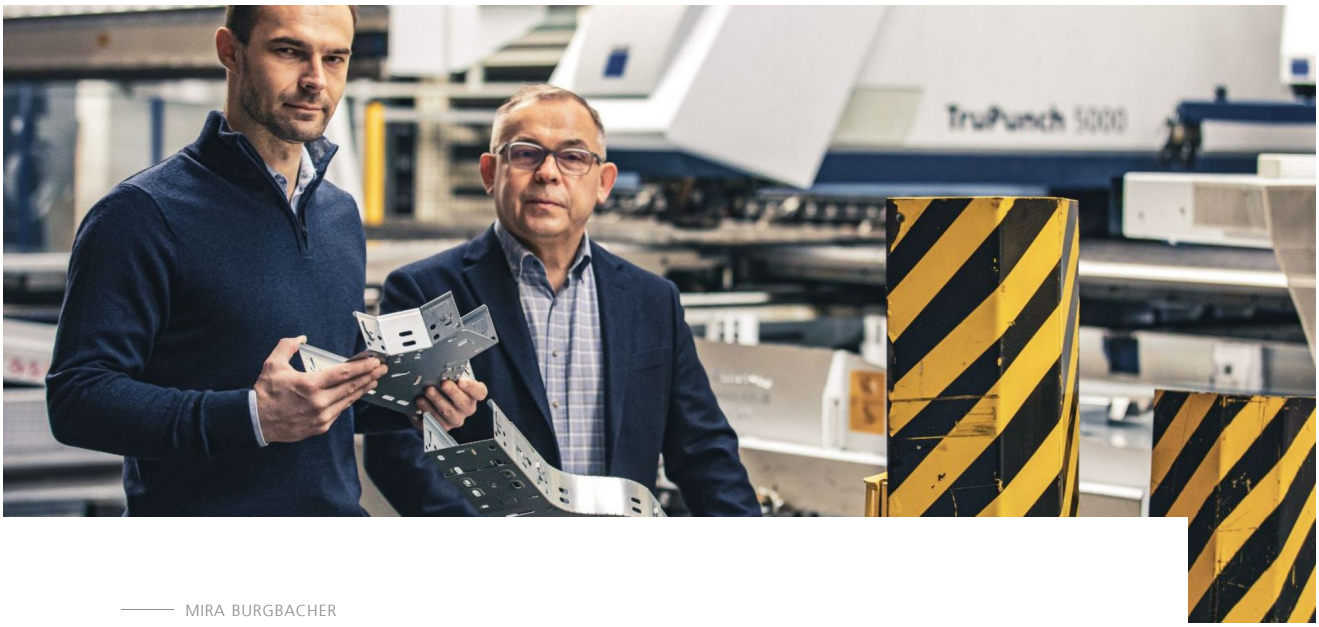


MIRA BURGBACHER

Cable racks from the fully automated production

Just before the fall of the Iron Curtain, cables still hung from ceilings in Poland. Kazimierz Sielski built the first cable racks in order to protect these leads. He and his son Tomasz rely on smart networking in their quest to develop their company BAKS into a global player.

Karczew, 30 kilometers south-east of Warsaw, near the Vistula River. Tomasz and Kazimierz Sielski are walking through their company buildings together. From the outside, there is no indication that this is where robots and people work together to make cable racks for the entire world. Kazimierz Sielski, the 59-year-old company founder, still works up to 13 hours a day keeping the business running smoothly, while 34-year-old production engineer Tomasz Sielski handles the export side.

Company founder Kazimierz Sielski and his son Tomasz lead the cable rack specialist BAKS.
© Bartlomiej Bukowski

Salzburg railway station, Lego factory in Mexico

The fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989 marked the end of Poland's state-run centralized economy and the shift to a free market economy with a global reach. Production increased rapidly and skyrocketed from the start of the millennium. Today, the company employs 550 people. Its range includes 27,000 products including cable racks and installation solutions for industry, infrastructure and residential building. BAKS delivers the products all over the world. The cable racks made in Karczew – a modest town of just 10,000 inhabitants – can be found in a Salzburg railway station, at Airbus in Toulouse, in a Lego factory in Mexico and in a hospital in Qatar. In Germany, the company supplies its products to Daimler and Porsche. The pharmaceutical concern Bayer relies on BAKS products as well. In Warsaw, BAKS cable racks are fitted in the Narodowy National Stadium, the Chopin Airport and the city's subway tunnels.

> **I bought my first TRUMPF system – a Trumatic 235 – in 1999. We have added a new one almost every year since then," says Kazimierz Sielski.**
>
> Kazimierz Sielski, CEO of BAKS Poland

There are a few dozen machines in the fully automated production facility. This includes laser and punching machines, bending machines and automated storage systems that are connected to the machines. There are also 38 TRUMPF systems working in two shifts. The latest acquisition is the laser cutting machine TruLaser 5030. The Sielskis chose it for its high cutting speed. Speed is an important keyword at BAKS. The cable rack professionals can deliver large batches of certain products from their extensive range in just one week. Customers appreciate this very much.

