



Family Business
Slovenia
2017



EY

Building a better
working world

Family Business
Slovenia
2017



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The family's sense and aspiration is to create a stable company with a solid foundation that will provide work, as well as grow and develop for many generations to come.



Janez Uranič

Country Managing Partner
EY Slovenia

Foreword

I am delighted to introduce 10 highly-inspiring stories of successful family businesses, presented in this year's Family Business Slovenia 2017 publication. While reading the stories of success, as told by the entrepreneurs, I rejoice in the extraordinary achievements of Slovenian family businesses and the drive of their founders and leaders. Entrepreneurial spirit is their most distinguishable feature and an important source of inspiration for all of us who have the pleasure of knowing them.

The Family Business Slovenia 2017 book offers insights into successful Slovenian family businesses, their practices and entrepreneurial perspectives. By reading their stories, readers can learn about the important role that family businesses play in our community and in the Slovenian economy. We are happy that with the support of the public agency, SPIRIT Slovenia, the collection of Family Business Slovenia books will now also be available in Slovenian libraries. This will further contribute to raising awareness among the general public about the features and importance of family businesses in Slovenia.

The Family Business Project initiative supports entrepreneurship and raises awareness of its contribution to a stable economy that is geared toward sustainable development. Moreover, in the framework of social responsibility, the project is contributing to the greater prominence of family businesses, both in local and international environment.

While the companies presented in this year's book operate in a range of industries, they are all innovators in their fields, making the quality of their products and services one of their top priorities. Even though corporate growth is an important goal pursued by any business, it is rarely the main or only guiding principle of a family-owned business. The wider sense and aspiration of a family business is to create a stable company with a solid foundation that will provide work, as well as grow and develop for many generations to come. In order to achieve this, family businesses are innovative, investing in new technologies, entering new markets, fostering fresh ideas and applying different management approaches.

At EY we are proud to support successful practices of family businesses and contribute to building an optimistic and better working environment. We hope that by reading the stories in this book, you will be inspired and perceive the energy and passion that family businesses exude.

“It is important that the owners and leadership team establish a single conceptual framework, enabling them to gain an insight into the company’s maturity level and identify strategic priorities for growth. ”



Mojca Emeršič, CFBA
Family Business Leader
EY Slovenia

Introduction

Strategic planning in a family business can be distinct from that in other businesses, due to the influence of family dynamics. It is often the case that formal goals and orientations become secondary to family needs and these priorities can greatly affect the company's growth and development. Therefore, systematic strategic planning, which takes into account all aspects of both the family and its business, is crucial.

In some companies, there is a prevailing sense that formal planning is not required, if strategic thinking is integral to their philosophy, which is often also used to justify less formal management. However, this does not contribute to a healthy, open and inclusive decision-making process, for which formal planning is vital.

One of the main challenges of strategic planning is often lack of personnel, especially in small and fast-growing businesses. In addition, relationships between family members and their perceptions of wealth and investment can greatly influence the business. Thus, it is important that the owners and leadership team establish a single conceptual framework, enabling them to gain an insight into the company's maturity level and identify strategic priorities for growth, in order to achieve the next level of success.

The EY Growth Navigator™ has proven to be extremely useful in establishing such a conceptual framework. The interactive experience was developed, based on 30 years' experience of working with the most successful businesses and analysis of more than 500 fast-growing companies' success. In the past two years, it has also been successfully implemented in family businesses in Slovenia, as part of preparing a family charter.

The EY Growth Navigator™ is a unique aid to thinking beyond the typical approaches and considering seven critical drivers for business success and accelerated growth. The highly-supported platform enables a quick and efficient overview of a company's past and future activities, while providing additional clarity around strategic priorities and challenges. During a one or two-day workshop, the leadership team works together with experienced EY advisors to systematically check the company's maturity level, according to individual growth drivers, identifying strategic priorities for growth, as well as gaining valuable insights from leading practices.

Representatives of companies which have already participated in the workshop have been very satisfied with the results and final report, confirming the experience from abroad, where the EY Growth Navigator™ is successfully used in the strategic planning processes of global, regional and local companies.

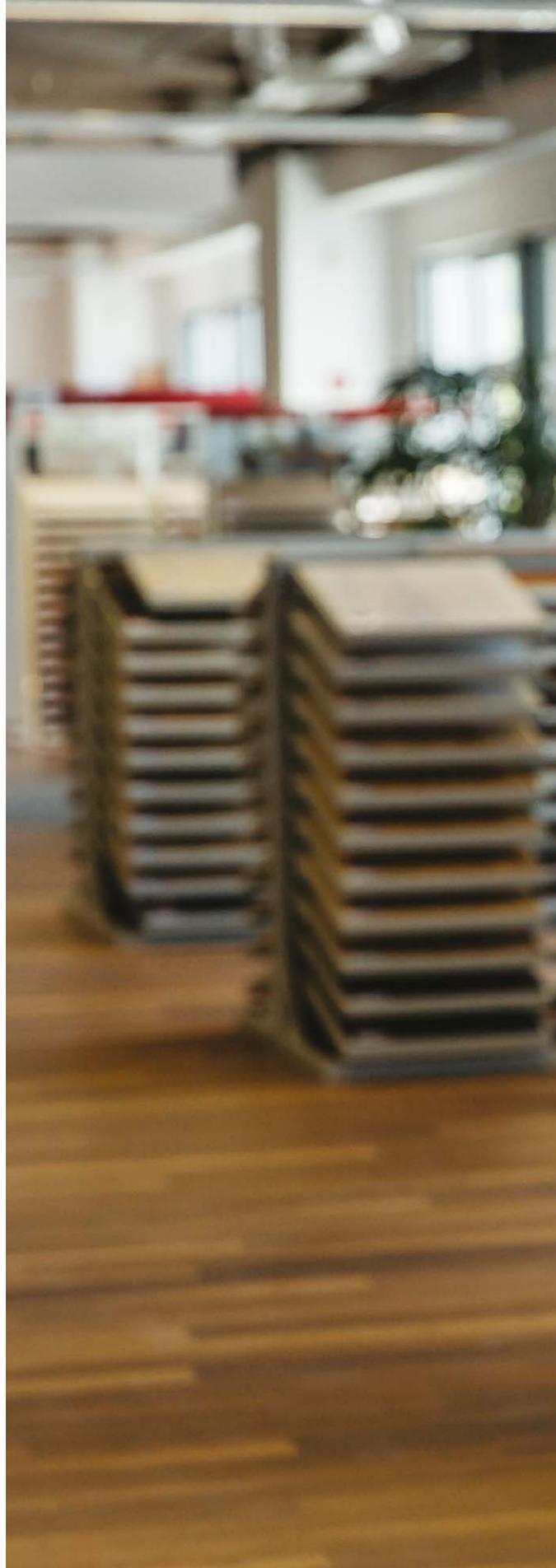
Alpod Group

Matjaž Štefan, Founder and Director Alpod d.o.o.

Samo Štefan, Sales Director Alpod d.o.o.

A family business gaining 20% of its revenue from China

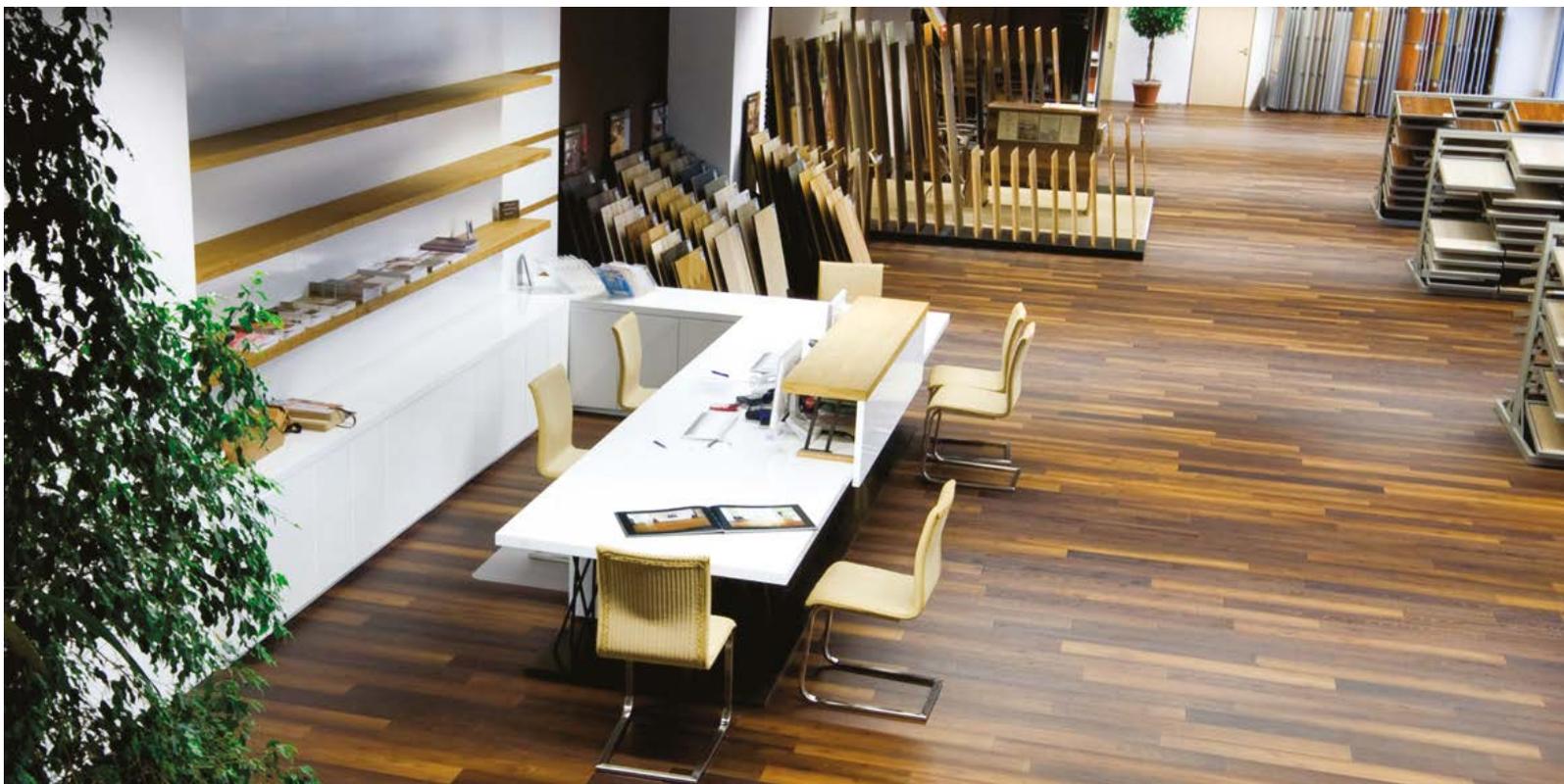
The Alpod family business, which is the largest distributor of wood floor coverings in SE Europe, is based in Cerknica and revolves around selling and laying parquet and other simple floor coverings. In addition to the parent company in Slovenia, their subsidiaries are located in Croatia, Serbia, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Italy, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Macedonia, Kosovo and Albania. In partnership with suppliers worldwide, they provide a wide range of quality, ecologically and technologically-advanced products. The main drivers behind the company are brothers Matjaž and Samo who, as they themselves say, perfectly complement each other.





“We are not on cloud nine, we are not presumptuous; we respect employees, customers and suppliers alike and have a respectful attitude towards everyone around us. Long term, this is the key to success.”

Samo Štefan,
Sales Director Alpod d.o.o.



Selling and laying parquet and other simple floor coverings are the Group's primary activities

From a rented space to four subsidiaries

After completing his studies in chemical sciences, Matjaž found his first job at "Brest", a furniture manufacturer from Cerknica. Despite the company failing to survive tumultuous times, he found an opportunity in the new laminate material, which he first saw at their German manufacturing partners. "I found the material very interesting, offering a wealth of opportunities for its use, although at the time it was not popular in either Slovenia or Europe. Nevertheless, I saw scope for further development," remembers Matjaž of the beginning, when he chose laminate as a cheaper alternative to ceramics and parquet.

To strike while the iron was hot, in 1998 he started his own independent business in rented premises and with borrowed money. "Twelve months later I was joined by a few of my colleagues, while my brother entered the

family business four years later, after he finished his studies. The business developed rapidly and we had to expand production to our own premises. Only five years after establishment we had our own warehouses," continues Matjaž.

The company's core business has always been floor covering. The opportunity Matjaž seized eventually proved fruitful, although things were rather difficult at the very beginning. "There are probably only a handful of business stories without some hiccups at the start. Over the years, we have invested significant hard work and effort, sometimes putting our family and friends second. However, seeing the business evolving in front of your eyes, gives you added impetus," explains Matjaž. They established their first subsidiary in 2005 in Croatia, followed by branches in Serbia and Slovakia and two years ago also in the Czech Republic. They employ 92 staff: 51 in Slovenia and 42 abroad.

Attracting the interest of customers from around the world

All materials used in floor coverings are imported, as currently there is no equivalent production in Slovenia. Three years ago, they established a separate department for the finishing of imported semi-finished products, which they process and paint according to the wishes of architects or end customers. Their aim is to expand the supply of finished or semi-finished products to other European markets. "We intend to gradually penetrate the markets of neighboring countries, such as Italy and Germany. In addition, we have established a joint venture in China, which will drive our future growth. Last year we recorded 15% growth, while this year it is estimated to reach 10%. In the future, annual growth is expected to range between 5% and 10%. If we continue to set up new businesses, this will automatically be reflected in these figures," believes Matjaž.

Five years ago, they joined the INTECH-LES consortium to develop new types of floor coverings. "A number of our employees are working on new products, especially on the finished look and we pay great attention to development," adds the Director.

