

Family business
Slovenia
2014



EY

Building a better
working world

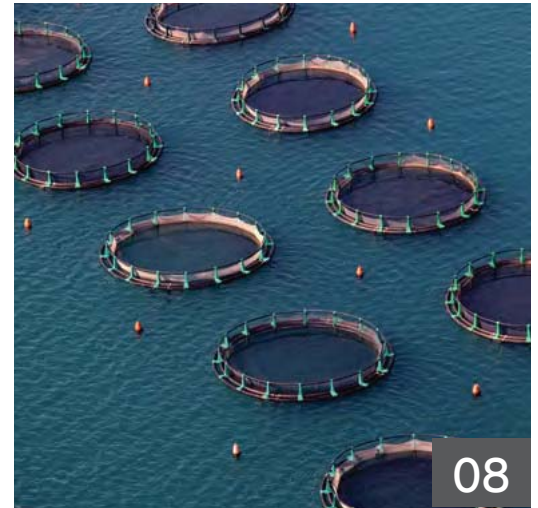
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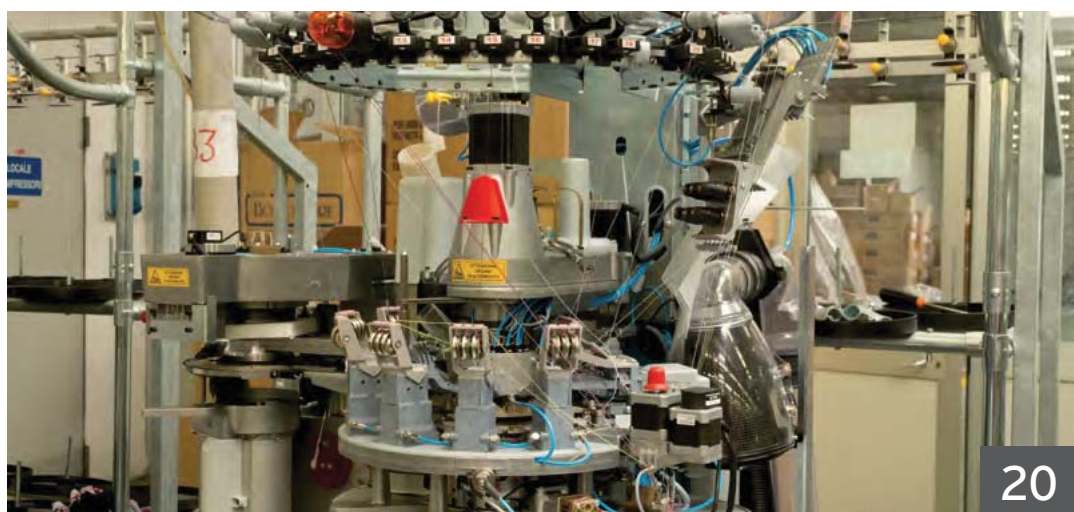
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“Today we know that family businesses can help meet expectations for sustainable and strong economic development.”



Janez Uranič
Country Managing Partner

Foreword

Family businesses today represent a key form of enterprise in the global and EU economies. A little known fact is that more than 85% of companies in Europe are family-owned, responsible for generating 70% of Europe's GDP.¹

Slovenia is a country of two million inhabitants, but with great potential in its knowledge and people. The stories of Slovenian businesses show us Slovenia at its best.

Not too long ago, Slovenia was a socialist economy, which allowed limited private initiatives, mainly in the form of craftsmanship or smaller enterprises. Many Slovenian family businesses grew from such small enterprises, while others became successful through privatization and further developed their companies.

The size of Slovenia's family business economy, in relation to GDP, is relatively small compared to other EU countries, but we expect to see it grow in the future. Today we know that family businesses can help address expectations for sustainable and strong economic development.

This is why we would like to introduce you to some of our most successful, innovative and fastest-growing Slovenian family businesses. The businesses featured generate a diverse range of products and services, encompassing various plastic products, plastic tops, automotive parts, textiles, fish, lighting systems, electric components, cryogenic coolers, pens, information technology, and tourism. They include everything from multinational, multi-million euro enterprises, to a family farm that is a showcase for our cultural values and heritage.

Today the most successful Slovenian family businesses are characterized by innovation, good family relations, developed research and development units, growth, care for local development and employees, as well as regional and global operations.

With this publication, we are pleased to play our part in promoting Slovenian family businesses to Slovenia and the world.

We are sure that you will enjoy reading the stories of these exceptional family businesses. We realize that there are many more successful family businesses in Slovenia, and we hope to share their stories in coming editions of our publication.



