Press release
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Miele mourns the loss of Dr. Peter Christian Zinkann

Gütersloh, 19. October 2026 – The family-owned company Miele mourns the passing of Dr. Peter Christian Zinkann, who died on 19 October 2026 at the age of 98. As Managing Partner, he shaped the company for more than four decades – particularly through innovations such as Miele's first fully automatic washing machine and the Miele Honeycomb Drum, which played a key role in the company's international success story.

Born on 17 September 1928 in Bremen, Dr. Peter Christian Zinkann moved to Gütersloh with his parents and sister during the final days of the Second World War, where he lived and worked for the rest of his life. He studied at the Technical University of Darmstadt and the St. Gallen School of Business. In 1954, he graduated with a degree in mechanical engineering and earned his doctorate in economics (Dr. rer. pol.) a year and a half later. After spending time working in the United States and travelling around the world, he joined the company in 1957. Miele had been founded in 1899 by his grandfather Reinhard Zinkann together with Carl Miele Sr. For more than four decades, Dr. Peter Christian Zinkann jointly managed and shaped the company alongside his business partner Rudolf Miele († 19 August 2004). He served as Managing Partner of the Miele Group until 31 December 2004.

Dr. Peter Christian Zinkann married Dr. Karin Zinkann in 1958. Their son, Dr. Reinhard Zinkann, has represented the Zinkann family on the Miele Group's Executive Board since 1999.

Dr. Peter Christian Zinkann played a decisive role in developing Miele into a leading company setting standards for quality and innovation in the domestic appliance industry. Major product milestones included the development of Miele's first fully automatic front-loading washing machine (1958), Europe's first electronically controlled tumble dryer (1966), as well as iconic product features such as the Miele cutlery tray (1986) and the Miele Honeycomb Drum (2001).

"With the passing of Dr. Peter Christian Zinkann, Miele, the industry and the country have lost an outstanding entrepreneurial personality; his family has lost its generous patriarch, the city a dedicated honorary citizen – and Miele's employees their highly esteemed senior leader," said the Executive Board of the Miele Group.

Entrepreneurial values and responsibility

The guiding principle behind his entrepreneurial activities was always to create not only economic value but also to serve people – both customers and employees. At the same time, he always kept the common good and the protection of the natural environment in mind. Dr. Peter Christian Zinkann firmly believed that this was the fundamental responsibility of every entrepreneur.

Long-term thinking across generations, down-to-earth values and financial stability were also among his core principles. Even after stepping down from executive management, he remained closely connected to the company until the very end.

Social and cultural commitment

In 2003, Dr. Peter Christian Zinkann was made an honorary citizen of the city of Gütersloh, which he supported with charitable donations throughout his life. Most recently, his support made possible the extensive restoration of the organ at Gütersloh's Stadthalle, which his father Kurt Christian Zinkann had donated 40 years earlier.

In recognition of his decades of commitment to economic, social and cultural causes, Dr. Peter Christian Zinkann was awarded the Cross of Merit, First Class, of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany in 2006. The tribute at the award ceremony stated: "Your efforts to reconcile what is right from an economic perspective with what is right from a human perspective have earned you an extraordinary degree of trust and affection."

In recognition of his commitment to improving engineering education and making it more practice-oriented, he was appointed an Honorary Senator of Paderborn University in 2004. In recognition of his life's work and personal achievements in the field of domestic appliance technology, Dr. Peter Christian Zinkann received the Carl-Heinrich-Dencker Honorary Badge from the University of Bonn. "The award recipient is regarded not only as a successful entrepreneur but also as an inventive innovator," stated an announcement at the time. During his active career at Miele and beyond, Dr. Peter Christian Zinkann filed applications for and was granted more than 130 patents, with further patents following even during his retirement.

A condolence room open to the public has been set up in front of the Miele Museum in Gütersloh, giving all members of the public the opportunity to pay their respects and express their condolences. Further information regarding the funeral arrangements will be announced shortly.

Biography

During his time as Managing Partner, and in some cases beyond, Dr. Peter Christian Zinkann served on the following supervisory, administrative and advisory boards:

- Viessmann-Werke (1994–2007)
- TÜV Rheinland Administrative Board (1973–2001; Deputy Chairman)
- Zanders Feinpapiere AG (1975–1990)
- Dürr-Beteiligungs AG, Stuttgart (1990–1995)
- Flender GmbH, Bocholt (1977–1986)
- Mannesmann-Kienzle GmbH (1977–1995)
- Fried. Krupp GmbH (1972–1978)
- Krupp Stahl AG (1978–1993)
- Krupp Hoesch-Stahl (1993–1997)
- ThyssenKrupp Steel (1997–2005)
- Dresdner Bank Regional Advisory Board for Westphalia

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About Miele: Since 1899, Miele has lived up to its brand promise “Immer Besser” in terms of quality, innovation, and timeless elegance. The globally active company for premium domestic appliances delights customers with pioneering solutions for the connected home. In addition, Miele offers appliances, systems and services for commercial use, such as in hotels or care facilities as well as in medical technology. With its durable and energy-saving appliances, Miele helps its customers make their daily lives as sustainable as possible. The company is owned by the two founding families, Miele and Zinkann. In the 2025 business year, Miele generated a turnover of 5.16 billion Euros with approximately 23,000 employees. Its global network comprises 19 production plants and 49 service and sales subsidiaries (as of March 2026). The company has its headquarters in Gütersloh, North Rhine-Westphalia.

There is one photograph with this text



Photo 1: Miele mourns the passing of Dr. Peter Christian Zinkann, who died on 19 October 2026 at the age of 98. (Foto: Miele)

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