Their competitive advantage is mainly due to their wide product range, as they are the providers of all types of flooring. In Europe, they also sell products imported from Asia or South America, while European products are sold in Asia and the Americas. "This meets our customer demand as they either do not have access to factories or are too small to engage in major business transactions. Some also lack an appropriate organization or else they just need an intermediary. Our advantage is that we offer a whole range of floor coverings. If we were only selling a single segment, the attraction for customers would be considerably lower. We are a supplier that can meet all the needs of small and medium-sized customers," states Matjaž confidently.



They employ 92 people: 50 in Slovenia and 42 abroad



Their products are sold throughout numerous foreign markets



They offer a wide range of floor coverings



They place great emphasis on development

Alpod Group in five words:

honesty, innovation, entrepreneurship, diligence, reliability.

Honesty as the key value of the company and the family

Samo, Matjaž's younger brother, is the Commercial Director of the family business. The brothers cooperate well and complement each other. While Matjaž primarily manages relations with banks, investments, liquidity and finance, Samo is responsible for optimum sales performance. "Matjaž puts forward a completely different impression of a family business than I do. In addition, he is a much harder negotiator, which is important in procurement and relations with suppliers. He commands respect from everyone he meets," explains Samo. The basic value of the company is honesty, both in business and interpersonal terms. "Honesty is one key factor of success and the other is having our feet firmly on the ground. We are not on cloud nine, we are not presumptuous; we respect employees, customers and suppliers alike and have a respectful attitude towards everyone around us. Long term, this is the key to success," says Samo confidently.

Despite the excellent cooperation between the brothers, Matjaž does not intend to force his children to join the family business if they do not want to. He believes that none of his four children will start their career in the family business as he is confident that they need first to gain experience elsewhere: "In any case, they need to spend a few years away from the family business to create their own social and professional network, as this is essential for any business. My two sons and daughters are interested in very different areas. The eldest daughter is about to complete her pharmacy studies, the eldest son is studying financial mathematics, the younger one is about to start studying economics, while the youngest daughter is still in senior school," says Matjaž, proudly describing the next generation of the Štefan family.

Trust as the advantage

Matjaž and Samo are both convinced that the greatest advantages of their business are fast and efficient communication and mutual trust. In most cases, they reach an agreement without a great many words. "Sometimes we only need two or three words to come to an agreement. I rarely learn about issues that Matjaž is in charge of because I am confident that he will make the best decision on his own. Vice versa, issues that I am in charge of (unless they are key business issues) rarely have to be shared with my brother. Usually we agree a solution within half an hour of discussing a problem and implement it the next day," explains Samo of their brotherly trust.

Matjaž and Samo Štefan

Owners

Company name:	Alpod Group
Number of employees (2016):	92
Revenue (2016):	€26.1 million

Blaj Fasteners (Anton Blaj d. o. o.)

Anton Blaj, Founder

Petra Blaj, Director

Blanka Blaj Borštnar, Sales

Passion for engineering, love for bolts

For over half a century, the Blaj family manufacturing business has been supplying special high-end screws and bolts that are critical to the function of a huge variety of machinery. The Blaj bolts can be found in shipbuilding, railways, hydroelectric power stations and machine building. The company combines the traditions of its founder Anton, with the newest, most sophisticated engineering developments and innovations. They are investing heavily in technological production upgrades, developing their expert knowledge and optimizing logistics to provide customers with products they need, when they need them. The list of customers includes large multinationals such as General Electric, Andritz and Siemens. Under the well-established Blaj Fasteners brand, the company develops and manufactures precision-engineered bolts and screws, used in some of the most complex machinery. Their exceptionally high product quality is confirmed by the miniscule number of customer complaints received over the past 10 years.





BLAJ
TENERS



"I'm happiest when we acquire a new customer or make a new product; when I see that after we have invested resources, time and effort in developing our solutions, they bring results."

Petra Blaj,
Director



Each of the 68 employees has a role in which they can demonstrate their passion for work, achieve results and be rewarded

Ingenious beginnings

In 1966, the founder of the company, Anton Blaj, an electrical engineer by profession, started to manufacture screws and bolts. According to him, one day after work, he simply contacted the director of the company where he was employed and told him that he was “going solo.” “I leased a small space from the parish priest, set up a workshop and that’s how the whole thing started,” recalls Anton. The beginnings were anything but simple, since in those times the state severely restricted employment. Eventually, as the business boomed, they needed to expand their workforce and the Blaj family found their own solution. “Myself, my brother, my wife, our son and daughter each registered five manufacturing crafts, in order to be able to hire five people each or 25 in total, while keeping separate books of accounts for each individual craft registered. In the end, this solution paid off and at that time I was the largest taxpayer in our valley,” proudly explains the ingenious founder. In 1985, they built a manufacturing plant in Griže that is still used to this day. At the time, the law enabled companies to invest 40% of their profits, while an additional 20% was contributed by the municipality. Development did not lag behind, although according to Anton, different rules applied at the time.

Exports account for 95% of production

Over the years, Anton has learned that there is always potential for further improvement and he has always strived to prove himself. “Not for the sake of becoming rich, but to show that I can achieve something. This is what motivated me,” he stresses. His brother-in-law, a mechanical engineer by profession, first proposed a move toward computer technology. The transition to computer-controlled production was made after Slovenia became independent, when they first began to pursue business abroad. “We made our first contacts with foreign markets in 1994 and from then on transferred our efforts exclusively to exports, which remain our focus. I have always wanted to employ well-qualified staff, as this is the only way to compete with foreign companies. I also wanted to prove to the world that we were equal to them. Manufacturing top-quality screws and bolts is much more important recognition for me than payment,” says Anton.

Their first foreign partner was the powerful wholesaler, Böllhoff in Germany. “They were my first connection to foreign business,” describes Anton of their first steps outside Slovenia. Today, they have no domestic competitors and stand side-by-side with large German companies. According to Anton’s daughter Petra, the current Director of the company, as much as 95% of profits are generated by exports. “In Slovenia, we are mostly involved in repair and overhaul, and almost our entire production is intended for the European market, mostly Germany and Austria. We are also targeting the northern market.”

The company is in the safe hands of a wider family

The Blaj company is synonymous with the family, since almost all members of the wider family are involved in running it. "My son Erih was involved in the company's beginnings, while today both my daughters Blanka and Petra also work here, as do my son-in-law Damjan, who is Head of the Commercial Department, my daughter-in-law Justina and granddaughter Patricija. We are truly a family business," proudly confirms Anton.

His daughter Petra, Master of Economics, has always been interested in the family business: "I have always wondered and found it intriguing to see how I could transfer the range of knowledge I have acquired over the years, to our company; but it was not easy. After completing my studies,

I started to work in the finance department, while also continuing to attend further education, and training to promote the company's growth and development. In 2014, after the transformation of the company, I assumed the position of Director; however, I continue to consult my father on key decisions."

Blanka, who works in sales, joined the company in 1985. "It was my first job. I joined the company after finishing school, and have since grown along with it. The family never talked about employment, as this happened naturally. When you set up a company you do not know whether it will develop into a family business or not. It's mostly due to a set of circumstances and hard work that help you create something that will provide work for children, grandchildren and future generations," says Blanka, sharing her thoughts.



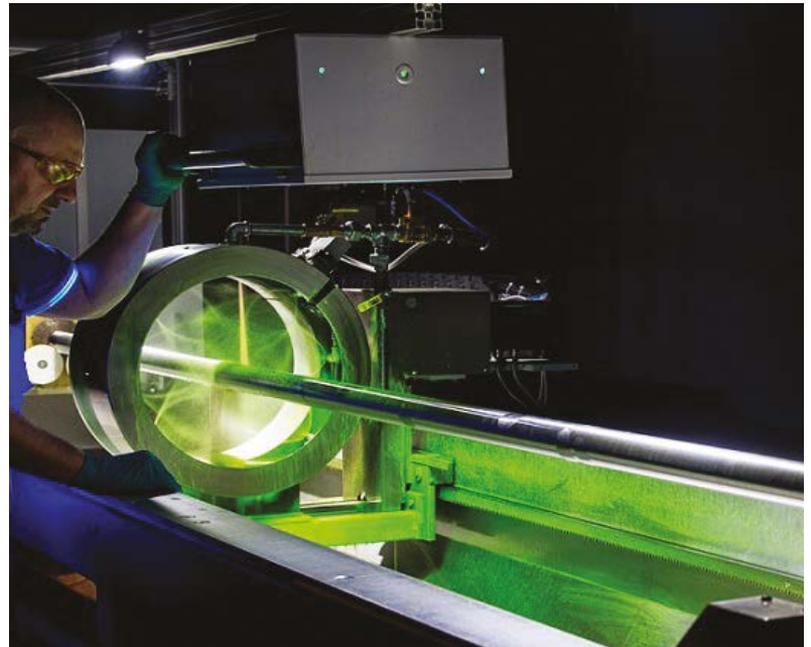
They develop and manufacture precision-engineered bolts and screws, used in some of the most complex machinery



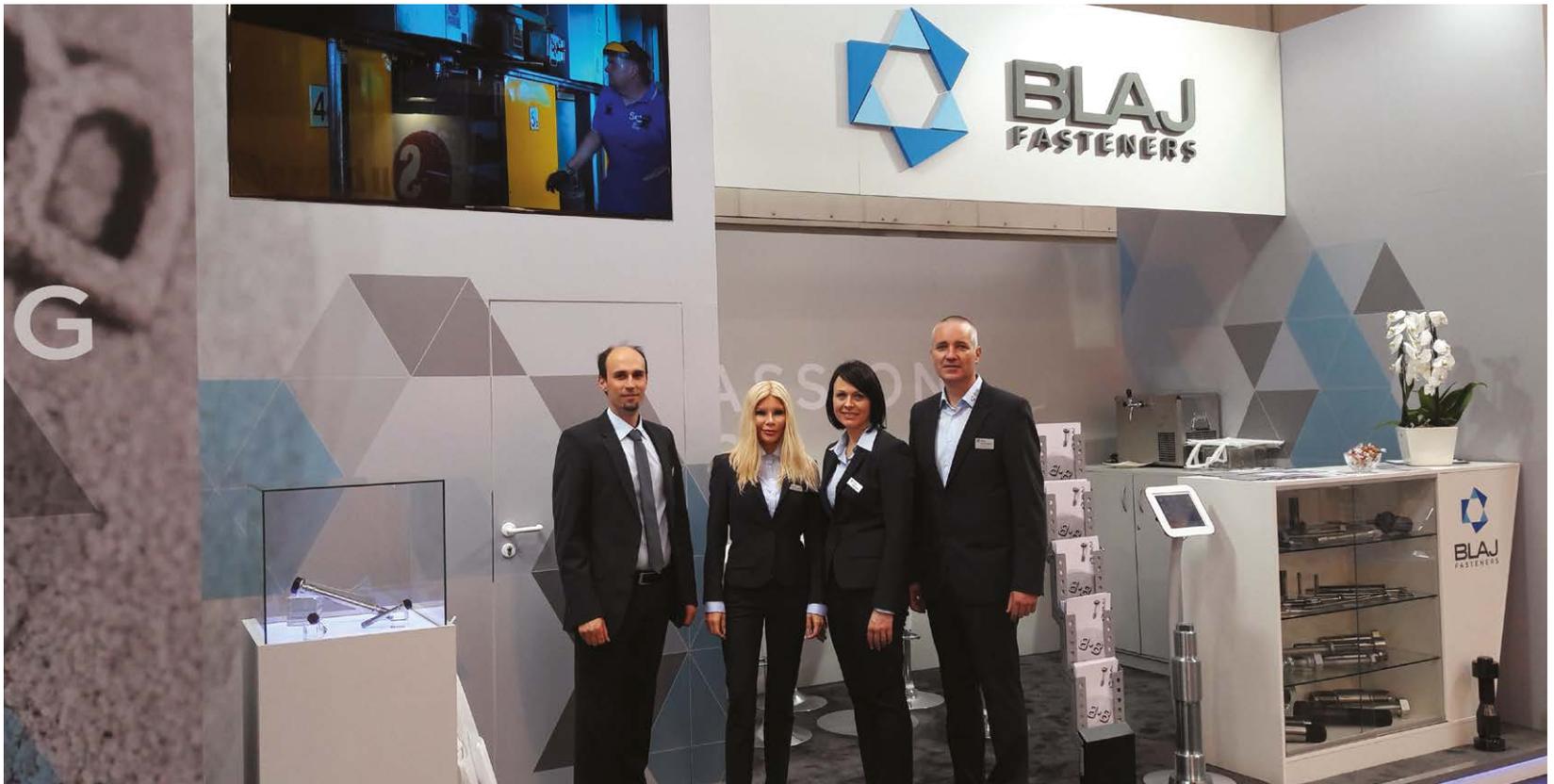
Checking dimensions and positional tolerances using the MAHR measuring device



The priority is maximum quality, aiming for product perfection



Surface defect control machine - up to 4,000 mm in length



Director Petra Blaj and colleagues at the Hannover Messe 2017

Blaj Fasteners in five words: passion, quality, development, responsibility, tradition.

Bolts, screws and family are ties for life

According to the Blaj family, the main advantage of their type of business is that family members commit to it completely. "You have to love the screws and bolts," remembers Anton of the advice given to him by Bollhof, their business partner and adds: "When you look at it, it must be flawless. You can make a top-quality product if you put your heart into it."

The long-term safety of machinery operating with Blaj fasteners is essential and demands perfection in the production of screws and bolts. In cooperation with SPIRIT Slovenia¹, the company has proactively designed a sustainable development strategy, encompassing the ambition and commitment of the owners, management and key company experts in order to achieve unified and sustainable success. "This is what makes us successful: because everyone in the company knows, feels and is aware of this," explains Petra of their commitment to sustainable development and the pursuit of continual improvement and quality.