¹ EY Family Business Year Book 2014

EY Global Family Business Center of Excellence

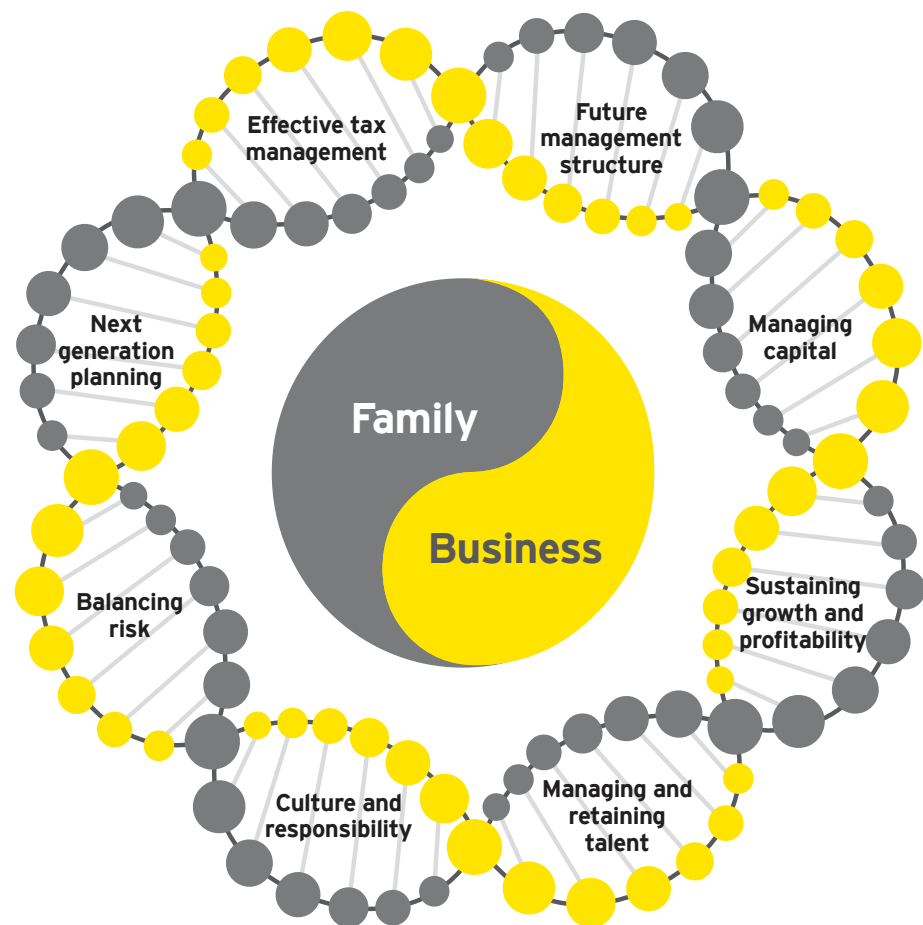
Succeeding for generations

For more than 100 years we have been expanding our knowledge and understanding of family businesses. We appreciate that, even though each one is unique, they also have a lot in common. Taking advantage of this knowledge we have developed what we call the “growth DNA of family business”. Within this, there are eight determining factors, which underpin our approach to providing bespoke services for family business leaders. The practical assistance and professional advice we offer can involve sector-specific issues, the latest regulatory provisions or personalized information from our key areas of specialization – Assurance, Tax, Legal, Transaction and Advisory Services. We are also able to leverage our experience of working on complex cross-border issues, providing an integrated team to address a unique family business agenda. We understand local customs, laws, languages and cultures – our global professionals can provide guidance wherever business is undertaken.

Online resources

You can visit our Global Family Business Center of Excellence online at www.ey.com/familybusiness for the latest news from the Center, to download our most recent thought leadership and to find out who in our global network of experienced family business practitioners is closest to you!

Also, to access the latest thinking on hot issues affecting family businesses today, please visit our Family Business blog, a unique resource featuring entries from our practitioners, family business leaders and top academics. familybusinessblog.ey.com



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

EY Slovenia and FBN Adria

EY and Family Business Network International (FBNI) are often connected in various forms of cooperation across the world. The aim of such cooperation is to address family business challenges and provide an efficient service for family-led companies throughout the world.

It was a natural step for EY Slovenia, as part of the EY Central and South-East region to connect to FBN Adria, FBNI's regional branch. The main goal of the association is to offer direct access to family enterprises, who can share their experiences, with the aim of furthering mutual cooperation and transferring knowledge to the next generation.

A further objective of the cooperation is to support FBN Adria's commitment to helping family businesses expand, raise their profile and improve family ties. This will also develop knowledge and improve the business culture in their regional marketplace.

Jakob Žigante, president of FBN Adria, believes that, "Family businesses are the backbone of economies around the world. Slovenia, as a young country, is facing important challenges in the next several years. Most of the family businesses will have to transfer their management and ownership roles to their next generation, which for many will be their first time. We at the Family Business Network refer to this generation-handover as "transformation art". Due to the complex dynamics of generation-handover logistics, a high percentage of family business owners have less-than-ideal experiences, from both personal and business points of view. We cannot stress enough how important this process is, not only for the families and employees, but also for the health of our economy. Alliances like the one with EY that support initiatives such as this book, help us better understand family business issues and help our members effect a successful transition to the next generation."

EY and Faculty of Economics at the University of Ljubljana

The Faculty of Economics at the University of Ljubljana, and in particular, its Center for Business Excellence, is an important partner of EY in Slovenia, in its aim of supporting the further development of Slovenian family businesses. In 2014, they began cooperating on two projects: firstly, the EY Family Business Book 2014, featuring stories of 10 Slovenian family businesses, and secondly, the creation of the educational program, Family Business Academy. The program is specially-designed to assist family businesses in designing the most appropriate governance and ownership structures and to foster better understanding of their specific, local challenges. EY, as partner and co-developer, brings expertise, arising from long-term support to some of the biggest family businesses in the world, at various stages of their development.

In particular, the EY specialist contribution covers key taxation concepts relevant to family businesses, focusing on personal and corporate tax, tax controversy, transfer pricing and the tax implications of business decisions. Also, EY's experts can bring attention to priority family business capital management issues and needs, and discuss how raising, investing, optimizing and preserving capital are the four key dimensions of the capital agenda of a family business. Finally, EY's experts can also explore the issues of generational change in family businesses: practical objectives and technical aspects along with the emotional component of the transition.

Mateja Veselica from the Center for Business Excellence and program manager for the academy, explains the main benefit for owners of family businesses: "Slovenian family businesses today are some of the fastest-growing and most successful. Their fast pace of development could mean that they lack time to address all the coming risks and challenges. The academy is designed to support development and advise companies on what is ahead and how best to approach various areas of their businesses."

“We were the first
to incorporate the
words “sea bass”
in a registered
brand name.”

Irena Fonda,
Fonda.SI d.o.o.





Irena and Lean Fonda

Owners, Fonda.SI d.o.o.

The only marine fish farm in Slovenia, Fonda aims to breed the best farmed sea bass in the world. Only the most natural methods are used to produce this food, which contains some of the healthiest and most important nutrients. Its freshness is indisputable, as it is delivered direct to your plate from a small area of Slovenia's coastal waters. This year the fish farm is expected to yield around 100 tonnes of sea bass. Whilst in the past, most of the harvest was sold abroad, nowadays, as much as 80% of total production is destined for Slovenian customers.



First fish with the brand name Fonda Piran sea bass



Fonda Piran sea bass in the delivery box with RFID and QR code

The Fonda family has always retained strong ties with the Istrian soil and sea. In 1984, Ugo, the head of the family, established his own independent enterprise, engaged in a variety of underwater activities, ranging from construction, marina and port maintenance, exploration and sampling, to filming and other diving activities. At that time, he probably could never have imagined that Fonda would become the only Slovenian marine fish farm.

“Our ancestors were farmers and salt workers; fish and shellfish farming are relatively recent activities which at that time were not part of our family’s expertise. My father was a biologist and a professional diver who loved the sea, fish and nature and had for years striven to build artificial underwater ridges that would have a positive impact on the sea life,” explains his daughter, Irena Fonda, giving a brief summary of the family history. “However, owing to bureaucratic restrictions, all his efforts were sadly in vain. My brother Lean joined the family enterprise after completing his studies and he and my father together decided to set up a special, eco-friendly fish and shellfish farm.”

At first this was a small off-shoot, which slowly developed into a more serious activity and, after the family was granted a concession, led to the establishment of the family business Fonda.si d.o.o.

Fonda Piran sea bass

The Fonda approach certainly differs from other fish farms, in terms of its farming methods, concept, policies, size and vision.

