



*Karl Roland Wirth,
founder, 1936 – 1991*



First company logo

In 1969 Ronal was founded by German entrepreneur Karl Roland Wirth. Wirth's decision to start a wheel company was the result of two distinct facts. First, Wirth was a passionate race driver. He started his racing career as a Formula V driver in 1966 and by 1967, Wirth already had won the ONS Junior Pokal. Second, Wirth sensed the growing interest of car manufacturers in light alloy wheels. As it well fits an entrepreneur, Wirth combined his passion with his business sense and started to make wheels under the company name RONAL. The name Ronal was the result of the composition RON (the abbreviation of his name Roland) and AL, which referred to aluminum (key material of the business). In the spring of 1969, the first Ronal wheels were fitted on an Alfa Romeo Duetto.

Ronal would initially work with an independent foundry but already in 1970, the foundry could no longer keep up with the growing demand of Ronal. As the demand for Ronal wheels increased, Wirth decided to vertically integrate the company. In order to control all different production processes, Ronal opened its own factory in Forst, Germany. By October 1970, the entire Ronal wheel production took place in Forst. The factory in Forst was the very first aluminum wheel factory in Germany to house both development and production. The first cast permanent mould wheel was delivered by RONAL on December 10th 1970.

In September 1971, RONAL received its first Original Equipment order from Ford AVO in Cologne. In 1974, RONAL already produced over 100.000 wheels in only one year and four years later, by 1978, RONAL's overall production surpassed 1 million. In 1976, RONAL opened a second wheel factory in Saint Avold, France and in 1981, another factory was opened in Teruel, Spain. The production milestone of 1 million was reached in 1984.

In December 1987, RONAL's German operations expanded when a factory in Landau opened up. Landau took over all production in 2003 when the foundry in Forst was closed down. By 1988, over 10 million wheels were produced in RONAL history and by 2000, the overall production of RONAL wheels exceeded 50 million. Over the years, other production facilities were opened up to meet the growing wheel demand, and some others were closed down in order to better organize and structure.



Forst Factory, Germany, 1970



Present day logo

One of the first major expansion efforts was the opening of the American Die Cast Engineering (ADCE) in Huntington Beach, USA in April 1978. In August 1983, RONAL expanded to Härkingen, Switzerland under the name RON AG. RONAL Canada was founded in Stevensville in March 1987. By July 1990, a mould factory was opened in Cantanhede, Portugal. When in March 1993, RONAL opened a factory in Jicin, Czech Republic, the eastward expansion of RONAL became a fact. Two years later, in 1995, Poland became a part of RONAL activities with the foundation of a factory in Waldenburg.

In 1999, RONAL reinforced its transatlantic operations by opening a factory in Queretaro, Mexico and most recently, in 2001, the company intensified its presence in Poland by opening a second factory in Jelz. The latest development was the acquisition of the majority of Speedline Italy, in May 2007.

On February 25, 1981, Ronal opened up its first shower cabin production facility in Bitche (France) under the company name Sani Métal. At the same time, distribution centres were opened in France and Germany. In 1999, a second production facility was opened in Jicin (CZ). As from 2000, Poland, Spain and the Czech Republic got their own distribution centres. In April 2009, the entire shower cabin division was reorganized and restructured under the new company name SanSwiss with subsidiaries in France, Germany, Spain, Czech Republic, Poland and most recently also in Romania. SanSwiss has an annual production capacity of 200'000 shower capacity.



RONAL lost its founder on August 15th, 1991. Karl Wirth died in a car accident in the Czech Republic at age 54. Despite the death of its founder, Ronal continued to extend its success in the industry and today, the company stands for one of the leading names in the wheel manufacturing business with a highly interesting and varied clientele worldwide that includes Ford (since 1971), Opel (1973), Saab(1977), Audi (1978), Nissan (1979), VW (1983), Rolls Royce and Bentley (1984), General Motors USA (1985), Mercedes Benz (1987), Toyota (1990), Seat (1992), Skoda and Renault (1993), Porsche (1994), and BMW (2000).