¹ Public Agency for Entrepreneurship, Internationalization, Foreign Investments and Technology

Customers recognize their passion for screws and bolts and turn to them not only for production of the fasteners, but also for assistance with development. "Everyone in our company has a role where he or she can demonstrate their passion for work, achieve results and be rewarded. The connection between family and non-family members, professionalism and reliability, agility and rapid response to the needs of the market, are extremely important to us. It was my father who in fact built this strong infrastructure," explains Petra, adding that she inherited her father's philosophy of aiming for continuous improvement, as well as his passion for growth and development. "I'm happiest when we acquire a new customer or make a new product; when I see that after we have invested resources, time and effort in developing our solutions, they bring results," says Petra, her eyes glowing with pride.

Anton Blaj

Owner

Company name:	Anton Blaj, d. o. o.
Number of employees (2016):	68
Revenue (2016):	€6.8 million

Happy Tours (Družina Krumpak, d. o. o.)

Sašo Krumpak, Founder

Jadranka Krumpak, Statutory Representative

Happy Tours: the firm from a family with tourism in their blood

Happy Tours is one of the fastest-growing European tour operators in the field of incoming tourism. They do not conform to the usual approach of this type of business, but rather act as a B2B agency, as their customers are other tourist agencies. The international team of 50 employees organizes trips for more than 1,000 groups of travellers each year. They are known for their responsiveness, coverage of diverse markets, deep understanding of local environments, network of experienced guides and carriers and 24-hour customer support. Happy Tours' professionalism and experience is complemented by membership of various international travel associations. However, their success story did not begin in tourism, but in publishing.





“Tourism enriches us, so I want to be associated with it. I want to do the things that interest me, make me happy, those which I believe have a positive impact on the environment.”

Sašo Krumpak,
Founder



Sašo Krumpak, the founder

From children's magazine to tourism

The Happy Tours story began at the turn of the millennium, when Sašo Krumpak and his father Ivan set up a small publishing company. They began publishing a children's magazine called "Hepko", or "Happy" in its English version. The son's ingenuity was boosted by the business experience of his father, who helped him with advice from the outset, while his mother took care of the accounting. "The 70-page Slovenian language version of the magazine was published monthly, while the English language version was published every second month. We were selling it in all Slovenian elementary schools with a circulation of around 3,000 copies. Unfortunately, after six years, this gradually declined, until I made the decision to stop publishing it," recalls Sašo.

Determined to continue building on his entrepreneurial spirit, he focused on what was at the time their parallel activity - the organization of trips abroad. "Alongside the publication of the magazine, we also organized trips for schoolchildren to the Gardaland amusement park, plus excursions for teachers' trade unions and others. Thus, with the end of the publishing activity, the tourism business developed. Shortly thereafter, we began to organize trips for businesses and our largest customer was NLB,"

1 Public Agency for Entrepreneurship, Internationalization, Foreign Investments and Technology

explains Sašo. The initial knowledge and contacts were gained through active visits to tourist fairs, as well as other events and seminars, both at home and around Europe. "We travelled to England, Berlin, Madrid, and always attended all the events organized by SPIRIT¹," explains the founder of the company.

Slovenia and Croatia are increasingly popular destinations

The period of global economic crisis in 2008 had a major impact on tourism. Fortunately, Happy Tours recognized the opportunity for incoming tourism, which now accounts for 99% of their activity: "In 2008, I went to London's second largest tourist fair, where countries are promoted and where you have the opportunity to make contacts with foreigners who wish to visit Slovenia. This seemed like a very interesting option to me and we gradually started abandoning the organization of trips to foreign countries. It was a decision which was also influenced by difficult economic conditions in Slovenia."

Happy Tours succeeded in turning the most recent global economic crisis to their own benefit, although the dependence of tourism on the world's geopolitical situation remains strong. "Our business is impacted, for example, by the crisis in Asia, currency changes and the political situation in Europe." The political situation also affects the choice of destinations; while some European metropolises have fewer visitors, visits to Slovenia and Croatia are on the rise. The record 30% growth in 2017 confirms that this will be another successful year.

Tourism enriches personality

In addition to his parents, Sašo's wife, a co-owner of the English company, has also joined the business. "Mum continues to be responsible for accounting, while dad works as an external consultant. Being a family business helps tremendously, because we have no issues with trust and dedication. Of course, as a result, our private lives are very much

intertwined with the work," says Sašo. His mother Jadranka confirms that the family business never rests: "We are always ready to work, any time of day, regardless of whether it is a weekend or a holiday. If something needs to be done, it gets done."

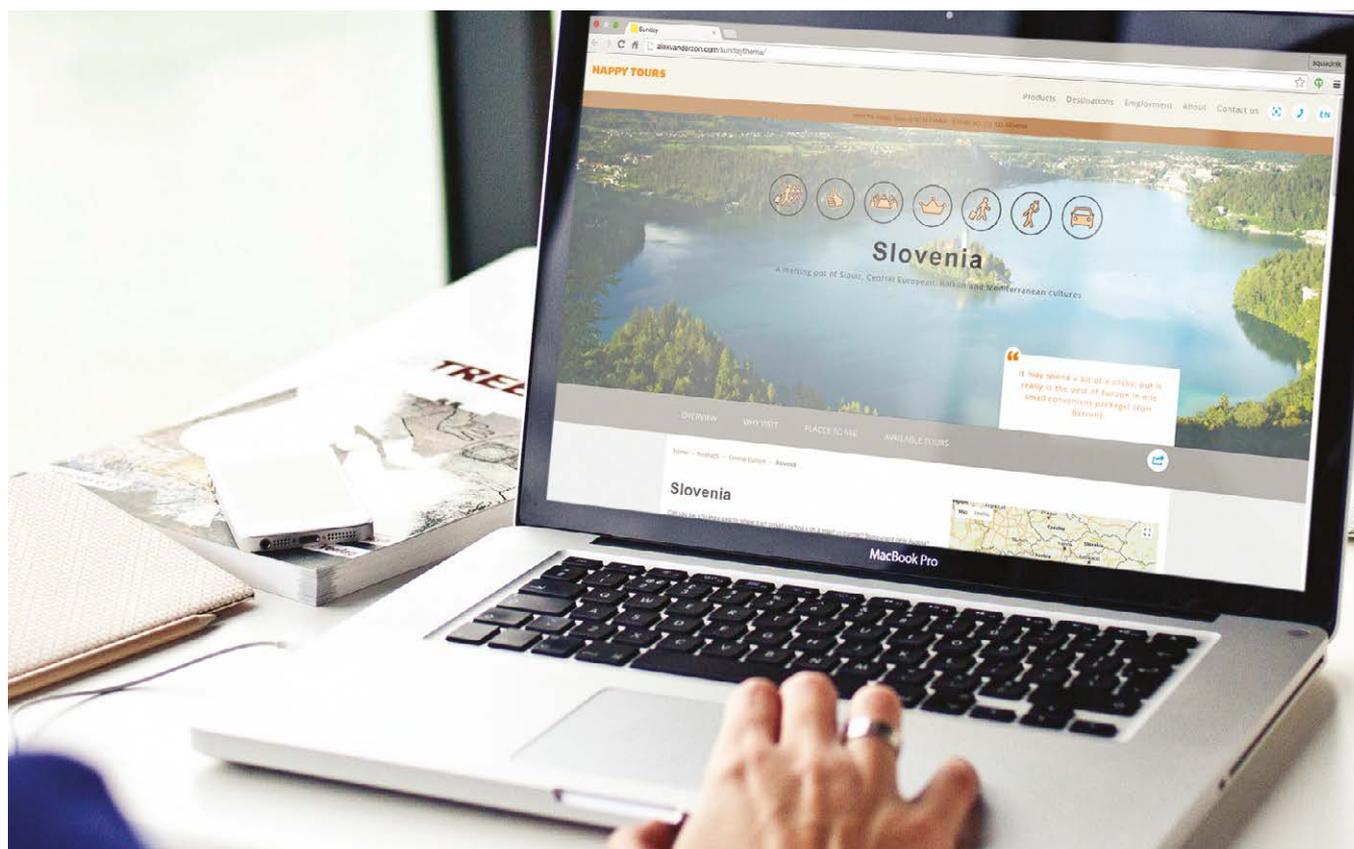
The Krumpak family believes that tourism helps people learn about different cultures and customs. "Tourism enriches us; it is one of the better-quality activities, so I want to be associated with it. I want to do the things that interest me, make me happy, those which I believe have a positive impact on the environment. I am not committed solely to Slovenian society, because I believe that we are all equal," says Sašo, revealing his philosophy. Eight-year-old Ulani, Sašo's daughter, is already becoming involved in the family business, as this is their way of life: "She is eager to help and she already knows what a voucher is. I'm happy and proud that she is growing up with tourism. She makes no distinction between a person's skin color; the only thing that matters to her is how good they are," proudly explains her father.



The team of more than 50 employees, from all over the world



Sašo Krumpak at the World Travel Market in London



Slovenia is becoming an increasingly popular tourist destination

Happy Tours in five words: responsiveness, multinationalism, diversity, connectivity, trust.

An external manager to promote stronger growth

The Company's headquarters is in Domžale. The team of approximately 50 employees is led by director Viljam Kvalič, who has no family relationship with the Krumpaks. "Some time ago, I realized that while I was a good manager, the company had reached a certain level of development, where I had to come up with a new solution to assure and encourage continuous growth. I am known for my horizontal management structure which, if we wanted to grow further, was no longer the best solution. So, I hired an external manager. This resulted in the need to change some working models, which was not easy and quite painful for some, especially colleagues with previous experience," reflects Sašo on the changes and the new manager Viljam, who had 15 years of experience working in a comparable position in tourism.

Two years ago, they opened a company in London; it has five employees and is managed by Sašo. In addition, they also have offices in Dubrovnik and Pula, where they mainly take care of the operational part of the business and cover Dalmatia and part of Bosnia. "We also have three offices in Asia - Shanghai, Malaysia, and one in Bangkok, where we also have a Slovenian manager present," adds Sašo. Asia is their most profitable market, as 80% of their guests come from this area.

Diversity as the source of competitive advantage

Employees from all over the world meet once a year at a joint event where they can have fun and enjoy each other's company: "It is very important that the teams get to know each other and that people who communicate via Skype and the phone meet each other in person and discuss the problems that might arise throughout the year. At the same time, this is an opportunity for leadership to outline new policies and technological changes. This gathering is very important for the company and employees as it gives them the opportunity to get a feel for work outside of their own department," Sašo confidently declares.

The Happy Tours multinational team is young and highly committed: "Our team comprises a Brazilian, Russian, several Chinese, Koreans, Thai and Malaysians, Croats, Egyptians, and other nationalities." Diversity is their most important asset because their guests appreciate not only language skills for ease of communication, but above all personal knowledge of their culture and habits. Knowing the needs of local markets is merely an added bonus.

New opportunities in the hotel industry

Experience from the past and the entrepreneurial mindset means that their thoughts are at all times directed to the future: "We are currently building a hotel at Plitvice which will open in June 2018. We are cooperating very well with the local hotels and as we are aware of the lack of capacity, we recognized this as an important market opportunity. Our four-star hotel will be in close proximity to the Plitvice park. We have received a grant from European funds for this project," explains Sašo of what is currently their largest project and a stepping stone to the hotel business. They see potential for further development in other markets such as India, North and South America, and Africa.

Sašo Krumpak

Owner

Company name: **Družina Krumpak, d. o. o.,
Happy Tours**

Number of employees (2016): **50**

Revenue (2016): **€11 million**

Humko, d. o. o., Bled

Tomaž Čufer, Director

Jan Čufer, Research and Development

Humko: when a teenager establishes a company

The Humko family enterprise is the leading Slovenian company in the field of plant breeding, horticulture and green infrastructure. They have registered a number of patents for their green wall systems and developed over 80 new gardening products, which are sold at various gardening centres of the "Profesionalna vrtnarska družba" (Professional Gardening Company), certain agricultural cooperatives and specialized stores. Tomaž Čufer, a successful entrepreneur since his youth, founded the company when he was just 17.





"The green wall has integrated artificial intelligence and is self-maintaining. The software recognizes where in the world the wall is located and also the prevailing weather conditions."

Tomaž Čufer,
Director



They completed the entire external and internal horticultural arrangement of the Slovenian pavilion at Expo 2015

From yogurt pots to luxurious greenhouses

Even though Tomaž lived in an apartment in his early childhood, he had the opportunity to learn about farm work. His father wanted him to gain work experience as early as possible, so he used to send him to his aunt's farm where he would help out with various chores. At the age of 11, Tomaž and the family faced difficult times with the death of his father, which left a lasting mark on all of them. Overnight, Tomaž had to step into his father's shoes and take on more responsibilities. "At the time, we were moving into a house and I took on my fair share of work, even though I was very young," remembers Tomaž. He wanted to become a professional industrial designer, but at that time there was no demand for this profession. "So, I decided to become a farmer and fruit grower and enrolled in a secondary school at the Biotechnical Centre in Kranj. In the first year, I became enthusiastic about mushrooms and a whole new world opened up to me during my internship," remembers Tomaž. In 1984, he worked without pay during the summer holidays just for the opportunity to gain experience. He then enrolled in the gardening school in Celje and became interested in Californian earthworms, which were very popular at the time.