“We are guided by high-quality, ecological concerns; working hand-in-hand with nature, flexibility, innovation and sustainability. In recent years, we have also diversified our core activity into the promotion of tourism or, more precisely, promoting educational tourism and cuisine,” continues Irena.

Ten years ago Fonda sea bass was given the name Fonda Piran sea bass. Then the family began developing their brand, by setting up an online fish market, and they began organising regular deliveries of fresh fish to end customers. They continue to build on all of these strengths and activities.

“We are consolidating our brand name and the recognition of the company by expanding our sales network into Austria, Italy, and Croatia.” Establishing the brand name has been one of the most successful moves made by the Fonda family business. “We were the first to register a brand name incorporating the words “sea bass,” whilst carrying our family name and that of our town. To our customers this demonstrates our personal guarantee of the quality of our produce, whilst highlighting the locality where the fish originates. It is this territory of origin that plays a decisive role in the quality of our fish,” explains Irena. Direct sales to end customers without any intermediaries, as well as our continuous care to achieve the highest quality of fish, shellfish and services in general, places the Fonda family business at the very top of our sector.

"In a way, we have developed into a fish boutique. All our sales are agreed on a delivery-by-order-only basis and we take great care to ensure optimised shipping and full order tracking. The latter is extremely important to us, although rarely provided elsewhere in the market. To ensure traceability, we were the first in Europe to implement Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) and QR code technology with fish and in our business process as part of the European F2F (from farm to fork) project. We are keen to use various marketing tools, including social networks, and we cooperate under the co-branding principle with a large number of our partners," explains Irena.

All the employees are involved in the development of new products. They are also eager to listen to feedback from customers, whose ideas, wishes and hopes are valuable and often quite innovative. It is this close cooperation with customers that resulted in the development of the fixed order system. "And again, it was our customers who expressed their wish to visit our fish farm. Consequently, we organised visits and tastings in addition to team building events and cuisine workshops which have proven to be especially popular. Some of the new products traded under the brand name have been developed in collaboration with our partners. Traditional baking salt, olive oil and smoked sea bass are just a few of the products resulting from this cooperation."



Father Ugo, founder of the Fonda company, sewing the nets



Sea bass and mussel farm Fonda.si



Ancestors of the Fonda family were salt pan farmers



Lean is passing on his love for the sea and its fish to his son Enej



Fonda delivery cars

The Fonda family business in a nutshell: “Breeding the world’s best sea bass.”

From generation to generation

After the untimely death of Ugo, joint management was assumed by his daughter Irena as the company director and son Lean as the head of the fish farm and underwater activities. “Our love for the sea and fish, as well as respect for the underwater world, has been passed on to us from our father. Both Irena and Lean now own the business, which has become a part of their lives. While their father was alive, they helped him develop and bring to life his numerous ideas. “Working in the fish farm is wonderful, but it is hard work,” points out Irena. “We had always looked up to our father as an example. His presence is felt daily in the way my brother and I approach the business,” adding that she and her brother are an excellent team. It is therefore no surprise that they both carry a major responsibility on their shoulders to continue the family tradition started by their father three decades ago. This responsibility is not only to the business, but also to their employees, colleagues, partners, customers and family. “Perhaps the largest responsibility we carry is to the five generations of sea bass in our sea fish farm which depend on us completely for food, a safe habitat and continuous care. This also requires teamwork, working and creating together with people you can trust completely.” Irena, a Doctor of biological science unveils another secret: “We are a family of biologists and we have decided to use our knowledge, respect for nature and our close association with the sea to realise our aim of breeding the world’s best farmed sea bass through close cooperation with nature, and replicating, as closely as possible, the life enjoyed by wild fish. To achieve this we need the best fish offspring, and to ensure that we use the highest quality fish food. Untainted sea, beneficial currents, work without chemicals, and a prolonged breeding period are conditions that are vital for the prime quality of our fish and shellfish. Our fish are fed manually as this ensures better traceability and control,” explains Irena.

One hundred tones of sea bass

Currently, 20 staff are employed in the business. “Since everything is done manually, we need a large number of employees and we are happy to employ young people, who work at first under the close supervision

of one of our more experienced colleagues, acting as their mentor,” says Irena, who grew up from a very early age in close proximity to the sea. The fact that sea bass need four to five years to grow from a tiny offspring, weighing but a few grams, to an adult weighing on average around 400g, is a clear indication that the Fonda family’s outlook is long-term. While in the past, most of the fish were sold abroad, today 80% of deliveries are made to Slovenian customers. This year’s harvest will yield around 100 tonnes of fish, twice as much as in the previous year, when revenue reached one million euros. Irena is confident that these figures can be improved, and in the next few years the family expect further increases.” Innovation, originality, flexibility and sustainability are prerequisites for the long-term survival of the business,” says Irena, as she considers the future. The family’s aim is to breed and sell sufficient quantities of high-quality fish and shellfish per year to ensure the successful performance of the business, its ongoing financial stability and the improved satisfaction of all those who are an integral part of the company.

Irena and Lean Fonda

Owners, **Fonda.SI d.o.o.**

Company name:	Fonda.SI d.o.o.
Employees (2013):	20
Revenue (2013):	€1m

“When a company's development is based on tradition, it means that long-term objectives, long-term quality improvement, natural growth, respect for wisdom and experience and above all building on past achievements, take precedence over short-term goals and profits”

Matjaž Čadež
Halcom d.d.





Matjaž Čadež

Founder and Chairman of the Board

Marko Valjavec

CEO

Halcom d.d.

Halcom has been offering solutions, tailored specifically to the needs of financial institutions, since 1992. Its professionals have gained priceless expertise through the performance of numerous highly successful payment system projects, using the most sophisticated solutions. Today, Halcom is present in 10 international markets and has developed into the leading provider of payment system solutions throughout Central and South-East Europe.



Team building in 2000

Owner Matjaž Čadež established the Halcom family business in 1992 and then only four years later, together with its Danish partners Belle Systems a.d., Halcom Informatika, implemented Slovenia's first Internet service Siol, for Telekom Slovenije. A year later, small and medium sized businesses run by sole proprietors, clients of Slovenia's largest bank NLB, became the first users of e-banking available through Halcom's banking solution Hal E-Bank. This was the first e-banking solution tailored to legal entities in the world, which was based on smart cards using PKI technology. The start of the new millennium and the year 2000 saw Halcom's major market breakthrough as the company was awarded the international project of setting up giro clearing for the Central Bank of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

"This was the beginning of a major and rapid expansion of the company by setting up two subsidiaries, one in Sarajevo and one in Belgrade. Today our company is present in 10 markets: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Poland, Kosovo, Montenegro, Iran, Qatar, Serbia, Morocco and Slovenia," outlines founder Matjaž, who was CEO until his retirement in 2011, describing the company's rapid development. Today he takes something of a back seat as Chairman of the Management Board, whereas Marko Valajavec was appointed as Halcom's CEO in 2014.

