



TEAM, FLEXIBILITY AND UNITY: ZATOR

Over twenty years of experience and a corporate philosophy based on a concept that is easy to tell but difficult to deploy: teamwork. To explain what **Zator** is today and the milestones of their journey to become one of the most interesting players in the adhesive application business, we met the person who created the company, **Alessandro Donati**, who launched this initiative back in 1998 with his father **Luciano** and with **Maurizio Tapparo**. From the origins "in a Milan basement" until today.

"When we founded Zator, in 1998, we were aware of our potential and our longstanding experience in this sector. We knew how to move. The original headquarters were in Milan, then in 2001 we moved to Cusano Milanino. This relocation did not change our philosophy or our goals, and neither our way of working.

Today Zator is a company with **fifteen people** and a turnover exceeding 2.5 million euro, handling the entire production internally and minimizing outsourcing. **Customer care** is our ace in the hole. I daresay it is one of our key strengths, from the early sales stages - when we look for the best solution together with our customers - up to after-sales, from installation to the resolution of possible issues. If you choose Zator, you have a partner next to you who supports you in case of problems. Ultimately, this is our philosophy: always work in team, both internally and with customers. We go beyond sales, we build ad-hoc plants for customers and we always want to be present".

Many ideas, many projects, and the pandemic in 2020. How did you face last year?

"It was not easy from a financial point of view, but **we can be satisfied**. The problems we had were more "technical", especially in terms of sales and service. It was a new situation, an unprecedented experience that forces our engineers to change approach, to turn the "physical" relations with customers into an online interaction, especially in the first period.

What are the consequences of this situation?

"Right now, the big issues are market fluctuations and uncertainty. It's not easy to make long-term plans. In normal conditions, a company must face daily changes, and even more in this period, we must be as flexible as we can. All companies are paying close attention to developments. That's normal: in these situations, the instinct drives you to a more conservative option. Some try to delay investments to see what happens in the coming months, some are approaching 2021 as a year of transition and decide to invest, trying to make the best of this difficult situation. We have chosen a third option. **We have invested in ourselves**, in our staff, adding to key roles last year, as well as



in machinery and in the improvement of our automated systems. We are fighting the virus by investing in our own organization, rather than adopting a wait-and-see attitude. We prefer to keep moving. It was not easy. Sooner or later, the pandemic will end and the entire industry will restart at full steam. And we want to be ready. After all, we are like a big team: without **unity**, we are going nowhere.

What are the goals in 2021 and in the near future?

"Starting from the assumption that it is not easy to make plans, we want to restyle our products, possibly introducing a new line of controls and sensors to be integrated onboard our machines. The first quarter 2021 seems to have started positively, largely beyond expectations. Now we'll see what happens. If it continues like that, it depends on the sanitary situation and how companies will face it. You asked what has changed. The answer is: **the vision of companies has changed**. Until one year ago, orders were submitted based on annual forecasts, in January you prepared for the necessities you would have in December. Now we are working with a much shorter vision. The way of working has changed...

If I should imagine Zator in the near future, for instance, I would like to expand the business, find a larger building, approach new sectors. So, we must grow, but at the same time keep the **flexibility** that has distinguished us so far".

What does it mean to make innovation in an industry like adhesives?

"In our industry, **innovation** lies in details, in the constant refinement of products. There is no revolution, but daily work that leads to progressive improvements in techniques, materials, equipment. You try to optimize everything, to improve the performance of all systems. Every piece of innovation strictly depends on customer requirements. Customization is our keyword, finding the ideal solution for each customer is our mission. And in this context, innovation is a direct consequence".

One final question: where does the name Zator come from?

"It's funny, it came to my father during a trip in Finland - said Alessandro Donati with a smile -. There was a restaurant called Zator. He was struck by the name and it soon became Zator. An original name with pros and cons. You can find us easily, but you have to leaf through exhibition catalogs until the last page..."

Team, flexibility and unity: in one word, Zator.

by Francesco Inverso ■

zator.it

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The goal is providing users with all the information and knowledge they need to purchase our tools "off the shelf". So, a clear categorization of technical knowledge, available online, so that they can browse a huge offer of tools for very different machines and very different materials! It's a very high level of technical complexity we are working hard to solve".

Which are the top technologies right now? Which are the strongest trends? "The "big topic" of this period is the **coating** of tools with innovative products. We have evolved from Widia steel or "hard metal" to integral tungsten carbide, and then to diamond, which revolutionized woodworking achieving new speeds and duration," **Gabriele Laghi** said.

"Now we are making research on product coatings of steel or integral carbide, to have more suitable working angles compared to diamond, in order to guarantee the best finishing with superior durability. I am talking about vapor deposited on the tool using very sophisticated technology, to avoid creating rounded edge and to achieve up to four times longer duration compared with Widia mixtures. Such technology comes from metalworking and it is like coating a piece of wood with a sheet of steel, and then use it as if it were made of solid metal!

All of this without causing any variation in the tool structure, with no need for grinding, and you can even resharpen it, although performance inevitably decreases in this case. But all in all, the tool's life is four to six times longer, at a really interesting price. The future tools will be coated, that's an increasing request by customers who have to machine thousands of meters of products every day, as the higher initial cost (twice the cost of a standard tool) is largely paid back by the tool life and the processing quality".

And finally, a piece of news that has surprised us positively. "Last year we were mentioned in a market survey by "Yahoo Finance", an initiative we came across by chance, and we were listed among the world's top-ten producers of milling cutters, next to very famous brands, and they presented our company as "...recognized for their innovation, technology and search of new products". Congratulations!

by Luca Rossetti ■

sistemiklein.com



Meeting **Gabriele Laghi** is always a pleasure, not only for his gentle ways and hospitality. This time, the pleasure was even greater, as we sat at the table also with **Eugenio** and **Lorenzo Laghi**, the new generation of the Laghi family, taking up the challenge of future growth. It seemed clear that this new vision has brought a new wave of life into the company. "We purchased another section of building because we need more space. Now we have approximately thirty people working in the company, but fortunately we are growing, we are facing new situations that require to strengthen our marketing, communications and online operations," **Gabriele Laghi** said. "We are also investing on products, but having thirty years of experience, production is what we are most confident in: today, all efforts must be focused on presentation, introducing yourself, showing your portfolio outside the conventional boundaries, have a clear vision of distribution and how to implement it".

The Sistemi Klein portfolio also includes the measurement instruments by **M. Conti**. "We have always been a dual business - **Gabriele Laghi** continued - with this company based in Pesaro offering a range of instruments that has expanded over the years and increasingly integrated with our tooling offer, including more and more solutions, up to tool presetting systems. This portion of our business keeps giving much satisfaction, it is a significant driver for our **growth**: even in 2020, a terrible year for the reasons we all know, closed with a turnover expansion by a few percent points, up to around five million euro. And we should not forget that you need energy to grow, different visions, and the arrival of my **sons** has opened a new era".

Eugenio (29) and **Lorenzo** (31) joined the company in 2014, almost by chance, after being abroad for a while, but they soon realized that their university education could be valuable in that context. They are the makers of the new opportunities created by Sistemi Klein online: "We have implemented a platform that enables our dealers to publish our entire catalog, including more than 10 thousand items, on their websites," said the Laghi brothers. "We are providing them with the necessary support, keeping up with modern times and looking well ahead into the future, not only to short-term perspectives. In Northern Europe and in the United States, this kind of organization is highly appreciated: today, we **export** approximately 80 percent of our production and we work regularly with some forty countries, plus others with occasional business.