Tomaž became familiar with composting during his internship at Hmezad in Radlje ob Dravi, while working on the production of mushroom-growing

compost. As a birthday treat, he borrowed 2,000 German marks from his friend's father (about €1000 in today's money) and bought earthworms to process vermicompost or "worm humus". He kept them at home, in the basement and in the garage, before moving them to the garden. "We used that humus to fertilize the flowers on the balcony and also a cactus, which soon had 264 flowers. The news about the prolific flowering cactus reached the media and people started calling to buy our humus and earthworms. Sales started rising and the money came rolling in," reminisces Tomaž of these times during senior school. From the very beginning, in 1985, the farm was called Humko, the earthworm farm. Tomaž himself designed the logo for it, which is used to this day.

After finishing his schooling, Tomaž worked as the head of the gardening centre at Villa Bled, while his business with the earthworms continued to flourish. In 1991, he felt that the time had come for him to devote his time and efforts exclusively to his own company and left the job at Villa Bled. "At the very beginning, we sold humus made by earthworms and offered gardening services. Then we began to import peat under concession. In the season of 1992/93, Ljubljanska banka became our first major customer, where we were put in charge of flower arrangements around their offices. Our next project involved construction of greenhouses. The first one, which still stands today, was sold to Semenarna Ljubljana. I was the first in Slovenia to import substrates, fertilizers, bark and accessories

for professional gardeners and sold them all over the country. We moved from using yogurt pots, loamy soil and compost to good pots, fertilizers and substrates - this was a breakthrough for us," says Tomaž, briefly outlining the history of his company. Soon, they built three garden centres and their own production plant covering an area of 20,000m². They set up luxurious, state-of-the-art Dutch greenhouses, equipped with computers and chambers. They attracted numerous large customers such as Kurbus Radgona, the Maribor and Ljubljana agricultural faculties and the gardening school in Celje.

Where there's a will, there's a way

As a result of the company's rapid growth, they were faced with certain difficult challenges. One of these was inefficient work organization, which slowed the development process. In the season of 1998/99, when a decree on compulsory composting of organic waste was adopted, they saw an opportunity. "I was the first one in and invested 1.2 million German marks in machinery, excavators, trucks and plant. We undertook a number of significant business opportunities with major companies such as Luka Koper, a sugar factory and three paper plants. More than 10,000m³ of compost was produced. We were deliberating buying another composting machine to cope with additional work. However, only six months later, the decree was abolished, as there was no adequate infrastructure available in

Slovenia. This left us with a debt of one million German marks," explains Tomaž.

The bank offered two solutions - bankruptcy or compulsory settlement. Nevertheless, with hard work and strong will, they managed to repay all their debts within six years and the company began to develop and grow again. Today, their annual turnover is over €2 million.

One success follows another. Amongst many prizes they have been awarded over the years, they are particularly proud of a gold medal and prize for the most creative garden, awarded at the 2012 Chelsea Flower Show. They also carried out the entire external and internal horticultural arrangement of the Slovenian pavilion at Expo 2015. They are taking part in the international project Erasmus+ Vertical Plant Life and in a multi-annual feasibility study on the use of green walls in Nürnberg. They also present their products at international trade shows such as IPM in Essen and Galabau in Nürnberg.

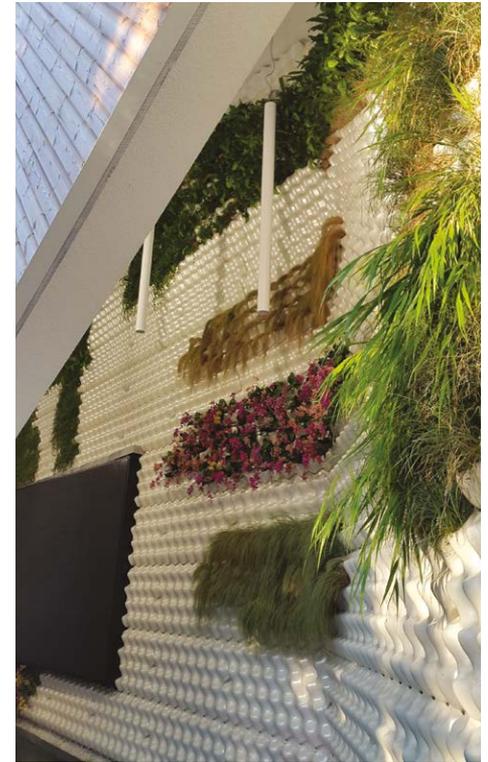
The Humko products are also available in Croatia, where the company has worked on over 20 top tourist and manufacturing facilities. Their green wall systems are exported to countries all over Europe and they are currently developing a new urban gardening concept. "For this reason, we are one of the few Slovenian companies that provides comprehensive solutions for the greening of cities," concludes Tomaž.



One of their most recognizable products is the green wall, which they patented in 2000



At the 2012 Chelsea Flower Show, they were awarded a gold medal and the prize for most creative garden



The green wall systems are exported to countries all over Europe



Green walls clean the air and water, are pleasant to look at, absorb noise and have a beneficial psychological effect

Humko in five words:

entrepreneurship, perseverance, innovation, diligence, boldness.

A smart green wall

Humko's main focus has always been working with soil and innovations related to soil development. They produce all types of soil mixtures and substrates, from clay mineral mixtures and composts to professional peat and ecological substrates. In addition, they have their own production of compost, humus made by earthworms, wood fibers and their own mineral processing, covering zeolite micronization and bio-charcoal production. However, one of their most recognizable products is the green wall, which was patented in 2000. This unique multi-purpose wall made of a durable plastic panel or polyester with a high-quality color layer, can be planted with decorative flowers or used for growing herbs and vegetables. As artificial intelligence is integrated in the green wall, it is self-maintaining. "In addition to regulating the addition of fertilizers, the software recognizes where in the world the wall is located and the time zone, for which we have collected data from 200,000 cities around the world. In bad weather, the software automatically prepares shock therapy for the green wall, reduces watering, adds potassium and humic acid, and informs the owner that the wall is going into shock and needs protection from cold and frost. If you fail to take action, the wall lid closes automatically; if the wall does not have a lid, the fertilizer program is adjusted in advance," explains Tomaž, of the innovative process. Cameras are the essence of the entire system as they recognize the activity of plants and detect the absence of photosynthesis. The entire process from beginning to end is carried out by Humko: from knowledge of plants and installation, to electricity and automation. A total of 27 subcontractors and suppliers are involved in the production of their entire green wall program.

Tomaž explains that the wall functions as a forest. "It cleans the air and water, is pleasant to look at, absorbs noise and has a favorable and beneficial psychological effect. The advantage of the green wall is also reduced energy consumption. In the summer, plants protect the facility from the sun, and in winter, the plants and the substrate act as additional insulation against cold."

Father and son make the best team

Tomaž's son Jan has been involved in the family business from a very early age; however he has taken a more active role in the company in recent years. Over time, he has helped with different jobs where he was needed most, from fieldwork to production. "I finished senior school for computer sciences and then continued my studies in entrepreneurship. In the long

run, I see myself taking over a leadership position within the company. When the time comes and I take over the family business, I hope to manage it as well as my dad has done or even better. I have a long way to go before that happens and I still have a lot to learn," explains Jan of his future ambitions. He did not need to look far to find a role model; he found him in his father. "I had my hobbies and tried my hand at various things, until I decided to become more seriously involved in the family business. My dad has extensive knowledge in all areas and I admire his determination and passion. Personally, I lack general and technical knowledge of our branch, but I hope that one day I will be just like him. I am good at organizing things, planning work in production and in the field, plus I am more organized and have good people skills," proudly explains 22-year-old Jan.

Despite being aware that learning from mistakes is important, Tomaž felt it was important to share his positive and negative experiences with his son. "I started working at the age of 12 by selling my products. As I did not have any business experience at that age, this was often taken advantage of. I lost quite a bit of money because I was naïve and untrained in terms of how to manage and deal with people. If you're a family business, you need somebody to help you. I compensated for my lack of knowledge and experience by working 24/7, and now that my son is also involved in the business, things are much easier," adds Tomaž. The youngest son Vid, who is currently studying at the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, may also join the company in the future.

Tomaž Čufer

Owner

Company name: **Humko, d. o. o., Bled**

Number of employees (2016): **18**

Revenue (2016): **€2.1 million**

Lingva, d. o. o.

Branko Gornik, Statutory Representative

Breda Gornik, HR and Administration

Blaž Gornik, Director

Prototype printed circuit boards chosen by Audi and Porsche

World-renowned giants such as Audi, Porsche, Pipistrel, Gorenje, Elrad International and Intra Lighting are just some of many customers of Lingva, a company specializing in the production of printed circuit boards and SMD stencils. They are well-known for their advanced technology, user support and fast delivery. The company began producing laser-cut stencils 12 years ago, after seizing an opportunity in a market that had just began to develop. Today, they rank among the four largest manufacturers of stencils. Branko, the founder, has already entrusted the management of the company to his son Blaž, who is successfully continuing the family story.





**"Speed and
responsiveness
are our greatest
competitive
advantages. We
strive to ensure
next day supply
of stencils to all
European locations."**

Branko Gornik,
Owner



Lingva, a company specializing in the production of printed circuit boards and SMD stencils

From a workshop in the attic to a global company

The story of the Lingva family business dates back to 1985, when a handful of friends from the village of Grahovo started talking about setting up their own company. "The girls used to tease us, saying that we were dreamers, all talk and no action," remembers Branko, an electrical engineer by profession, who at the time worked at Brest. The desire to set up his own business never went away and eventually he and his friend decided to embark on the entrepreneurial path. "We did not care what we sold, until we came up with the idea of selling printed circuit boards. At first, we didn't even know what they were; if we had, we probably would not have got involved in it. At the time, we were told we needed 1.5 million German marks to start this type of activity. However, we were starting from scratch," says Branko, describing the early days.

A year later, he and his business partner and friend Miro Levar left their jobs at Brest and established their own company. "My business partner

was director of procurement, while I was the system manager for large computers. When we established the company we agreed that after 10 years, we would split and each pursue our separate goals." Therefore, in 1997, they and a third partner, who had joined them subsequently, went separate ways and Branko moved the company's headquarters to its current location. "Prior to that we worked in the garage, in the attic, even in the old barn. We then invested in the premises of the former Brest warehouse, which was no more than four walls and a roof. We built up the empty space and arranged it according to our needs," explains Branko.

Branko is confident that the decision to part ways was correct, because over time different interests develop that are difficult to control. "Thus, each one of us bought a new company. We bought the Lingva company from a lady from the Loška dolina, who was involved in translation. We changed the activity; however, the name had to remain and thus our company is called Lingva," explains Branko.

Orders from abroad cannot wait until morning

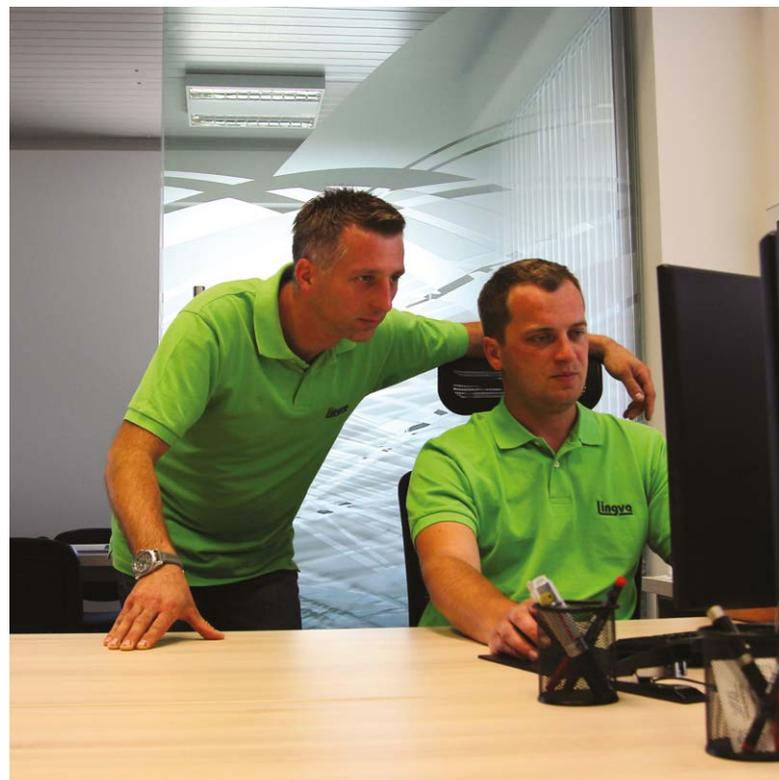
Today, Branko remains the owner of the company, while his son Blaž has assumed its leadership. Branko still helps with advice based on his many years of experience. "Two or three times a day he still asks for my opinion, but otherwise he has completely relieved me of my duties, which is quite a challenge, as we receive a vast amount of e-mails daily and Blaž had to learn to respond quickly to customer enquiries," explains his father. Branko's wife Breda, a teacher by profession, is also involved in the company. She runs the administrative part of the business and takes care of the staff. Initially, she helped while still holding her full-time job as a teacher, but subsequently she left this job to devote her time and efforts to the company. "It gives me great satisfaction to see the company growing and developing. Our son has proven to be a good leader and we lead a good life," says Breda.