Transition from owner to manager

What sets Halcom apart from all other family businesses is the fact that its CEO is a professional manager rather than its owner. "Although I'm sure that Halcom continues to be a family business, which I established and

have been building and living with for more than 20 years, it is also my belief that it is not essential for a family business to have its operational management handed down from generation to generation. It took quite a bit of soul searching to do what I felt was best for the long-term development of the company and to choose only the best candidates for managerial positions," explains Matjaž of his decision to appoint a colleague from outside the family as the company's CEO, adding: "The decision required four years of intense preparations for my retirement. We also sought the advice of Dr. Adizes, world-renowned corporate management consultant, who advised us on building a company structure which would no longer be totally dependent on its founder."

Expertise and experience

Quality, experience and the enthusiasm of its employees are key factors for the successful development of a company. So, it is no surprise that Halcom's employee structure is composed, on one hand, of more senior employees, bringing experience and wisdom, and on the other, a younger generation full of energy and know-how. "This intergenerational cooperation is very important for the company's success. Key positions must be filled by good workers, who are also role models for others. Currently, 43% of our staff came to us as first-time job seekers. We employ a total of 165 staff, whose average age is 36. There are also a number of students employed in Halcom; through our cooperation with universities we offer internships to students, who prove to be the most talented when working on research projects."

Our colleagues are an important link in the business chain

Common values provide the core foundation for our thought processes, actions and the conduct of the company and its personnel. "Halcom's values are based, not only on our exceptional inheritance of the past, but also on our outlook for the future contributed to by many of our employees. The foundation of every good company is mutual respect and trust. This can only be achieved through responsibility, creativity, flexibility, fairness, openness and enthusiasm for work, as these are prerequisites for a sound corporate climate. We reinforce the values already held by Halcom, whilst enthusiastically welcoming other values that will enhance the company in the future," agree Matjaž and Marko. "You live with the company 24 hours a day. If your colleagues share your

vision and outlook for future development, corporate governance is that much easier. There are only a handful of good managers in Slovenia, and we are very lucky to have Marko, who spent 16 years abroad," readily points out Matjaž, adding: "knowledge, the ability to adapt rapidly to business changes, internal energy, and enthusiasm for working with other people are very important in the IT sector. It is this enthusiasm and energy that were decisive for us in choosing Marko, as he embodies all of those attributes."

Marko, who gained most of his knowledge and experience abroad, was proud to accept the appointment, although he was well aware of his responsibility to the company. "It was important for me to work in a business that has identity, solid foundations, an excellent market position and great potential for growth," he proudly points out.



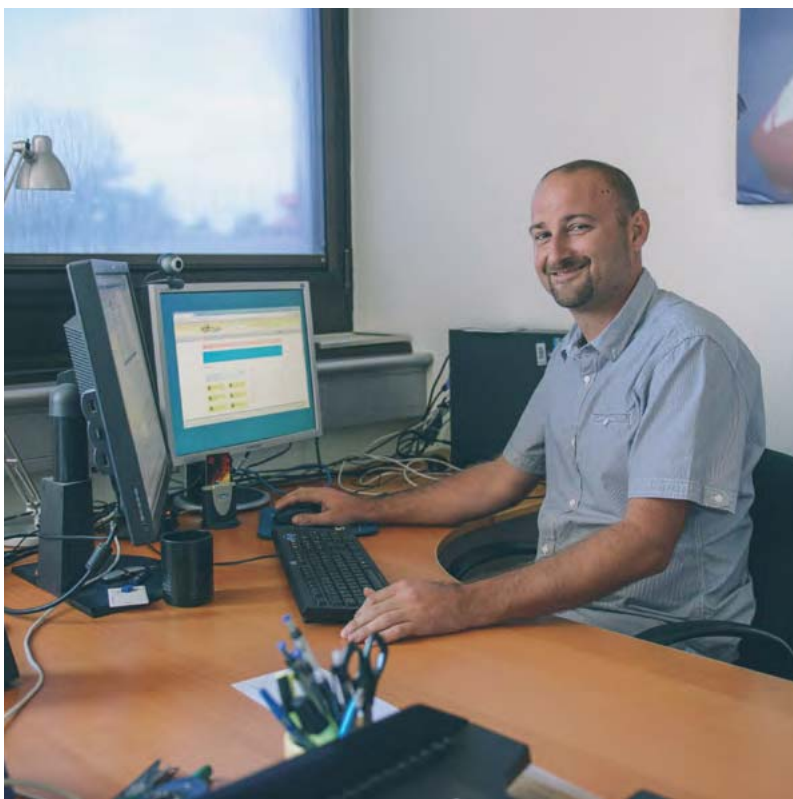
Matjaž Čadež worked as CEO up until 2011 when he retired



Halcom established the basis of its business well in the past; the goal for the future is continuing the successful story of e-banking and payment systems



Among other acknowledgements they received awards called Zlata Gazela in 2003 and Najpodjetniška ideja in 2006/2007



Son of Matjaž Čadež, Aleš, works as a CTO at Halcom



They were the first in the world to introduce e-banking for businesses

Halcom in a nutshell: “Quality based on innovation and tradition”

Tradition and development

Tradition plays an important role in the development of a business. “When a company’s development is based on tradition, it means that long-term objectives, long-term quality improvement, natural growth, respect for wisdom and experience and above all building on past achievements, take precedence over short-term goals and profits,” explains Matjaž. Both Matjaž and Marko share the same views of the pros and cons of a family business. “One of the strengths of a family business is that as the owner, you decide everything, because there is no-one in a more senior position whom you need to ask for permission. Yet we must never forget that our clients are our harshest judges. In addition, you can support local community projects that are close to your heart. One such project is Imago Slovenija, which has been sponsored by Halcom for a number of years. In addition, our concern for the environment is shown by the company providing financial support to projects that are striving to develop environmentally-friendly technology,” explains Matjaž.

Future goals and orientation

To date, Halcom has sold its business solutions to more than 70 banks, four central banks and several clearing houses. Halcom’s e-banking solutions are used by over 150,000 business users and in 2013 the company generated just over 11 million euros in revenue. “In the past, Halcom successfully laid down solid foundations. Our aim is to continue our success story involving e-banking and payment systems. In the fields where we have made history and where we have vast experience and references, we are striving to find innovative and suitable solutions for issues encountered by users, which are currently unavailable,” says Marko of the future, adding: “Another goal is for our company to grow in terms of geographic orientation through our integration with foreign entities, allowing our existing customers to continue to grow along with our company.”

