„We strive to advance the barrier-free exchange of data"

Frank Peiffer has been in charge of software development at FRILO Software GmbH for twelve years. In the meantime, the 45-year-old became head of the department and a member of the FRILO management team. In the second part of the interview, he provides revealing insights into the way FRILO works, explains the role of customers in the development of new solutions and talks about FRILO's visions for the future.

Hello, Frank. Nice of you to take the time for the second part of the interview. In the last team update, you described the 2021-1 release as a complete success. How do you arrive at this assessment?

Frank: We were able to release a release with extensive enhancements on time because the entire team stuck to the clearly defined schedule. We were also able to significantly reduce the number of support requests and bug reports from our customers. These key figures have developed positively because we follow an established process in preparing for a release, but we continue to refine it with each delivery - for example, through the use of roadmaps.

What does the use of such roadmaps look like in practice?

Frank: Targeted features are prioritised and then, depending on the product area, presented as goals for the next and subsequent release on a product roadmap. The product roadmaps of the sub-areas are used to create an overall roadmap for FRILO, which shows which teams are working on which features by which release date. This allows us to plan with foresight.

What role do our customers play in the further development of FRILO solutions?

Frank: Through close contact with our customers via the support hotline, we take on board many of

Frank Peiffer is Head of Software Development at FRILO since 2012.

their ideas. Of course, we cannot always implement all feedback, because some suggestions are only interesting for a few customers. But in principle, we strive to listen to our customers and to align our products with the concrete benefits for our customers in a practical way. In addition, since 2019 we have also been inviting customers to so-called Innovation Labs, where we exchange ideas directly with representatives of interested customers and discuss tomorrow's innovations together.

But how do we succeed in taking our customers' feedback into account when developing products?

Frank: First, we try to gather the best possible feedback from customers. If an initial assessment comes to the conclusion that a feature is actually needed by a majority of customers, the idea is pursued further. Then product management and development from the corresponding product areas sit down together and compare the benefit for the customer with the feasibility in development. If

the added value justifies the effort, the feature is weighted and prioritised. In this way, we bring a sensible order to the pool of ideas and maintain an overview. We then put the features with the greatest benefit on the roadmap as quickly as possible.

Unfortunately, like so many things, running Innovation Labs is not possible for the time being due to the current pandemic. How has COVID-19 actually affected the work in the development team?

Frank: Our last two releases have shown that we can handle it surprisingly well. This is certainly also due to the fact that our team works in two locations, Stuttgart and Dresden, and has therefore already gained experience in communication via video and telephone conferences. Everyone is pulling together to get the innovations ready by the deadline. What we are missing, of course, are the casual, spontaneous conversations on site in the break room, the kitchen or the hallway. I am glad that this will hopefully be possible again soon.

What the Corona pandemic has meant for FRILO probably cannot even be assessed at the moment. Despite a certain degree of uncertainty, we have long-term goals. What will be the focus of development in 2021?

Frank: In general, we strive to advance the fast and barrier-free exchange of data. So, in addition to the ongoing expansion of the BIM Connector, we are also striving for improved exchange with our numerous partners. We are also working intensively on a 64-bit version of the FRILO software. With this, we would like to practically remove the limitation of the usable working memory and thus enable our customers to calculate the largest possible systems with more load cases, combinations or degrees of freedom. The modernisation of as many legacy applications as possible in the form of the PLUS programme line is an essential technical prerequisite for this. This is especially true with regard to completing our beam programmes with a reinforced concrete continuous beam as a PLUS programme.

The interview was conducted by:
Tim Kullmann

ABOUT THE PERSON

Frank Peiffer graduated from RWTH Aachen University with degrees in civil engineering and computer science. He then spent five years as a doctoral student researching the topic of "Textile Concrete" and received his PhD in 2008 from the Chair of Structural Analysis and Structural Dynamics at RWTH Aachen University. Entering the job market, Frank landed at FRILO Software GmbH the same year and has remained loyal to the company ever since. Today, he is part of FRILO's four-member management team as head of the software development department.