Blaž joined the company after finishing secondary school. According to him, he has never been interested in anything else and has always known that he would eventually join the family business. He started his working career in production, gradually moving to other areas to learn about the company's operations until he began to take on managerial positions. "I had to step into rather large shoes, because my father has a very wide

social network. He knows a great many people and is more communicative than I am. Above all, he is a great teacher," says Blaž of the succession. Branko is very proud of his son, who has overcome many obstacles and has independently taken over the company's reins, as well as managing all the other staff working in the family business: "We are lucky to have a couple of key people who are very important to us. For example, Gregor Felicijan started working in production as a student of geography. Today, he is a very successful salesperson and one of our key staff members. In the past, I had to work 16 hours a day to make sure all the work was done," remembers Branko, but that is in the past. Blaž is now the one busy working until late in the afternoon, dealing with clients abroad, as orders cannot wait until the morning. All three family members point out that they have orders for only three days in advance as they strive to respond to them promptly. They all confirm that this high level of responsiveness is their competitive advantage. "The German customers are very tough on us. Although our products are not cheaper than theirs, our advantage is that we can deliver them the next day. If a German customer orders products from a German manufacturer, they will have to pay double for next day delivery. Speed and responsiveness are our greatest competitive advantages. We strive to ensure next day supply of stencils to all European locations," firmly assures Branko.



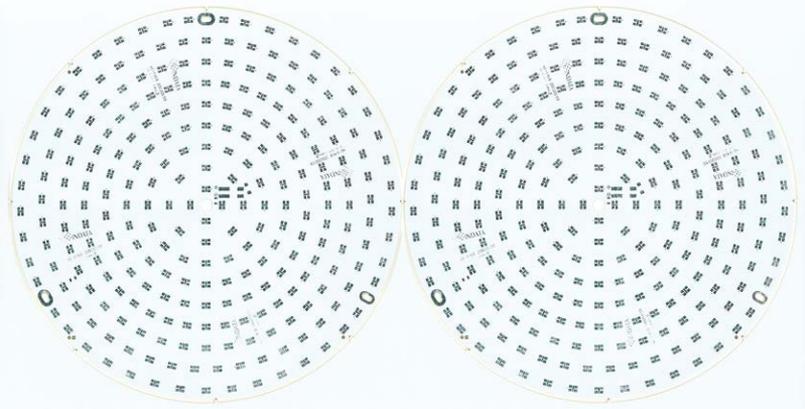
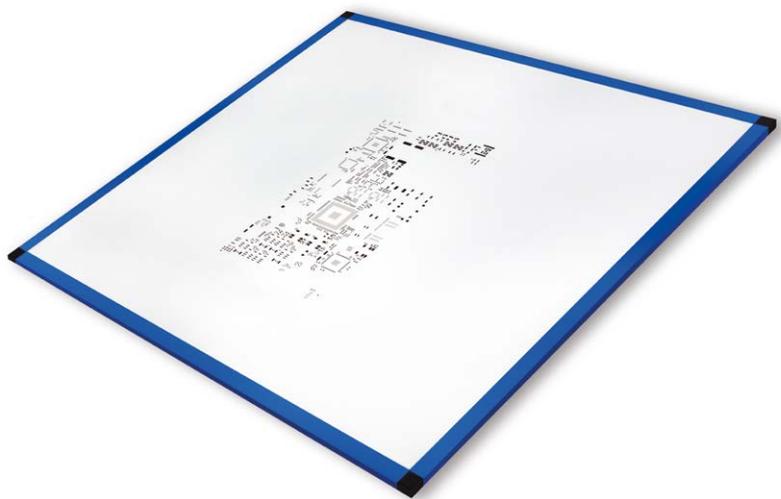
Gregor Felicijan, one of the key staff members with Branko and Blaž Gornik



A high level of responsiveness is their competitive advantage



The decision to invest in laser machines proved to be crucial



Printed circuit boards are used in a wide range of products

They produce between 2,000 and 2,500 stencils per month

Lingva in five words: speed, reliability, quality, honesty, innovation.

Golden investment in lasers and foreign markets

While in the past they were unsure who their final customer was going to be, today printed circuit boards are found in almost any product. "Our first customer was Riko in Ribnica. It was due to this transaction that my business partner and I left our regular jobs. Later we did major work for Iskra, the Jožef Stefan Institute and others. Anyone who is involved in electronics needs printed circuit boards. We have a large customer base across Europe and only 20% to 30% of our products are produced for the Slovenian market," explains Branko. Every customer who orders printed circuit boards from Lingva also needs a stencil that allows all elements to be attached to the printed circuit board. At first, they used to etch them, but later they decided to invest in a laser and this investment proved crucial. "Due to insufficient quality produced by etching, I decided to buy a laser. I

was ready to invest up to 100,000 German marks, but found that the actual price was twice that amount. To date, I am not I sure how we managed to gather sufficient funds. When you enter the market with a laser stencil your position changes completely," proudly explains Branko.

Sometimes the growth of the company seems to be overwhelming. Last year they achieved about €2.4 million of revenue, while this year it is estimated to reach €2.8 million. "I feel that the breakthrough occurred two years ago, although growth has been gradually increasing ever since the acquisition of the first laser in 2010. We invested in additional lasers in 2013, purchased two in 2015 and one last year. Monthly we produce between 2000 and 2500 stencils," reveals Branko. One of the lasers is also located in their joint venture in Turkey. Although they are a small family business, it is due to lasers that they rank among the major players on the European market in the field of laser stencil manufacturing.

Branko and Blaž Gornik

Owner

Company name:	Lingva, d. o. o.
Number of employees (2016):	21
Revenue (2016):	€2.4 million

Mebor, d. o. o.

Boris Mesec, Owner and Director

Marinka Mesec, Sales, Administration and Accounting

Simon Mesec, Head of Sales and Marketing

Uroš Mesec, Head of Production, Procurement and Development

Love for wood and family

The Mebor family business is one of the leading providers of complete solutions for primary wood-cutting. They take pride in their machinery's innovation, robust construction and high performance. Their product range includes machines for small, medium and large sawmills, from small band saws to complete sawmill lines. They have succeeded in combining ambitious business plans with a genuine family atmosphere and have fostered close links with representatives of the local environment. They strongly believe that good quality wood should be handled with the love and care it deserves.





HTZ1100 PRO

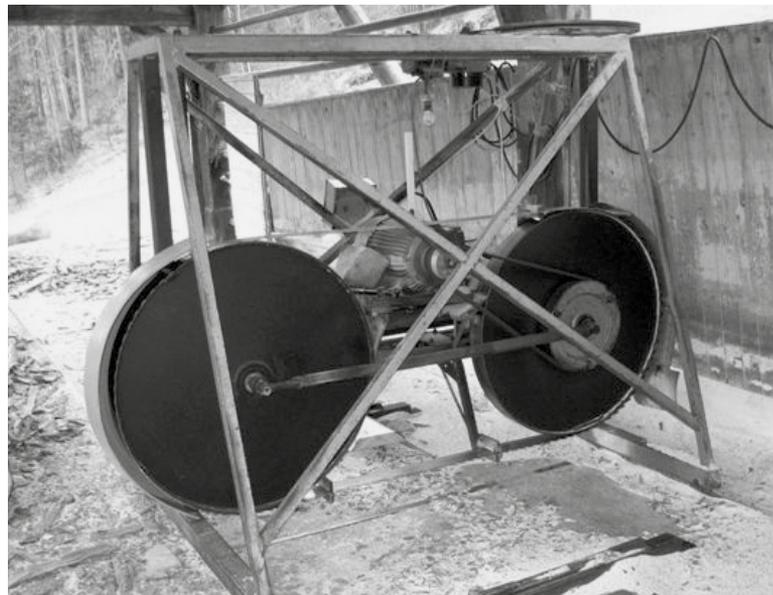


"The company is a part of our lives; the company goals are very personal goals."

Uroš Mesec,
Head of Production,
Procurement and
Development



Boris at the beginning of his entrepreneurial journey



The first machine Boris made for his father and which he kept improving over the next two years

Dad, I'll build you a saw!

The Mebor family business was founded in 1991, spontaneously and as a result of emerging local needs. However, the story began a few years earlier when Boris's father, who was involved in wood-cutting, needed a new saw. "He had an old saw, and when it no longer met his requirements, he began to look for something better to replace it. My husband saw an opportunity and seized it. As he was interested in mechanical engineering, he decided to build a saw for his father. He built the first machine in his own workshop and kept improving it and adding to it continuously. As he found the entire process thoroughly enjoyable, he was constantly coming up with new, innovative ideas," explains Marinka, remembering the early 1980s.

It wasn't long before a neighbor asked for a new saw to be built and slowly but steadily, demand spread throughout Slovenia. "I took time in developing my first prototype; while it kept evolving continuously, the

concept remained the same for a very long time. The idea caught on, as it stood out from the competition. While some of my competitors left the business, I continued to follow my own ideas, making the saw a little more robust, which seemed to be exactly what the market was looking for," proudly reflects Boris. The married couple grew together with the company and met some challenges along the way. "While my husband spent long days and weekends assembling the machines, I was at home with the children. Time was scarce and precious, but it was worth it. Today, we are proud of what we have achieved," affirms Marinka, who has always been the backbone of the family as well as the business, being in charge of documentation and administration.

Boris's brother, a turner, also helped in the family business and together they kept improving the machines. "We have always followed our own concept, not taking much notice of what others were doing," points out Boris. Soon after the establishment of the business, they turned their focus to foreign markets: Croatia and Austria.

A large family all over Europe

Boris and Marinka built the family business from scratch, ensuring its growth and development. "With time, we began to employ the first welders and production workers. The next family member to join the business was my brother, who first worked in production, but later took on a role in development. Our eldest son Uroš, who had accompanied me on my visits to clients since he was very young, followed and joined the team. Later, a need arose for a developer to help my brother who was involved in designing. Today, three employees are working as developers in addition to Uroš, who is also the Head of Production," says Boris, describing the process of employment and expansion.

Marinka is proud to point out that the sons joined the business of their own free will: "Uroš, the eldest, has always enjoyed mechanical engineering, and he was determined to join the company from an early age. Simon's interests lie in languages and marketing; however, he has been involved in various projects within the company since his school years. Our third son, Gregor, who is currently studying mechanical engineering, is also keen to join the family team."

Today, the company has 40 employees, from whom innovative ideas are always welcome and suitably rewarded. Another of the pillars of this family

business's success is maintaining external associates. "We are present in more than 50 countries worldwide, including Austria, France, Germany and Hungary, plus others, where we have more than 20 representatives who also offer local service of the machinery. We ensure support and training to all our service teams at our own facilities, as we believe this to be the best way to ensure sales. The best product advertisement is availability of local, high quality service, assembly and spare parts for the Mebor machines," confidently asserts Boris.

The Mesec family believe firmly that their employees should always see the rewards of the company's success. It is the employer who is responsible for the employees by ensuring they have work and receive fair payment for it. Furthermore, Boris believes it is important to contribute to the community by investing in it and promoting its development. "We help local societies with sponsorship, cooperate with schools and provide internships for the young. A metalworker will probably have to look far and wide to learn the skills that they can learn in our company. Here, he or she can become familiar with the entire production process, from a single screw to the finished product. If they are willing to learn, there is plenty of opportunity right here," Boris declares.



Company headquarters in Železniki



The Mebor team



The newest sawmill line



Developing complete solutions for primary wood cutting



The second generation is actively involved in the family business

Mebor in five words: sincerity, innovation, loyalty, application, growth.

The company goals are also the family goals

In addition to its many advantages, the family business also has its weaknesses, as it is very difficult to separate private life from business. Nevertheless, despite the close involvement in business and work, the benefits of a family business are numerous. "One of the advantages is the fact that we all pursue the same, or at least a similar goal and can respond to issues quickly; we don't need to organize meetings as any issues and plans are discussed regularly, sometimes even at lunch. The company is part of our lives and we are happy to be involved in its success and development. The company goals are very personal goals," says Uroš.

Everybody in the Mesec family is aware of the importance of their own brand and innovation. According to Uroš, they are continually striving to develop new and advanced technologies, while preserving their identity, and as Simon says, closely monitoring customer demands and market needs. "It is what guides us: customer requests and market demands decide which machines will be developed and which problems need to be solved, all of which creates new, innovative ideas and solutions. Our close involvement in sales and development generates new ideas and solutions for our customers and drives innovation. We always strive to offer our buyers a complete solution in one place, even if it means that we need to develop a solution in order to meet the client's expectations," emphasizes Simon.

Large corporations do not instill a great sense of belonging and often find it difficult to react quickly, which is something family businesses are required to excel at. Sincerity and hard work are two of the foundations of the Mebor family business. "My parents taught me that in order to succeed, one has to work smart and hard. Our family always communicates openly and we all share our thoughts with each other. We believe that in the long run, it is best to resolve any issues as they arise and the same is true for sales. We must provide accurate information and offer advice which is in the interests of the customer. Short-term, this can reflect in lower sales; however, in the long run it works out better for us and the customer. If we make sure that the customer is satisfied, success is ensured. This is our basic goal and we adhere to it at all times," explains Simon of his marketing mentality.

Last year the company grew by 17%

The future goal of the family is to continue their successful work. Their concepts are recognized all over the world, and companies often try to copy them. In 2016, the family business had around €9 million in revenue, and due to rapid growth they are dealing with the consequences. "Growth is a big challenge for us because we need to increase production. This in turn results in bottlenecks that must be eliminated. Unfortunately, it takes time to increase production but we certainly do our best to take on all the orders. Last year we grew by 17% and on average, our annual growth ranges from about 5% to 10%," explains Uroš of their nice headache.

The family aim to follow trends and maintain the high quality of their machines. While horizontal band saws are their flagship product, they are currently developing other machines, including the highest productivity sawmill lines, in order to extend their product range. In addition, they are looking for potential new markets. "While Europe remains our main market, it is South America and Africa that offer the greatest potential. By penetrating the Asian market, we are slowly becoming global," says Mebor's Director, describing their ambitions.

Boris Mesec

Owner

Company name:	Mebor, d. o. o.
Number of employees (2016):	40
Revenue (2016):	€9.1 million

Medle companies

Robert Medle, Director of the companies Roletarstvo Medle and Medle IP d. o. o.