Matjaž’s outlook for the future is similar: “Undoubtedly, financial results do play an important role; however, Halcom is renowned for its ability to integrate clients, forge new ideas and create new, innovative activities. We are not only a software developer and provider, we also provide services.

We are driven by our determination to remain a business that does not simply follow the ideas of others; on the contrary, we aim to be an industry leader whose innovations and initiatives continue to be followed by others, as they have in the past,” enthuses Matjaž.


The right people in the right positions

“One of our objectives is to ensure the sustainable development of our finances as the basis for future growth and development. It is extremely important to find the right people for the right positions, cultivate a good working climate that rewards and promotes employees whilst giving them the right incentives to find new creative solutions,” says Marko, illustrating his view of the importance of human resources. “For this reason Halcom is investing time, money and energy to ensure its employees’ job-satisfaction, as this has ensured our previous success and will do so in the future,” Matjaž confidently assures us. The future strongly depends on innovation, which is the area where Halcom invests heavily. “Among other measures we have taken is setting up the Halcom studio, which studies new, innovative ideas forged internally and externally, develops prototypes and checks their feasible use by potential users. We develop our own products and know-how and our core determination is to be a step ahead of everyone else.”

Matjaž Čadež

Founder and Chairman of the Board

Company name:	Halcom d.d.
Employees (2013):	165
Revenue (2013):	€11m

A portrait of Dé Louis Hurwits, a middle-aged man with short, dark hair and blue eyes, wearing a white polo shirt. He is looking slightly to the left of the camera. The background is a blurred forest scene with trees and foliage.

“Family business
is very important,
but even more
important is that
we get along and
that we are a happy
family.”

Dé Louis Hurwits
Intersocks d.o.o.



Dé Louis Hurwits

Owner, Intersocks d.o.o.

Intersocks is a leading developer and supplier of high-quality technical socks to the clothing and sportswear industry, cooperating with representatives, agents and distributors in more than 60 countries. It also offers a wide range of services, including market research, design, development, production and branding.



The second generation: Daan, Debby and Dennis Hurwits



Marjan Kočila

The Intersocks Group was established in 1979 by the Dutch entrepreneur Dé Louis Hurwits. Following in the footsteps of his father Jozef, who ran his own Amsterdam-based, import-export company, distributing hosiery, he was also influenced by his studies at a renowned Dutch textile college in the small town of Enschede and driven by a strong desire to prove himself. Thus, 50 years ago, he embarked on an entrepreneurial journey by establishing Hurwits Socks S.R.L, based in Trieste. The company's growth took off when it relocated to Belluno, Italy, assuming the new name of Intersocks, S.R.L. Today, it is an integral part of the Intersocks Group, with entities in Italy, Slovenia, Croatia, Poland and Turkey. Dé describes the company as one with a highly-advanced range of products and a prosperous future.

"As long as we know how to steer the company in the future, I am confident that our success will be long-term. Thus, our focus is firmly on the future," Dé assures us.

Although subject to a cyclical business environment, with its range of seasonal products, including distribution of Crocs™ in 10 countries and global distribution of Spenco® (excluding the USA), the company has succeeded in mitigating this effect. While the majority of business functions are carried out in Kočevje, some are based in Belluno, Italy, and numerous offices, agents and distributors are dispersed throughout the world.

Quality as the primary factor

The company is committed to the continuous development of both technology and innovation. Their own R&D team travels the world researching new developments in the areas of high performance materials, specific treatments and innovations, in order to be able to offer top-quality products for each new season. Much attention is given to development of brands for both professional and amateur athletes. This positively affects the quality of processes and the size of the range, both of which are essential for successful, long-term business partnerships, quality and the profitability of the entire Group. The company has its eyes firmly fixed on the global market and trades in more than 60 countries.

"This widely dispersed network of partners and representatives allows us to create products and design market strategies that attract local as well as global markets," they proudly state, adding that corporate responsibility to the environment, business partners and employees has, for a number of years, been one of the most important company values. As such, it is documented in the company's code of conduct, in accordance with the SA 8000 standard.

Plans for long-term development

Currently the Slovenian company, which is the largest in the Group, employs 62 staff. In 2013 they generated nearly 33 million euros in revenue and just over 1.2 million euros of net profit. They are truly focused on long-term development, and all profits are retained for use in new investments and development projects, such as purchasing the most technically-advanced knitting machinery. Also, a large amount of profit is retained and allocated to company reserves. Continuous investment in innovation and constant development are the two key elements in the design of their products and business processes.

Dennis Hurwits explains: "New technology and a strong focus on development play key roles in our operations. Our sales team is familiar with various markets and applies new technologies and materials to further our development. Another key factor is ensuring that these new technologies and materials are integrated into the production process to guarantee the products' correct functionality." It comes therefore, as no surprise that the R&D division was there at the very beginning and boasts 35 years of experience.

"Our company's success could not be imagined without the invaluable contribution of our R&D department, broadening our knowledge and developing innovative high-tech materials and technologies for our product ranges. Thus, we stay a step ahead in the market and add value," proudly explains the Intersocks team.



Intersocks pays a lot of attention to developing brands for professional sports



The company has 35 years of experience in development of new technologies in the sock industry