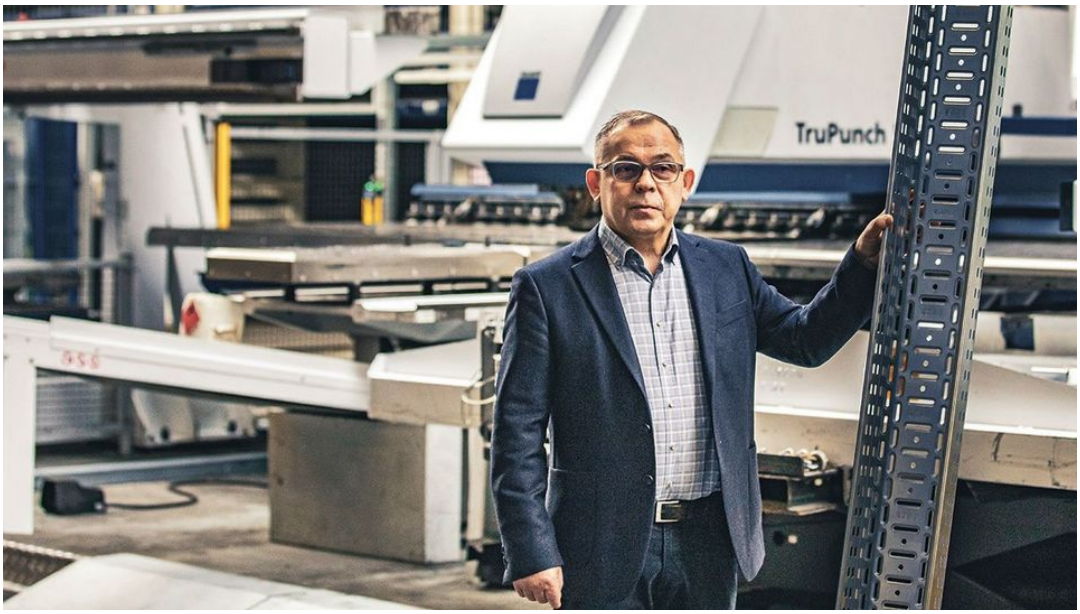
After all these years, Sielski is convinced of the high quality of the products and the reliability of TRUMPF machines. "TRUMPF machines are one of the keys to our success. I bought my first TRUMPF system – a Trumatic 235 – in 1999. We have added a new one almost every year since then," says Kazimierz Sielski.

3,000 tons of steel: that’s how much BAKS’ 550 employees use each month to make cable racks.
© Bartlomiej Bukowski

Solidarno□□ fueled progress

Father Kazimierz’s entrepreneurial drive resembles a Polish version of the American dream. "At some point I found myself wondering: could I build a company that would create work for lots of people?" he says. But when the electrician had the idea of building his own business in 1986, the Polish People's Republic at that time was still a socialist state. He had noticed power cables dangling unsecured from the ceilings in many factories. It quickly became clear to Sileski that they needed to be contained and protected. The idea of providing cable racks was born. Poland was undergoing massive transformation, especially Warsaw. Many small businesses were springing up everywhere, and they needed shelving systems for the weekly markets. Steel was a scarce commodity in Poland at the time. This is why Sielski started buying scrap strip steel from factories and using it to make shelves. Selling these shelving units made it possible for him to buy his very first machine thirty years ago, a simple sheet-fed printing machine from the former Czechoslovakia.

In 1989, the revolution inspired by the independent workers’ movement Solidarno□□ led to the end of communist rule in Poland. After this political upheaval, progress throughout the country could no longer be held back, and BAKS was no exception. Starting in 1999, the company gradually shifted its production operations to TRUMPF machines. The 2004 expansion of the European Union into Eastern Europe presented BAKS with further opportunities. The company could invest in new machines, employ new staff and modernize its production facilities.



"TRUMPF machines are one of the keys to our success."
© Bartlomiej Bukowski

Ready for the future

Together with his father, Tomasz Sielski is working hard to equip the family-run company for the future. As well as handling the export business, he is also responsible for getting their production facilities ready for digitalization. The first steps in this direction are already underway. Thanks to an ERP system, all production sequences in the company will be networked in future. BAKS proves to be innovative toward its customers as well: the in-house BAKSCAD CAD software allows customers to download and redesign cable rack models. The company is currently setting up a database of 3D models for its most popular products. The special feature: all cable rack models are available to everyone on an open source basis. BAKS benefits from customers' ideas as well. They provide the company with impulses for new solutions.

There are a few dozen machines in the fully automated production facility. This includes laser and punching machines, bending machines and automated storage systems that are connected to the machines.
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Asked how BAKS comes up with new developments, Tomasz Sielski smiles and says, "The development department. And that consists of me and my dad." The bond between them is evident when they chat about their investments and plans for the future. Their constant readiness to change with the times has paid off. BAKS has steadily evolved into a sought-after specialist in its field. One key advantage was the company's determination to see potential obstacles as opportunities for progress. Tomasz Sielski is writing the next chapter in the company's success story – and preparing it to face whatever challenges the future holds.

BAKS delivers the products all over the world. The cable racks made in Karczew – a modest town of just 10,000 inhabitants – can be found in a Salzburg railway station, at Airbus in Toulouse, in a Lego factory in Mexico and in a hospital in Qatar. In Germany, the company supplies its products to Daimler, Porsche and Bayer.
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