Gorazd Medle, Director of the company Senčila Medle d. o. o.

Experience gives them the edge

The family businesses Roletarstvo Medle, Senčila Medle and Medle IP, have a long tradition of manufacturing and installing blinds, insect screens and windows. The second generation of the Medle family is successfully continuing the vision of their innovative and ingenious father Alojz Medle. All three companies, based in Novo mesto, involve the broader family in managing day-to-day business, carefully controlling growth and maintaining a good working atmosphere - amongst the leadership as well as employees.





"Profits are merely a side product and if a business is run correctly, they look after themselves."

Robert and Gorazd Medle



Headquarters of the Medle enterprise in Novo mesto

Complementary companies, satisfying exacting customer requirements

The entrepreneurial story of the Medle family started over 40 years ago, when Alojz Medle commenced business as an installer of blinds and then opened a small manufacturing plant in 1976. "This used to be a great logistical challenge, as the blades were manufactured solely in Ljubljana. At first, our father had to drive to the capital, where he would purchase finished blinds and then install them. Later it became easier, when he could rework the materials into final products at home," his son Robert recalls. Even though some items were initially unfamiliar for local people, the business soon thrived within the region. Four years later, Alojz's wife Marta joined him. "Our father spent a lot of time working with clients and he needed someone to take care of administration. Our mother, a medical technician by profession, took over the accountancy," adds Robert. His brother Gorazd also has vivid recollections of the early days: "We attended many fairs linked to our field of work abroad, and searched for the most

advanced and suitable material and system providers in Europe and beyond. It is much easier to access information today, for you can come across numerous ideas, discover how things are done abroad and see all the newest trends on the internet."

It has been more than 10 years since Alojz and Marta took the decision to withdraw from the company; however, preparations for the new generation to take over began well before. "In 1994, at the age of 26 and after consultation with my parents, I decided to open my own company, Senčila Medle. We started manufacturing different blinds from those made by Roletarstvo Medle, leadership of which my brother Robert assumed roughly six years later, at the age of 30," says Gorazd, recalling his entrepreneurial beginnings. While Senčila Medle, with €2.8m revenue in 2016, specializes in manufacturing insect screens, awnings, screen blinds and decorative interior shades, Roletarstvo Medle manufactures shades and windows. "We do not manufacture identical products, but complementary ones. Most of our clients know us as Medle and they do not differentiate between the two companies. We always cooperate and

offer our clients the best combination of the two,” adds Robert. The two brothers place utmost importance on client satisfaction: “Our main goal is to keep our clients happy. Profits are merely a side product and if a business is run correctly, they look after themselves.”

Who can a man trust, if not his wife?

The Medle brothers grew up with the company and helped out with various chores from a young age. “We always had money, but we had to earn it. I was extremely thrifty with the money I earned, for I had to work hard for it. I was not given pocket money as some children were,” recalls Gorazd. A similar approach can be seen today with their children. Alongside their wives Vanja and Anastazija, who have both been employed in the company from the start, they have another four young people who can occasionally help out. “It is good to have at least a few people in the company you can trust unconditionally. And who can you trust if not your wife?” asks Robert. The brothers both agree that the children will decide their own futures. Regardless of wishes for them to continue in the family tradition, the children’s ambitions come first.

Fair payment for fair work

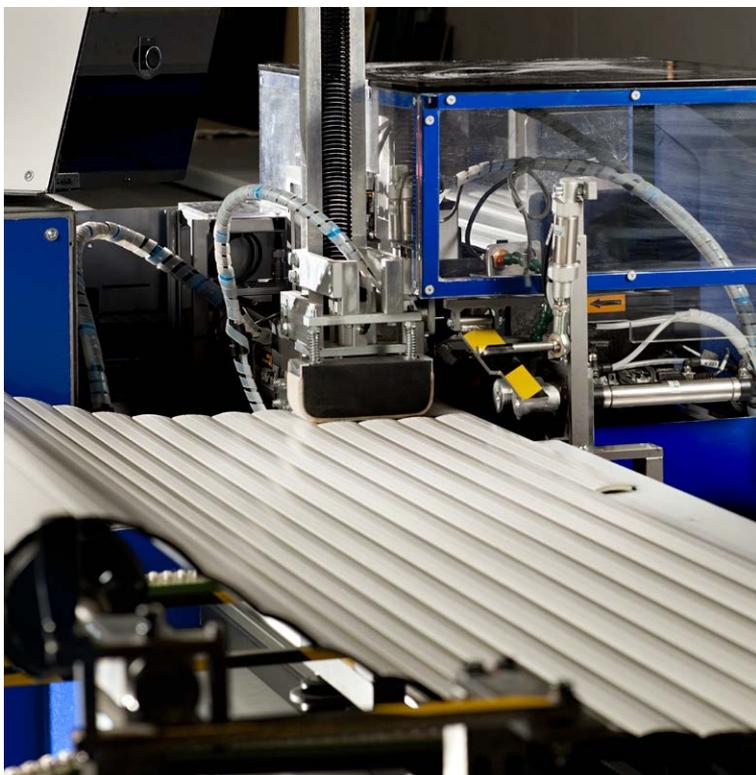
Roletarstvo Medle currently has 128 employees, working alongside Medle IP (offering employment opportunities for handicapped people) which has 12 and Senčila Medle has 33. Gorazd remembers how times were different in 1994, when Senčila Medle was just emerging: “In the beginning it was just my wife and me. Over the years as the company grew, new employees joined us. With growth, responsibility towards customers and employees also increased. I feel nostalgic looking back at the times when my wife and I, with a small baby at the time, spent all day in the workshop. It was difficult, but at the same time it brought us a great feeling of satisfaction. It was all manageable and simpler. Today, the responsibility is much bigger than it used to be.” Robert takes a contrary view and believes it was much harder when the company was smaller: “It was hardest when there were about 20 or 30 of us. We were already quite big, but on the other hand we could not afford someone to work just on the time schedules for the installations, or somebody who would work exclusively in the warehouse. All of us had to perform multiple tasks and had to be good at a vast array of them. It became easier with additional employees, because we could employ specialists for quality control, head of production, head of sales, etc..”



Three generations of the Medle family



Senčila Medle specializes in manufacturing insect screens, awnings, screen blinds and decorative interior shades



Quality is their top priority



Close cooperation between the two companies offers their customers the best combination of both

Medle companies in five words: experience, quality, flexibility, honesty, innovation.

The Medle brothers strive to offer their employees the best possible working conditions, which is why they try their hardest to avoid the requirement for shift work, and they always want to establish a fair relationship. "We expect a lot from our employees, but we also pay them fairly. Our salaries are above average," explains Robert, while Gorazd adds that they do encounter certain limitations. "Unfortunately we cannot stretch the season across the entire year, which is why we have to work longer hours during our busy time. However, the employees remain with us," concludes Gorazd.

A mixture of innovation and experience

The Medle family advocates moderate and controlled growth and they believe that their expansion during the 2006 to 2008 period was too rapid. "We grew between 20% and 30% a year, which was impossible to control - financially as well as staff-wise. We did not intend this accelerated growth, but the market simply pulled us in. Since 2009 we have grown more sustainably, ranging between 5% and 15 % per year, which is manageable. We might not be increasing the number of orders dramatically, but we are managing to sell higher-class products and more electronics, which is also easier to control," says Robert, summarizing their annual growth. They are aware of the importance of development, which is why they employ three developers: "We are constantly working on innovations and even though some are less visible, we pay attention to the details that enable easier and better operation." In comparison to their competition, the Medle family have an additional ace up their sleeve. "There are numerous companies that could start manufacturing similar products to ours, but they lack experience. Without this experience they are not familiar with the details and they are therefore not competitive, i.e., they cannot offer a better product for the same price," states Robert.

The goal is to preserve their market position

Both main companies are currently facing developmental and logistical challenges. "Sales growth is not our main goal. We wish to preserve our position in the market, recognition amongst our customers, our quality, innovation and flexibility. If this means we also grow and obtain new customers, that is great, but we do not wish to force it. We already have customers abroad, and we are constantly gaining new ones," explains Robert, who also adds that they export approximately 60% of their products, mainly to the former Yugoslavia, Austria, Germany, Switzerland, Italy and Israel.

The Medle family strongly believes in social responsibility, primarily to their employees, but they also like to give back to their region: "We might not be as big as some of the pharmaceutical companies in our region, but we support numerous sports clubs as well as various events. This year we helped build a sports centre for the local community."

Robert and Gorazd Medle

Owners

Company name:	Roletarstvo Medle, d. o. o., Senčila Medle, d. o. o., in Medle IP, d. o. o.
Number of employees (2017):	173
Revenue (2016):	€20.2 million

Oljarna Kocbek (Gorazd Kocbek, s. p.)

Gorazd Kocbek, Director

Traditional slovenian pumpkin seed oil, now a gourmet ingredient

It is a little-known fact that pumpkin seed oil originates from Slovenian soil. Records show that it was first made in the Slovenian part of what was then the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Gorazd Kocbek represents the third generation of the family business, which has, despite many obstacles and challenges, grown steadily throughout its history. Today, their products are recognizable both at home and around the world and are used in the most prestigious gourmet cuisine in Dubai, Japan and the USA.





“Ever since I’ve become involved in the family business I find the days to be too short. I don’t perceive it as merely my job, it’s a way of life.”

Gorazd Kocbek,
Director



Anton Kocbek, the founder of Oljarna Kocbek



The company has been active every day since its establishment in 1928

One liter of oil worth a day's pay

The roots of Oljarna Kocbek date back to the beginning of the 20th century, when in 1928 Alojz Kocbek, Gorazd's grandfather, purchased some land. "There was a mill next to the house and only a year after the purchase, my grandfather began to work as an independent miller, while at the same time producing oil. Since then, we have been in operation every day, without exception," points out Gorazd.

Throughout their history, the Kocbek family has experienced their share of bad luck, including their house burning down twice. In 1963, when it burnt down for the second time, the family abandoned the mill, proceeding solely with oil production. Gorazd explains that over the years the market has changed dramatically; however the most dramatic changes occurred in the years following the independence of Slovenia and at the time when he joined the family business. This was the period which saw the rise of large traders. "Things used to be much simpler than they are today, especially with regards to legislation. Everything was happening more or less in the homeland and the price of pumpkin seed oil was much higher than it is today. My father used to tell me that by selling a liter of pumpkin seed oil, his father could pay a tradesman for a full day's work," recalls Gorazd. He reflects that he joined the company 20 years ago, and similarly to his father's experience, this was a natural process. After his father's retirement 12 years ago, Gorazd took over the family business and modernized it in order to meet market requirements.

Made with love, confidence and tradition in mind

There are 825 types of pumpkin and each one has different seeds. However, only the seeds of one particular type of pumpkin are suitable for the production of oil. Locally, this pumpkin variety is known as "Slovenian Golica" and it has several hybrids, which have developed due to changes in weather and soil composition. "For the ninth season we are cooperating with our own local producers: they plant the seed, while I am very well aware of what they have, where it is planted, who is picking it and who dries the seeds. Dried seeds are then transferred to the warehouse where they are stored and processed when needed. Our essence is that everything is local, Slovenian. We only use seeds of the Golica pumpkin," emphasizes Gorazd.

In addition to the oil, they also offer a range of products enriched by the taste of pumpkin seeds. "We sell salami with pumpkin seeds, pork crackling with pumpkin seeds and pumpkin oil; pumpkin seed and chocolate cookies; pasta with pumpkin seeds, shower gel made exclusively from vegetable fats with a focus on cold-pressed sunflower and pumpkin oil; lip balm made from beeswax, cold-pressed pumpkin and sunflower oil, and coconut oil," says Gorazd, outlining some of their product range, adding: "We also cooperate with a company producing "Lušt" tomatoes and we sell their dried tomatoes pickled in pumpkin oil. In cooperation with an external contractor, we also produce professionally-mixed ice cream with pumpkin oil, under the Stork brand."

Luxury products for Dubai's wealthiest

Gorazd was happy to take over the family business and has been able to capitalize on his experience from numerous trips around the world. "I was aware of the importance of a product's visual presentation. I also knew that we could pride ourselves on quality and tradition, although at the time we were not fully aware of their importance." Gorazd realized that in the 21st century, pumpkin oil should be positioned as a luxury product, fit for gourmet cuisine and fine dining and used in special chocolates rather than being used merely as a salad dressing. Twelve years ago, when his father retired, Gorazd opted to re-brand the oil and introduced a new line. "My aim at that time was to make something that would become the centre of attention and that people would remember. Pumpkins, sunflowers and similar items were removed from the labels as these motives are used by

all other oil producers and we wanted to pursue our own way, which has paid off. At the same time, I introduced a premium pricing structure, which customers accepted," explains Gorazd. Today, they are working on a new image, the third such re-branding, as they are aware that people now have different tastes. "If you offer something that is out of the ordinary, you will definitely get a circle of people, consumers who prefer this speciality. However, everything must have a background, it should tell a story and explain how and why, because people are interested in learning about it," he adds.

Together with designer Gregor Žakelj, they came up with an idea for a new bottle and its story. "Gregor developed the shape of our own special bottle, putting heart and soul into it. From all the elements he had available to work with, he chose the stamp used by my grandfather. The



Gorazd was more than happy to take on the family business



More than 5,000 visitors come to their tastings every year



Exports account for around 15% of total sales

Oljarna Kocbek in five words: tradition, quality, love, innovation, trust.

outline of this small piece of wood and the initials are used in the metal plate that is glued to the bottle," explains Gorazd of the creation of this exclusive product line. Steklarna Hrastnik was entrusted with the production of the bottle, as they are the only ones in the world that can make a bottle without the addition of heavy metals. "This is the most pristine and health-conscious packaging that can be used for any foodstuff. Each bottle is unique, black in color, matted, hand-blown and containing an ecologically autochthonous variety of pumpkin seeds of Slovenian origin. The seeds are ground on a machine that my grandfather used when he started the business. Therefore, we offer the most traditional and organic product in the most pristine and unique packaging," proudly explains Gorazd. The bottle is presented in handmade packaging made either from cardboard or wood. The latter is made by a carpenter from oak that is more than 100 years old. "This is a luxury product intended for those who are willing to pay that little bit extra for it. We have already sold some bottles and the first buyer was from Dubai," continues Gorazd in describing part of their marketing strategy.