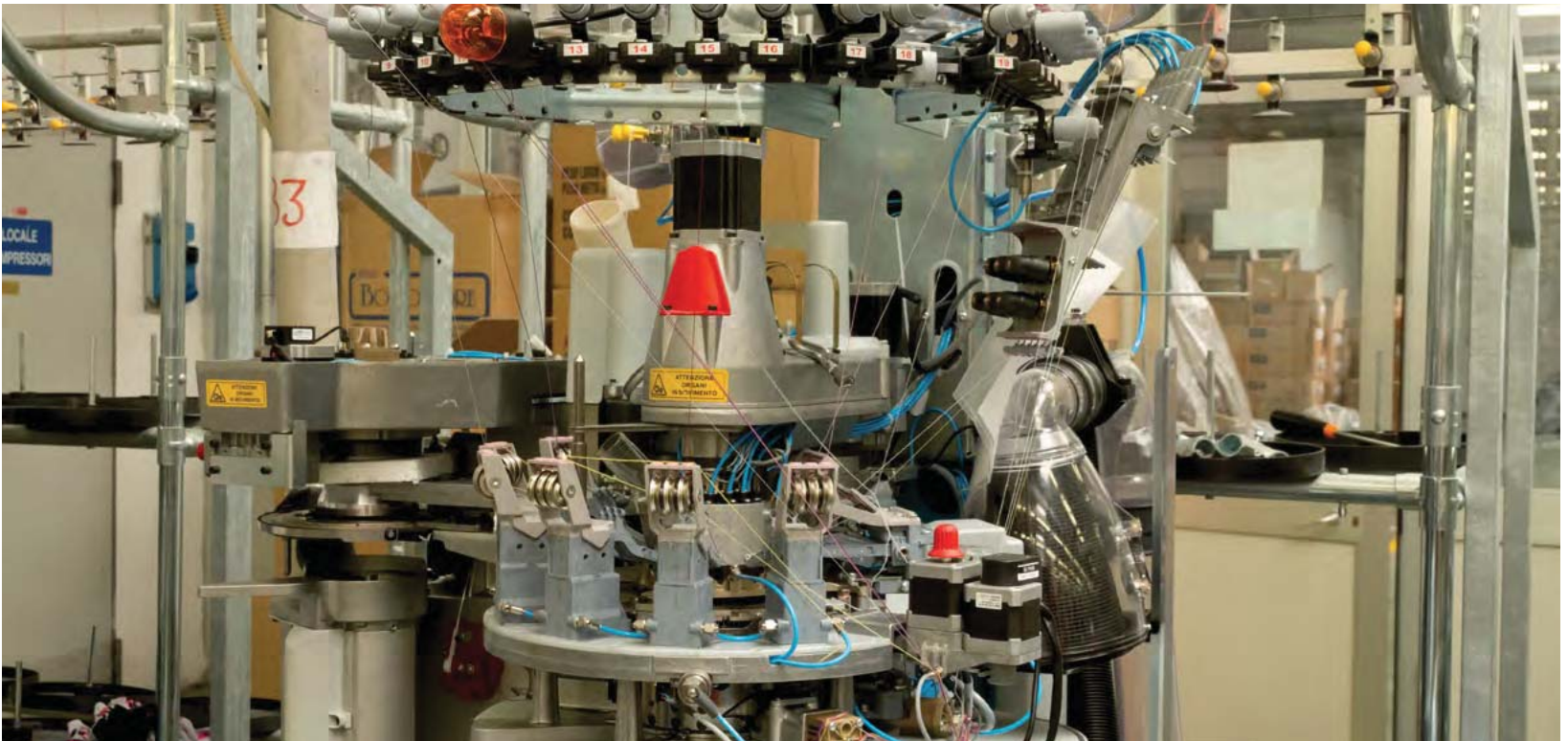
Ski socks from private brand program BRBL



Intersocks is distributor for Crocs in 10 countries



Intersocks headquarters in Kočevje where most of its business departments are located



Each year they invest in the purchase of the most technologically-sophisticated knitting machines and thus continually renew their machine park

Intersocks in a nutshell: “Innovative, efficient, global, profitable and responsible.”

Inquisitive spirit, boldness and integrity

As innovations and the company's success are the fruits of hard work, Intersocks feels a great responsibility to its workforce. “This responsibility is even greater for us in carrying on the success story initiated by our father. As entrepreneurs, we have made a major commitment to the livelihood of a large number of staff,” explains Debby Hurwits, Dé's daughter, who is sure that maintaining a healthy work-life balance is one of the major challenges faced by all family businesses:

“Once all three of us, as the next generation, had joined the family business, it took some time to separate private and business lives and most of our family gatherings finished with us talking shop. We constantly think about our company. However, in recent years we have succeeded in improving this situation.”

In their opinion, family characteristics which they bring to the business, including an inquisitive spirit, boldness and integrity, also play a vital role.

“We offer exceptional concepts that bring long-term profitability and the benefits of synergy to all participants in the business process,” they proudly point out. Following a very successful restructuring in 2000, the company's best results in terms of growth, business scope and profits, have come in the past few years.

Family aspect

The company's move to Slovenia in 2004 was also a turning point for the integration of the second generation into the family business. This is how Debby remembers those times:

“It was then that we all accepted our first real responsibilities and we have since become increasingly independent and confident. We were entrusted with independent responsibilities in the field of sales: Dennis in the area of development, Daan in distribution, while I was responsible for the company's move to Slovenia.” Dennis is quick to add: “In recent years, as the number of projects has relentlessly grown, so has the associated responsibility. To me, being part of a family business is a challenge that helps me grow personally.

It requires a vast amount of thought and understanding. While the second generation is consolidating, our father is the one who is responsible for final approval of key decisions as the chief consultant to the company,” says Dennis with a smile, while Daan adds: “We appreciate our father's vast experience and advice. A combination of experience and new, fresh ideas is the key to success.”

Dé distilled his wealth of experience into three pieces of advice to his children: “First, family business is very important, but even more important is that we get along and that we are a happy family; second, differences of opinion should be discussed and resolved, and third, we must always be honest. One's reputation is very precious and cannot be replaced by any amount of money,” asserts Dé, while praising his children for being smart, hardworking and having their feet firmly on the ground. He is also confident that they will maintain the successful growth of the business.

“We shall continue the good work and our hope is that at least one of our children will one day be willing to continue what our father began in 1979,” they unanimously agree.

Dé Louis Hurwits

Owner

Company name:	Intersocks d.o.o.
Employees (2013):	62
Revenue (2013):	€33m

“Light only where
necessary, only as
much as necessary
and only when
necessary.”

Marino Furlan
Intra lighting d.o.o.





Marino and Marjeta Furlan

Owners, Intra lighting d.o.o.

It has sometimes been said that light is man's best friend. With its dynamic development and rapid growth, Intra lighting has surprised both the global lighting industry and the Slovenian economic environment. In just two short decades the company has surpassed all expectations and today Intra lighting is a successful manufacturer of architectural lighting, marketed in over 60 countries across four continents.



Their products are among the most technologically-advanced, efficient and contemporarily designed, earning many prestigious international awards



Today Intra Lighting is a successful manufacturer of architectural lighting, marketed in more than 40 countries. (Nova KBM, Ljubljana)

Husband and wife team Marjeta and Marino Furlan established Intra in 1989. Although at the time this was a rather small enterprise with a very modest amount of financial capital, the drive and creative energy of both founders secured its rapid growth. Only a year later the Furlans' love for lighting and light resulted in the company beginning to trade in decorative light fittings. In 1992 the company made another leap forward as it began to conquer the world with its first range of light fittings made from sheet metal, which were assembled locally from parts imported from abroad. Soon after, their light fittings were being sold on foreign markets too. Two years later Marjeta and Marino purchased machinery for the production of light fittings and through their pioneering enthusiasm, assembled these fittings themselves, thus setting the foundations for the company's present highly modern production of technical light fittings. In 1996 Intra assumed its new name "Intra lighting". The scope of production began to increase steeply despite limitations due to a shortage of a suitably qualified workforce. For this reason the Furlan team decided to direct their energies and production into architectural light fittings, a sector with higher added value. With new designs and new light fittings the company was rewarded with numerous awards, by adding innovation, modularity, short lead times and comprehensive economy to its range of development objectives. At the same time the company did not forget its environmental responsibilities, which is demonstrated by the use of environmentally friendly materials and energy saving bulbs. Today the Intra Group comprises three production units located in Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia.

