**Change of leadership at the top of CARAT: Gerhard Essig hands over responsibility to the next generation**

**Dreieich, 31. March 2021.** 33 years ago, Hans Strothoff brought Gerhard Essig and Norbert Michael on board. Actually, at that time, the 37 software products available on the market for kitchen planning were to be put through their paces in order to then make the best product available to the MHK partners. The conclusion of the two IT professionals was sobering: "We can programme that ourselves - and better." And so, in 1989, the software company CARAT was founded under the umbrella of the MHK Group. The declared goal: to develop its own, more cost-effective and better product for the specialised trade. An ambitious undertaking for many at the time. But with innovative ideas, a lot of commitment and even more passion, the managing director duo has led CARAT to market leadership in the entire industry and, with its team that has now grown to 160 employees\*, has developed an internationally successful kitchen planning software.

"We have moved a lot and achieved a lot," says Gerhard Essig, looking back proudly on what has been achieved. More than 45,000 kitchen planners in over 80 countries use one of the 14 language versions of the planning software. Numerous applications that are taken for granted in the industry today, such as e.com for electronic ordering, come from the Dreieich company. In addition, the software was once again voted the most popular by users only last year.

In June, Gerhard Essig celebrates his 66th birthday. But he is not thinking of retiring yet. He will only retire from the operative business on 31 March 2021. "After 33 years, it is time to put the CARAT management in younger hands," emphasises Gerhard Essig. "To this end, we have built up a first-class management team over the past eight years." Taking over will be Andreas Günther, who has been CARAT Managing Director for two years and is responsible for Sales and Marketing, and Andreas Joost, who has been Managing Director for nine years and is responsible for Technology. Norbert Michael is in charge of the Data Management Division. Alexander Graf, Anita Kirchdorfer, Michael Kirchhoff and Frank Ußner will support the new management in customer and technology-oriented development. The team convinces with many years of industry, development and internal experience. In addition, Michael Kirchhoff, who will be responsible for international key account sales, will be given procuration. In Austria, Matthias Schaufler takes over the helm of CARAT Austria in addition to managing the international sales staff. Gerhard Essig will be active in an advisory capacity in the future: "I want to support CARAT in identifying new products that fit our software and the work of users in trade and industry."

Werner Heilos, Chairman of the MHK Group, thanked Gerhard Essig for his work: "Gerhard Essig has played a major role in shaping the development of our group - but especially of CARAT. At the same time, he has also played a decisive role in shaping our industry in terms of kitchen planning. Alongside Norbert Michael, he is the face of CARAT and knew the requirements through his earlier work in his parents' specialist kitchen shop. Close contact and exchange with industry and trade was always of essential importance to Gerhard Essig. This is certainly another reason why CARAT has always been and remains 'state of the art'."

Kirk Mangels, the board member responsible for CARAT on the MHK Executive Board, believes that the course for the future has been set very well: "Andreas Günther and Andreas Joost have been built up successively over the last few years. They think and live CARAT. In addition, Gerhard Essig will remain with us as a sparring partner with his know-how as well as his interest in and flair for technical innovations and for the requirements of the industry ..."