



THE MECHATRONIC VALLEY.
The birthplace of the Viano-based multinational

VIANO/A JOURNEY INTO THE HEART OF INDUSTRY 4.0

An eagle soars over the wonderland

Enrico Grassi and Vittorio Cavirani tell us the history, the present and the future of Eletttric80 and BEMA. The new logistic hub rising from the “ashes” of the former Isla Tiles factory is already up and running.

By Michele Campani

“Our Group, in collaboration with its partners, has always invested in the territory to support local communities as well as educational, sporting and social organizations. We do this because we believe firmly in the value of our roots, and we know that together we can tackle even the most difficult challenges”. These are the words of Enrico Grassi, President of Eletttric80 and BEMA. We followed him and his longtime partner Vittorio Cavirani, General Manager of Eletttric80 and Vice-President of BEMA, into the heart of the companies that are driving our local economy. Let’s say it, they succeeded in turning our home town into a wonderland.

How did you end 2019 and what are the forecasts for this year?

The year that has just ended brought us further confirmations from customers, partners and collaborators on both the local and world markets. We closed 2019 with a 10% increase in turnover on 2018. We are expecting to exceed EUR 300 million in 2020. Our growth has always been accompanied by constant investments in people, especially young people, in training and in research projects.

What is the situation in terms of employment and how are your employees distributed here and worldwide?

We hired around one hundred people in 2019 in the group as a whole. In total, our workforce is now over 800 people strong. We have thirteen branches in different world countries in addition to our headquarters in Viano. We started in 1994 from the United States, where more than one hundred people currently work. Step by step, following market trends and with the primary objective of always being close to our cus-



Enrico Grassi and Vittorio Cavirani

tomers, we opened other offices in Australia, Brazil, Chile, United Arab Emirates, France, Great Britain, Mexico, Poland, Russia, Spain and, in the last year, also in China and Thailand to meet the needs of areas in constant development. We have also been working with Tetra Pak worldwide since 2007.

Around three hundred integrated factories built, more than two thousand robotic systems and more than five thousand laser-guided vehicles installed. Figures like these make you proud and humble at the same time. Is your customer portfolio constantly increasing in size? Where are you expanding?

We have brought the new concept of total integration and automation of logistics processes to FMCG manufacturers, particularly in the beverage, food and tissue sectors, but also in other areas, such as ceramics, plastics, pharmaceuticals. This is Industry 4.0, the smart factory model that is the buzzword today and that we started working on back in 1992 in Caldonazzo di Trento with Costerplast (Coster Group), that supplies plastic caps for the pharmaceutical and cos-



metic market. In a few years, our technology was being used in all the other plants of the group. We make a difference because we do not offer a single product to our customers. On the contrary, we deliver tailor-made, scalable and efficient solutions that we guarantee over time with remote (24/7) and on-site support services. To this end, we design increasingly advanced systems, such as palletizing robots, automatic laser guided vehicles, high-speed robotic wrappers, depalletizers, pallet control systems, robotic labellers, and high density automated warehouses.

The entire logistic flow is managed centrally from a software platform called SM.I.LE80 (Smart Integrated Logistics) to ensure a direct “connection” between production systems and processes and to optimize all operations from raw material reception to warehousing and shipping. Not by chance, we opened a unit in Parma exclusively specialized in software development two years ago. Our national and international customer portfolio includes Barilla, Acqua Sant’Anna, Parmalat (Lactalis Group), Pregel, Sterilgarda, Sofidel, Constellation Brands, Danone, Evian, Nestlé Perrier, Bonduelle, Nestlé Purina, Moët & Chandon and Coca-Cola. Recently, we acquired major customers in Southeast Asia and South Africa.

The former Isla Tiles factory first and then Carpineti. The redevelopment of old tile

factories seems to be the way for the future on the local level. Industry 4.0 but also an operation that is good for the landscape, too...

In addition to the landscape, redevelopment operations are good for the people because they create job opportunities and improve the environment in which we all live. Our goal has always been to grow, focusing on high-quality projects, development of young people and creation of sustainable infrastructures. For us, the local community is incredible leverage. It is the inner force that has driven us forward

with the awareness of what we represent for the people who live here. We have achieved something special setting off from this valley. **Can you tell us about the genesis of the new opera-**

with greater quality control and a drastic reduction in lead times. **The impact on the local community is major, also through the allied industries...** Investing in this valley means

concretely supporting the employment of people, especially young people. If there are more job opportunities in an area, more families can settle and more children will be born. It is a circle that has a positive impact on the entire production chain and on society at large. This is demonstrated by our partnerships with innovative companies, such as GorFar, for the production of LGVs, Kaitek Flash Battery for lithium batteries, and iN²POWER, for induction charging of the batteries themselves. We have also built partnerships with local institutions, local activities and investments in sport, like those with Vianese Calcio, the LG Competition Castelnovo Monti basketball team and Valorugby Emilia, to transmit our distinguishing values to young people - particularly those of rugby, that include teamwork, respect for your opponent,