Marketing companies and commercial representative offices are located in nine countries and the company cooperates in the development of new products and lighting solutions with partners from several countries.

From London to Moscow

Intra lighting has over 25 years of experience in working on a large number of projects across four continents. The company's light fixtures give light to business premises, public buildings, stores and shopping centres as well as venues intended for various events and activities of sport, education and culture located all over the world. Some of these prestige installations include, at home: Cankarjev dom, Kristalna Palača, renowned hotels such as Kempinski in Portorož, Livada Prestige in Moravce, Perla in Nova Gorica and Grand Hotel Toplice in Bled. Furthermore the company has also fitted light fixtures in the Stožice sport stadium, at numerous universities, senior schools and kindergartens, as well as at industrial facilities and numerous new buildings. Abroad, the company's light fittings provide light to the offices of Microsoft, Chevron's HQ Houston, EY, Armani, Calvin Klein, Adidas and Nike stores, hotels and schools in Amsterdam, Moscow, Sarajevo, Verona, London and elsewhere around the globe. The company is particularly proud of its successes in projects where a number of different objectives were met and where its light fittings fulfilled all the requirements of both users and those involved in the process of realising the project.

Innovation and success

A highly technical company with dynamic growth allows its individuals to be creative, giving them endless opportunities to be innovative. "As we aim to put our products on the market as quickly as possible, to help achieve this we also have a number of state of the art in-house laboratories as well as our own research and development department, where new materials and construction techniques are researched and tested, and where work is coordinated between designers and other divisions," explain the Furlan team. "Our light fittings are of modern design, and high quality, as well as efficient with high energy efficiency achieved using the latest technologies. With our focus firmly on detail and modularity as well as simplicity of assembly these are key elements of our development philosophy. Intra lighting's products are placed in the market segment of architectural lighting where innovative solutions and design play a key role within the wider global market. They are some of the most technologically advanced on the market, the most efficient and advanced, as well as being of a modern design, and are often awarded the most prestigious international awards such as IF, Red Dot, Japanese Good Design Award and Design Plus award."

Integration of knowledge and competence

The Furlan husband and wife team saw the company moving through a period of rapid growth to a point today where great attention is devoted to building their brand, and everything that goes with it - from improving working processes, digitalisation and data integration, and developing even more complex products, which must remain user friendly and simple to operate; to launching onto new markets, team integration and further development of knowledge and competences of individuals. Their son and daughter are also involved in the family business. "Our daughter is responsible for marketing while our son manages the sports and events centre Magma X. It was important to us that both children become independent and responsible, to keep their feet firmly on the ground and to achieve their own goals and aspirations. We support them when our support is needed while giving them the freedom to choose their own career paths," they add. "You build your company in your own time and your goal is to ensure its long-term success. As the owner you have great responsibility to the company and the people employed in it. Today, our business includes 200 families in total. While your company is growing, it is important to have the right workforce who are professionals in their own areas and who you can trust to contribute to the team effort of



Their products give light to business centres, public buildings, shops and shopping centres all over the world. (Sauflon centre for innovation, Gyál, Hungary)



Both children are contributing to the business, daughter in marketing (in photo above) and son as a director of sports centre Magma X



Today Intra Group has three manufacturing factories in Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia. (Faculty of Medicine, Maribor)

Intra lighting in a nutshell: “Innovation, design, quality, energy efficiency and care for sustainable development.”

achieving the company's objectives, and staff who are willing to further their knowledge and expertise and be responsible for taking the right decision” add Marino and Marjeta, who agree that their responsibility to the family business is immense. “What the company represents today has been built by many people, employees of companies and representative offices of the Intra Group. Each individual and each of their contributions have helped to create a successful business, known as Intra lighting. Staff in the sales, development and production divisions are a well-rehearsed team that knows how to lend a listening ear to each individual customer,” say the Furlans. “We need people who know how to accept a challenge, want to build on their knowledge and expand beyond the boundaries of what is possible. People, who can take on responsibilities for their work and be creative team members. Anyone who takes on new tasks enthusiastically and is not satisfied with half-hearted solutions can always find a suitable challenge.” They continue: “We comply with quality standards and for this reason expertise and skills, responsibility, accuracy, and dedication are important in-house values.” Marjeta adds that today she and Marino are no longer alone in the company: “Ours is a successful team of strong individuals, who are at the same time colleagues we trust and collectively we are writing the Intra story.”

Awards system and experience

Since people play a significant role in the success story of this Slovenian enterprise, the most prominent achievements of individuals are rewarded at an annual awards ceremony. “Each individual accomplishment results in even closer ties between all those involved. Our employees share close affiliation to the company and forge friendly relationships with our colleagues. It is important we celebrate all our achievements together and to achieve this we organise memorable excursions and most enjoyable parties. We put particular emphasis on the physical fitness of our employees and thus we have established a fitness centre Magma X, where employees are able to relax and socialise, or perhaps they may prefer to try their luck on the golf course, or elsewhere where they can renew their physical strengths they need to face new challenges,” explain the husband and wife team.

In addition, the company promotes and organises a range of educational and training programmes that contribute to the personal and professional development of its employees, as well as activities which help drive the further development of the company.

Internal training courses, a mentor-ship programme and close cooperation between individuals from various specialised areas, ensure the smooth flow of certain specific knowledge and the exchange of experiences between all employees. Special attention is devoted to working conditions and in particular providing modern technical equipment in all working areas.

Our goals and mission

Everyone in Intra lighting believes in our common objectives and while performing individual tasks, employees forget the time and are rarely tired: “You need to be alert, be able to make connections between various areas of expertise and recognise new opportunities when they arise. One should not remain satisfied with current results, instead constantly asking yourself how something could be optimised or improved further in order to make that next leap forwards,” Marino enthusiastically states. Future plans are directed towards development of innovative, masterful and artistically designed products, greater recognition of the Intra lighting brand, and greater depth of sales promotion on foreign markets.

Marino is confident that innovative lighting solutions are the future, concluding, “Light only where necessary, only as much as necessary and only when necessary.”