The whole family is involved in oil production

Gorazd describes himself as being stubborn and persistent, two of the traits of paramount importance in a family business. He inherited many good qualities from his parents and was able to integrate them in the business: "I learned from my mother the importance of fostering good relations with people and having a good attitude to work. My mother was always ready to listen and offer a helping hand to anyone needing it. My father was the first in Slovenia to make cold pressed oil. Just like me, his approach to business was stubborn and innovative. His entrepreneurial mindset was inherited from my grandfather."

The entire family is involved in oil production; even Gorazd's four-year-old daughter is already helping with very light tasks and is proud to talk about pumpkin oil and ice cream in the kindergarten. Gorazd's father is still making cold pressed oils, his wife helps with minor design work and marketing, while his mother has always taken care of the family. "Ever since I've become involved in the family business I find the days to be too short. I don't perceive it as merely my job, it's a way of life. It represents us, the family, and this is also how we present ourselves. We have never been and will never be a store that closes its doors at five or six in the evening," says Gorazd, describing the business.

Focusing on the rest of the world with roots firmly set in the Slovenian soil

The family wish to continue focusing primarily on the Slovenian market, as all their products are local. Nevertheless, in the last few years, they have directed their attention to foreign markets which are significantly bigger and where prices are much higher. During the time that Gorazd also took on the role as salesman within his business, he realized that luxury products sell themselves and customers should find you, rather than the opposite. For several years now they have been dealing with customers in the US, Taiwan, Japan, and Dubai and their exports account for around 15% of total sales. "Our most recent major reference is from the At.mosphere restaurant in Dubai, located in the tallest building in the world - Burj Khalifa," Gorazd is proud to point out.

All their investments are financed solely from their own funds. In the future, they intend to invest in tourism: "More than 5,000 visitors per year come to our tastings. Since the building dates from 1850, we want to build premises that are more comfortable for them."

Gorazd Kocbek

Owner

Company name:

**Oljarna Kocbek,
Gorazd Kocbek, s.p.**

Revenue (2016):

€0.3 million

Petre, d. o. o.

Jože Petre, Founder and Director

Mira Petre, Director

Ane Mari Petre, Sales and Marketing Director

Petre tents for any event

The family-run Petre company has operated from Vransko for the past 35 years. The family's entrepreneurial journey has been remarkable. It began with them operating a locksmith's workshop, changed direction radically into running a restaurant, before finally becoming today's successful core business, providing tents and canopies. Through astute business decisions, the company has grown so that it now manages over 50,000 m² of tent capacity. It is also diverse, supplying stages, pavilions, tables, tablecloths, chairs, curtains and flooring, in addition to renting and selling tents and storage halls, some of which are made to order. They pride themselves on serving some of the largest events in Slovenia, such as the ski flights in Planica, and their clients include an array of respected Slovenian companies, including Krka, Petrol, Zavarovalnica Triglav, Lek and Gorenje. They also supply personal celebrations, such as weddings and birthdays. They are successful abroad, especially in Austria and Italy and most of us will encounter their products at some point.





"We are greatly appreciated abroad for being a family-run business. We always stay true to our word."

Mira Petre,
Director



The company employs 35 staff and cooperates with numerous contractors

From a locksmith's workshop to manufacturing tents

The company began in 1983, when the founder Jože Petre opened a small locksmith's workshop. "I had dreamt of my own workshop from a young age. I wanted to manufacture machines and create - for people, society and myself. My wish came true when I was joined by my wife who supported me and my ideas," explains Jože. His wife Mira, today a Director, has taken care of everything running in the background from the very beginning. The company operated successfully until Slovenia declared independence, when the general crisis affecting the whole country also hit the Petre family. They tackled it by closing down the workshop and opening a restaurant, which they ran for two years. "While working in catering, we discovered that there was a lack of overhead cover at events and gatherings of larger groups of people. We came up with the idea of starting to rent tents and canopies. As I worked in the hop-growing business, I knew various breweries had tents around Europe already at that time. However, this was still something new in Slovenia. We bought our first tent in 1992/93," says Mira, recalling the beginning of their latest business.

The German dealership from which they bought their first tents remains their main supplier even today. "My husband says that they have the

Mercedes of tents. Later on, we started with our own production line of PVC tarpaulins. We are also trying to establish our own production line of storage halls. We already manufacture corrugated iron storage halls, and even though we still import aluminium constructions, we would like to start manufacturing these as soon as possible. Our greatest wish is to develop a machine that would make it easier to assemble and disassemble tents," Mira reveals.

Their daughter Ane Mari recalls the sudden change in the demand for tents, which accompanied the last economic crisis: "At the beginning the tents were intended for events. During the crisis, in 2008, the need for storage halls and tents appeared. At the time everybody was scared of investing in construction, and temporary objects were suitable for everyone, as they could hire them and if necessary purchase them. During the crisis people were uncertain as to what the situation would be in a year or two, which was why we provided a perfect solution."

The storage hall segment expanded greatly from 2007 to 2008 and is still growing. It covers the hire and sale of storage tents and the production and sales of fixed storage halls. The Petre family business expanded their range with aluminium storage halls of standard dimensions and corrugated iron storage spaces. This is the third type of semi-covered space without support pillars, wider than 50 meters, which they have developed over the past four years.

Family business - space for the daughter's development

As the only child in the family, Ane Mari grew up with the company. "My father often joked that I was there at the time he had the locksmith's workshop, because it was at home. I also liked to help out at the restaurant, and I have been working in the tent business from the very beginning. At first I helped out with basic tasks during the holidays," says Ane Mari, describing her upbringing.

"While the company was reaping success, Ane Mari was successful in her studies, which is why we did not wish to burden her with the family business. However, in the end it was her decision to join," explains Jože. In

2009, Ane Mari accepted a position in the company, which also employs her partner Jani, who is Head of Procurement. According to Jože, the young couple have given the business new energy and momentum. "From my studies, I contributed graphic design to the business and started creating a corporate identity. I do everything: from invitations, preparing protocols to erecting tents, plus the entire VIP image of events and weddings. I also deal with commercial work and finances," recalls Ane Mari. She responds unreservedly to the question of a takeover: "It is our wish to preserve it as a family company; this is a great moral responsibility, as we wish to preserve our good practice."

She is extremely proud to have inherited her father's honesty. "My father is a financier, he is an honest worker, and I consider honesty to be of the



Jani, Ane Mari's partner, is involved in the family business as Head of Procurement



The team is composed of young and enthusiastic talent



The Petres manage the complete profile of VIP events and weddings - from invitations, to preparing protocols and erecting tents



They manage over 50,000 m² of tent capacity



Their focus is on new developments and innovations

Petre in five words: honesty, quality, promptness, reliability, trust.

utmost importance. I love asking him for advice. I hope I inherited at least 80% of my mother's ambition, for she is truly ambitious when searching for new opportunities and clients," says the daughter, paying respect to the family values.

Young and enthusiastic workforce

Mira's persistency and entrepreneurship will not allow the company to go downhill. "The entrepreneurial streak was placed into my cradle, for I got this from my parents. My husband and I have learnt a lot while living abroad. When we were young we lived in Germany for 10 years. I never truly focused on money. It always seemed more important to create something and to give something to your environment - provide job positions, make people happy and create an environment in which people enjoy working," reveals Mira. Success within the Petre company is measured by the growth in tent hires. "I put 100% into everything I do. Our managerial cadre has been carefully selected and we know we can rely on them entirely. We also focus on novelty and try to be innovative. Our main challenge is to simplify the demanding assembly process," adds Mira.

A good tent is nice to look at, well-maintained and clean. The boys who assemble the tents are extremely flexible and this is a great advantage for the company. However, most important is the right atmosphere in the workplace, and the employees can verify that the atmosphere is right. "We have a young workforce under 40 years of age; however, they have been with us for 15 to 20 years, some from their student days. They helped establish our company and remained with us," says Mira.

The company is part of the family

The family values of the company have often opened doors for them. "We are greatly appreciated abroad for being a family-run business. We always stay true to our word. Our main suppliers are also family businesses. We can get goods valued at one or two million euros without paying in advance - this is trust," points out Mira. The connection between company and family is normal in the Petre family, for they are not burdened by their work. "We see the family business as positive, but it also brings a lot of challenges. We consider it to be our lifestyle. Regardless of the shortcomings the family business represents plenty of good and positive experiences. We are distinguished for our honesty, warm and patient relations and the active inclusion of all family members," says Jože, describing the family commitment.

"Our desire for the future is that all co-workers, headed by my daughter, successfully continue with the work and that they will find it at least a bit easier to enjoy the fruits of our hard labor," says Jože, who also adds that with their orientation toward development and care for a healthy environment, they are counting on state support. In the future they will continue to follow their motto - "for all eventualities and in all weather". This is one of the reasons why they started manufacturing their own parts.

Jože Petre

Owner

Company name:	Petre, d. o. o.
Number of employees (2016):	35
Revenue (2016):	€6.1 million

Plastika Skaza, d. o. o.

Igor Skaza, Owner and Managing Director

Tanja Skaza, Co-owner and Director

A company's ambition for its products to be in every home

This year, Plastika Skaza is celebrating its 40th anniversary. With its innovative bioplastic products, the company is looking toward the future, working to ensure a better tomorrow for all. Their products are found in over one and a half million households in 56 countries worldwide. They sell products to world-renowned multinationals such as Ikea, Landis&Gyr and Gorenje, but their most recent success is in the US market. Despite rapid growth, they maintain the values of a family business and a high level of trust in the international market. "Our success is based on the high quality of our products, as this will ensure our existence and continue the family tradition into the future," say the family members.





"Our aim for the next five years is for half of households worldwide to own at least one of our products."

Tanja Skaza,
Co-owner and Director



Their products are found in over one and a half million households in 56 countries worldwide

A family business managed by professional managers

Like most family businesses, the Skaza company has grown almost from scratch. Their story began 40 years ago in a garage, a place where a lot of tremendous ideas typically originate. Franc and Martina Skaza, the founders, were eager to include their son Igor in the family business. Later, Igor's wife Tanja also joined the company, leaving her job in Zlatarna Celje, where she was director of sales, in order to get involved in the industry of plastics. "When I first started to work in the company, I was in charge of staff management. My aim was to become personally acquainted with every member of staff and identify the heart of the company. Because at the time we were typical subcontractors working for Gorenje and Ikea, we decided to find our particular innovations and competitive advantages. Within a year of joining the company, I became a member of the leadership," says Tanja, describing the beginnings of her career with Skaza.

Over time, their garage activity developed and alongside it, the need for recruitment of additional staff. The most recent world economic crisis suddenly put brakes on the company's growth as the warning

bells kept ringing. They realized that big changes were needed, so they turned the company "on its head" and completely reorganized it. They began to provide training and education for employees, created a new entrepreneurial culture and took urgent strategic decisions. "We decided to set up our own brand, which now generates almost €2 million of revenue annually. Since 2008, we have grown four-fold from €8 million revenue to €35.2 million in 2016; from a few thousand square meters of business area to 15,000 square meters, and from 73 employees to 320," says Tanja Skaza, Director of the company, outlining their impressive growth.

One of the key decisions the company took was to entrust executive functions to a young generation of managers who are not family members. "As co-owners of the company, my husband and I are primarily involved in drafting strategies and providing development guidelines, ensuring provision of a creative internal entrepreneurial culture and widespread brand recognition. Day-to-day operational work is led by our ambitious managers of organizational units, operating according to the principle of mini internal companies, with all the associated competences and responsibilities. Ours is probably one of the very few examples of a family business in Slovenia, managed by a team who are not family members," explains the Director.

Education of all employees as the basis of success

Although the company now has a large number of employees, they maintain genuine contact with them and cultivate good mutual relations. "Good relations and freedom of creativity are the combination that lead to employee affiliation and motivation to be creative and efficient," believes Tanja. Because they greatly appreciate and respect knowledge, ideas and creativity, they invest heavily in education. Last year, every employee received on average of almost four business days of training. "We have an additional advantage of working with the world's leading companies in individual industries and gaining a vast amount of knowledge from our customers," reveals the Director, of the added value.

Her major role in the company is to change and educate staff, making them realize that at work, they have to step out of their comfort zone as it is change that drives progress. "People need to be aware that success depends on all of us, not only our customers. I insist that the consumer comes first, just as I put staff first," adds Tanja Skaza and continues: "I believe a leader is successful when they understand when I explain that I'm not the one paying their salary, it's their team."

A combination of tradition and innovation

Tanja quickly found her role in the family business that operates in more than a quarter of world markets and provides more than 90% of the solutions for multinational companies. Although some may be deceived by the company's size, Plastika Skaza operates according to the principles of a family business. "My family is extremely important to me. It is typical of family businesses that one feels surrounded by family at work and so you treat employees as your family. Nevertheless, ours is a slightly different family," explains Tanja. She emphasizes that the company sees employees as an extended family that succeeds or fails as one: "I always say that family businesses have one great advantage over large multinational corporations, and that is affiliation - the loyalty of people who would do anything for the company. This is where we can make a change for people as multinationals lack this affiliation of employees." Tanja and her husband place commitment to the family tradition alongside their commitment to employees and their families.