courage and determination - also to guide and support their future choices. **Companies like yours are looking into the future. Tell us about your relationships with schools and your partnerships and investments in training.** A few years ago, we opened an in-house Academy to prepare new recruits and keep skills up to date at all levels of the company. We are also one of the main founders of ITS Maker, the Emilia-Romagna mechanical and mechatronics training center. It is the largest technical school in Italy that offers two-year post-diploma courses of excellence with the aim of fostering employment in the companies of the region. We contribute to drawing up the study plans. Our technicians teach courses and we host the students with company internships. Over the past five years, we have hired all fifteen ITS Maker interns. Training has always been a key element for us. Our approach developed over 27 years ago. We have a longstanding relationship with the Cattaneo-Dall'Aglio high school in Castelnovo Monti organizing classroom talks with students. Over the years, we have bolstered and expanded our relationships with all schools in the area through internships and traineeships, as well as guided tours inside our factories. We also collaborate with several universities, including the universities of Modena and Reggio-Emilia, Bologna, Parma and the Polytechnics of Turin, Milan and Bari, offering professional opportunities to graduates and PhDs specializing in areas such as ICT, mechatronics, automation and engineering more in general. We do the same on international level. Our branches in Krakow, Poland, and Monterrey, Mexico, have built important synergies with the universities in the area by promoting qualified employment. We kicked off the concept of brain circulation aimed at the concrete enhancement of young people and the dissemination of knowledge, that everyone wants, several years ago. Today, our companies employ people of different nationalities and with different skills. At Eletric80 and BEMA we are committed every day to being "ECCUS", which is an Italian acronym for the qualities necessary for continuous improvement: enthusiasm, know-how, charism, humility and wisdom. ●

The E80 Logistics Hub on the site of the former Isla Tiles factory (photos by Giuliano Bianchini - Alta Media)



tional headquarters in the Rio Fagiano valley?

This decision is part of the investment plan that we have been implementing for over thirty years in the area from Viano to Castelnovo Monti and beyond. Starting from these assumptions

and to provide answers to our production growth, we have opened a logistic hub in a 12,000 square meter area by redeveloping an existing building that had fallen into disuse for twenty years. It was the former Isla Tiles plant located between Viano and Rondinara. The new hub is responsible for designing, manufacturing and commissioning LGVs (Laser Guided Vehicles), the leading system that has allowed Eletric80 to make a difference in the international automation market.

Take us on a virtual tour of the hub. Tell us about the cutting-edge technological solutions and energy management. Is it true that the whole structure is autonomous and entirely solar powered?

The structure has been designed to be totally efficient and reflects our principles, specifically to develop projects aimed at promoting social, environmental and economic sustainability.

Has the opening of this office fostered a change (perhaps a rationalization) of the production system of the company?

Eletric80 and BEMA are working to optimize the entire supply chain. Being able to build LGVs in an area close to our headquarters means we can boost production, which today amounts to more than five hundred units per year,



Tell us about the partnership with GorFar and the Carpineti headquarters project

After opening of LGV's Carpentry production hub in Villa Minozzo, Eletric80 and GorFar are continuing to invest in the area by acquiring and entirely redeveloping a disused building in S. Prospero, in the town of Carpineti. The former 1960s ceramics plant will be replaced by a new area to house part of the activities of the Viano-based multinational.

"We are proud to be able to invest in the area by building new production facilities and encouraging the employment of many young people in the Tresinaro valley. We will be opening a new production hub for a total investment of over ten million Euro that will lead to the creation of a space of almost 9,000 square meters in a redeveloped, existing building which was a disused tile factory. "The hub was created with the aim of manufacturing the structural components of our systems, including the technological equipment now produced in other areas far from our headquarters," explained Vittorio Cavarani, general manager of Eletric80 and vice-president of BEMA.

"The operation is part of the development plan that Eletric80 and BEMA, in collaboration with GorFar, have been carrying out for some time, aimed at maintaining the production of the systems within the local community. The proximity of the future Carpineti plant will allow us to increase production volumes while maintaining very effective quality control. It will be possible to implement just-in-time principles for the entire process, reducing error margins to a minimum and guaranteeing the quality and innovation that have always distinguished the Viano-based multinational to customers worldwide." "We have kicked off a wonderful and challenging partnership with Eletric80 and BEMA," commented Mimmo Costetti, president of GorFar. "The acquisition of the building in Carpineti adds further value to the place where we were born, converting existing areas and structures and offering job opportunities to many young people living in the valley. The history of our company proves it. Growth comes above all from the sharing of strong values, those that distinguish our community, such as team spirit, dedication, commitment, a sense of responsibility and quality. We have become great by remaining here, in these hills, and investing in people even before technology."