Igor Skaza and his team are primarily concerned with monitoring industry trends and focusing on innovation and the development of future solutions. Skaza Lab is a small, perceptive and innovative "cell", where



Plastika Skaza is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year and currently employs 320 people



The Pick & Go sets are perfect for anyone who enjoys life in the countryside



They create innovations in the field of plastic treatment



Kitchen composter Bokashi Organico

Plastika Skaza in five words: innovation, education, courage, ambition, growth.



Plastika Skaza is always looking toward the future

he and his team develop new products and continually search for better solutions for global customers. "The competitiveness of the industry at the global level does not allow us to rest on our laurels. Materials are constantly changing and being replaced by more natural and people-friendly materials. In addition, shape, design and colors are continuously evolving to reflect changes in our lives. Due to lifestyle changes the very functionality of products is also changing, making combining our materials with others such as metal, wood and the like an additional opportunity for innovation. Here we rank among 3% of the most advanced companies in the world," points out Igor Skaza.

Sky-high, but achievable goals

Due to their achievements in the field of development and plastic processing, they have received numerous awards and considerable recognition in recent years. They rank among the five fastest growing technology companies in Central Europe and are among the winners of "Creators of the Century", awarded by the International Economic Forum (EMF) Perspektive. Based on the criteria of business success, innovation and business ethics, the prestigious commission of the European Business Awards made them one of their finalists.

Plastika Skaza is completely focused on the future, which may soon involve the youngest members of the Skaza family, aged 12 and 7. The company's ambitions are extremely high: by 2020, they aim to reach €100 million of revenue, €20 million of which is expected to be generated from sales of their own brands. The company is further strengthening its well-established Skaza brand by rebranding Style Your Life (product lines Viva, Solo, Contessa and Pick&Go) and the Mind Your Eco brand, which is most recognizable for the Bokashi Organico mini compost maker. "Our aim for the next five years is for half of households worldwide to own at least one of our products. We are already present in 56 countries and given our efficient and ambitious team, we believe that this goal is achievable," says the Director of their plans.

Igor and Tanja Skaza

Owners

Company name: **Plastika Skaza, d. o. o.**

Number of employees (2016): **320**

Revenue (2016): **€35.2 million**

Family Business Services

Helping you succeed for generations

Why choose EY?

- ▶ We serve **75%** of **500** of the world's largest family businesses (familybusinessindex.com).
- ▶ We have advised generations of the world's most entrepreneurial, innovation-oriented companies and understand the complex issues that they face.
- ▶ We understand the difficulties of balancing the concerns of the family and the intricacies of the business.
- ▶ We know what it takes to address the dual challenges of securing the long-term success of the company and managing the risks of growth.
- ▶ EY's tailored services offer a wide range of professional business services aimed specifically at the unique requirements of family businesses.

Our approach

More than 80% of the world's businesses are family owned – they are the driving force of the world economy. This is consistent with the findings of our research, which EY Slovenia prepared in cooperation with the Faculty of Economics, University of Ljubljana. The research confirmed that 83% of companies in Slovenia have family control over their strategic direction. Family businesses, in general, are better placed to ride the turbulence of today's volatile financial markets. Yet we know that just 30% of family businesses make it through the second generation and only 13% survive the third. Each family business is unique, but with over 90 years of experience and a professional network spanning 140 countries, we know that many share similar advantages and face common challenges.

Our Growth DNA Model for family business

Our unique "Growth DNA of a family business" model addresses every facet of your personal and business agenda. It aligns our personalized range of business services to address your specific needs from capital management, sustaining growth, effective tax management and balancing risk, to culture and CSR. And it forms the foundation for the planning of ownership and management succession.

The EY Global Family Business Center of Excellence

The EY Global Family Business Center of Excellence is a powerful, online resource. It gives you access to our insights, experience and people; and to connect and learn from fellow family business leaders around the world.

EY Slovenia and family businesses

EY Slovenia is closely cooperating with the EY Global Center of Excellence. Through our local program we connect and present Slovenian family businesses. With support of the Center we also link them to the global stage by dedicated events and the EY award of excellence for family businesses. In addition, we have also begun to actively support businesses with succession planning from organizational, tax, legal and other aspects, as well as various dimensions of development and (international) growth.

Visit our website [ey.com/si/familybusiness](https://www.ey.com/si/familybusiness)



EY's Growth DNA model of Family Businesses highlights the interlinked nature of the eight characteristics of successful family businesses

EY Growth Navigator™

Accelerate your journey to market leadership

When most businesses think about strategy, they think about how to focus people, systems and processes on delivering customer value and ultimately, growth. However talking to, and working with, clients through their business cycle, coupled with our own research, has shown us that, while this strategy is successful for some, focusing upon a broader set of activities can help deliver accelerated growth. That's why we have developed EY Growth Navigator™.

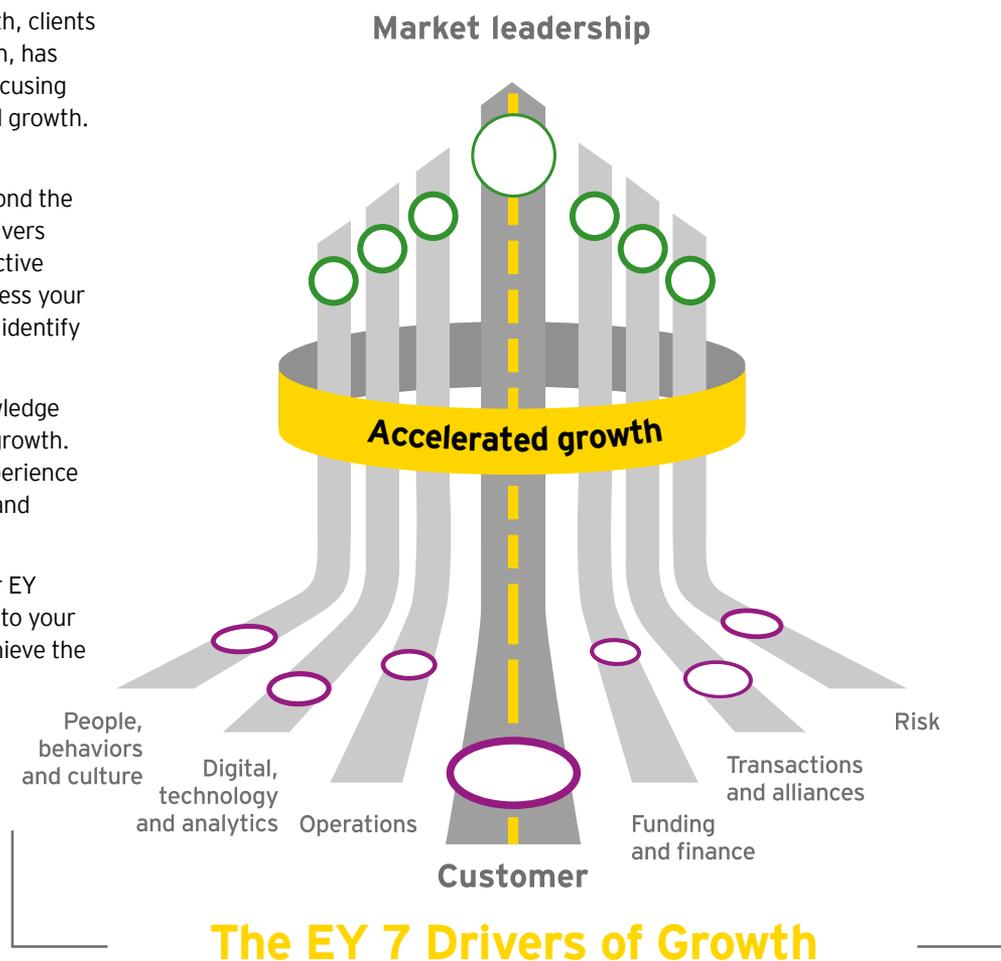
EY Growth Navigator™ is a unique way for you to think beyond the typical approaches to growth and consider seven critical drivers for business success and accelerated growth. It is an interactive experience that allows you and your leadership team to assess your company, gain valuable insights from leading practices and identify strategic priorities for growth.

Connecting your knowledge of your business with our knowledge and experience in the market can help deliver accelerated growth. EY Growth Navigator™ uses our research and 30 years' experience of working with hundreds of the most dynamic companies and growth leaders.

At the end of your EY Growth Navigator™ session with your EY advisor, you will have a set of actions, prioritized according to your strategic needs, to help you take the necessary steps to achieve the next level of success.

○ Assessing where you are today

○ Achieving market leadership



SPIRIT Slovenia

promotes networking and the growth of family businesses

The Public Agency for Entrepreneurship, Internationalization, Foreign Investments and Technology (SPIRIT Slovenia) helps realize the plans of Slovenia's development programs, aiming to achieve an innovative, technologically-developed, export-oriented destination that attracts foreign investors. The Agency is an active part of the business environment, ensuring the competitiveness and promotion of the Slovenian economy and offering Slovenian family businesses effective and comprehensive support in their development and promotion on the global competitive market. It does this by combining knowledge and skills in all key areas, with the aim of increasing the added value and creation of quality jobs, which enhance the competitiveness of the economy. SPIRIT Slovenia performs its services based on the "everything under one roof" principle.

We are aware that in Slovenia, families account for a large proportion of businesses and contribute significantly to the development of the Slovenian economy. Since 1959, when crafts became a permissible form of private enterprise in Slovenia, many family businesses have evolved from small workshops. In 2015, the family enterprise as a form of business was researched in detail, in collaboration with EY, by a team led by dr. Boštjan Antončič from the Faculty of Economics. Research has shown that family businesses are the driving force of the economy in Slovenia and that this form of entrepreneurship represents the majority of Slovenian enterprises.

Through its activities, the Agency encourages all family businesses to identify the challenges that await them in the future, prepare to face them and thus ensure a fast response. These include appointment of management, professionalization, succession and other challenges that encourage businesses to grow. Family businesses differ from others

around the world in the way they shape their strategy. In setting their business strategies, family, business and ownership interests clash and this is something we pay special attention to at the Agency.

The Agency services are there to support family businesses at all stages of their growth and in all phases of international business. Entrepreneurs are able to monitor this on the Agency's websites www.spiritslovenia.si, www.podjetniški-portal.si and www.izvoznookno.si. Family businesses can obtain comprehensive support also in person via VEM points, university and business incubators and technology parks. We provide support in the transfer of knowledge and technology from public research organizations to the business sector, as well as information and advice on introduction of new products, processes, services, and technological and non-technological innovations in the private sector. As the National Contact Point or NCP for "Instrument SME" and connection with other NCPs in Slovenia, we support and provide information to entrepreneurs, regarding opportunities and current tenders, as part of the Horizon 2020 programme.

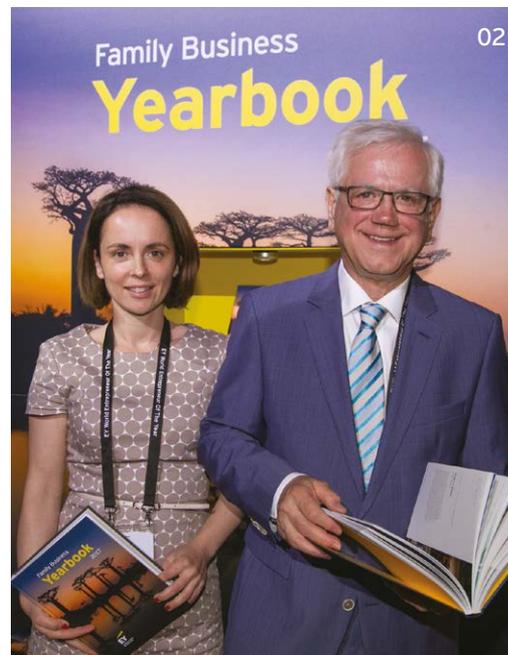
The Agency supports activities that encourage promotion, networking and build the international connections of Slovenian family businesses.

We are particularly pleased that we are working together with EY Slovenia which, as a member of a multinational corporation, provides an opportunity for Slovenian family businesses to meet some of the best in the world at the annual meetings of the global family business in Monaco. SPIRIT Slovenia strives to ensure recognition of Slovenian family businesses also in the international business environment. Therefore, we are proud to support their promotion with the EY book, Family Business in Slovenia.



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Last year's highlights



01 Representatives of the companies featured in Family Business Slovenia 2016. **02** Slovenian company KLS Ljubno was featured in the global EY Family Business Yearbook 2017. **03** Launch of Family Business Slovenia 2016. **04** In June 2017, the Global Family Business Summit took place in Monte Carlo, where we celebrated the accomplishments of the people who are building businesses, creating jobs and growing the global economy.

Family Business Slovenia 2017

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REPUBLIKA SLOVENIJA
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RAZVOJ IN TEHNOLOGIJO

Mediade





Jani Ugrin

Jani Ugrin, born in 1990 in Koper, began to show an interest in photography when he began higher education and this soon displaced public administration. He is currently completing his studies at the Department of Photography at the Higher School of Applied Sciences in Ljubljana and his professional photographic assignments see him cooperating with different agencies and companies throughout Slovenia. Together with his friend Jernej, he has created the wedding photography brand "That Happy Day", for couples in Slovenia and abroad.



Matjaž Tavčar

Matjaž Tavčar began his career as a journalist and editor, and over time enhanced his range of skills with photography. Portraits were his first love, but soon after he also turned his lens toward reportage. He captures moments in business, sports and social life in Slovenia and abroad, working closely with a range of companies and agencies. Under his own brand he creates unique wedding stories for couples and families.

Picture credits and copyright

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