Marino and Marjeta Furlan

Owners

Company name:	Intra lighting d.o.o.
Employees (2013):	250
Revenue (2013):	€20m

“Business culture
which is founded
on mutual respect
will bring the best
results.”

Bogomir Strašek
KLS Ljubno d.o.o.





Bogomir Strašek

Owner and CEO, KLS Ljubno d.o.o.

KLS Ljubno is a world-renowned manufacturer of industrial rings, plus starter ring gears, signal rings and mass rings for engine flywheels used in cars, HGVs and mobile worksite machinery. In this niche market, the company is in the very highest echelon. Present in a number of foreign markets, in the most recent five-year period the company expects to record 60% growth.



KLS Ljubno is planning a 60% growth in the next five years

In 1972, at the age of 26, Bogomir Strašek was entrusted with the major challenge of taking over the Gradbenik Ljubno metal plant.

“When it was proposed that I take over the running of the plant, my first thoughts were that I would be closer to the Savinja Alps, and at the time I didn’t give much thought to what challenges the new job might bring,” says Bogomir, remembering those early days. “I was told that due to the high unemployment in the Savinja valley at that time, my task was to create as many new jobs as possible, while at the same time not incurring losses. While I could see myself being quite capable of meeting these challenges, the reality was less idyllic. Generally, working conditions were very bad; as much as half of the production was either in the open air or under cover in a barn, with no heating during the winter. All the loads were carried by workers themselves as there was no machinery. We worked extremely hard and saved even harder, although we did invest in the training and education of new employees. In 1977 we had a total of 87 employees and we sponsored a total of 34 students in a vocational college. Gradually our position improved.” By the end of the 70s, the company traded across the then Yugoslavia, plus other East European countries, and also saw success in the USA and Canada. They expanded their production programme and increased the workforce. “By this time there were now 174 of us in total and we were constantly in profit.”



The company produces starter ring gears, signal rings and mass rings for different types of vehicle and machines

However, after Slovenia’s independence in 1992, the company again had to battle major challenges. “We lost over 90% of orders as our customers folded up,” says Bogomir, illustrating the dire situation. Together with his colleagues, he decided, despite the difficulties, to continue operations.

Worldwide reputation

Eighteen years ago, after several years spent seeking orders across Austria, Germany and Italy, the company changed its work orientation and thought processes.

“We concentrated our efforts and specialised our production on starter ring gears for the automotive industry,” explains Bogomir, adding that it was then that the company assumed its present name, KLS. Today, it is well-respected throughout the world’s automotive industry; what’s more, within its market niche, it is at the very top, supplying more than 50% of the European market and 14% of the global market in starter ring gears.

“We gradually overtook our competitors, achieving this through dedication and hard work; by employing a local workforce, cooperating with Slovenian companies and by utilising Slovenian know-how,” proudly points out the recipient of the 2011 Golden Gazelle award.

“You need to work hard, not only to the extent you think is possible, but beyond, to the level required to arrive at the finish line,” he adds.

Successful development

KLS have combined the high quality of their products, timely deliveries and flexibility towards customer requirements, with competitive prices. The company regularly invests in the most advanced equipment and technology, while in the forthcoming year they intend to build a new production plant. Compliance with ISO quality assurance standards and a policy of constant advancement are consistent with the aim of achieving long-term improvements in customer satisfaction. This is also enhanced by the company's business culture. "Business culture which is founded on mutual respect will bring the best results," points out Bogomir.

KLS is a socially-responsible, service-oriented company. It has a strong sense of responsibility to customers, colleagues, owners, suppliers and also the environment. "To achieve our goals, the company needs to constantly evolve and grow, and this requires significant investment in the development market, products, processes and human resources. To ensure this investment, the company needs to constantly achieve added value," explains Bogomir.



Bogomir Strašek in 1977 inside the workshop of TOZD Kovinarstvo, the predecessor of KLS Ljubno



Sculpture "Self-respect" in front of the headquarters of the company



They specialize in the production of ring gears for the automotive industry



The Zgornja Savinjska valley, where the company has established its headquarters



Daughter Barbara, Bogomir Strašek and daughter Nataša

KLS in a nutshell: “Reliability, quality, productivity and responsibility.”

Quality is the key

Since the company faces fierce competition from other producers, it continuously improves the quality of products, methods and delivery terms, responding rapidly to customer demands and changes in market conditions. “The quality of our products is measured in the number of substandard quality pieces delivered to customers. Currently KLS deliver only two substandard pieces for every million supplied. This is one of our strongest competitive advantages, since our competitors count their substandard products in the range of 40 to 50 per million,” explains Bogomir, adding that their number of customer returns is incredibly low. “Although we produce a total of 250 different products, our supplies are always delivered on time and we have few customer returns; in fact, ours is the lowest customer return rate of any product manufacturer in the world.”

A second generation involved in various responsibilities

Both Bogomir’s daughters are involved in the business and have had close ties with the company since they were very young. They have also gained international experience as students in several European countries.

As a professor of geography and history, Nataša specialised as an interpreter in English and French. For several years she worked for the European Commission, European Parliament and European Court in Brussels and Strasbourg. Currently she works in the company’s sales department and is responsible for quality communication with business partners all over the world. She is also a PR officer and gets involved in the general running of the company with her husband Franci Bevc, a mechanical engineer, who is responsible for the development and production of gear-rings.

The youngest daughter Barbara graduated from the Faculty of Economics in Ljubljana and pursued her MBA postgraduate studies in Budapest and Dijon, specialising in the automotive industry at TUW (Technische Universität Wien). Her husband Samo Mirnik, also a graduate of economics, is in charge of KLS production planning, IT and supply.

Plans for the future

Although in terms of workforce numbers, KLS Ljubno is the most automated business in Slovenia, the company employs a total of 215 local staff. “Our workforce exclusively comprises local people. Some of them are the children of employees from the 80s,” proudly points out Bogomir, adding that in relation to KLS, the term family company has a slightly wider connotation. “It is not only our immediate family that is involved in the company, but also several generations of staff who we regard as our extended family. Considering the structure of the workforce, the pay rates are good,” says Bogomir. “Salaries of our workers are 10% higher than the country’s average. All employees who are successful and achieve set goals are rewarded.” In 2014, gross added value per employee amounted to as much as 95,000 euros. In the last five year period, the company will achieve 60% growth, and based on current results, this goal will be achieved sooner than planned. “Our aim is not to become a large company, but rather to remain a good and successful one. Since stability is important, we intend to continue to invest in further development,” adds Bogomir, sharing with us his thoughts of the future.

Bogomir Strašek

Owner and CEO

Company name:	KLS Ljubno
Employees (2013):	208
Revenue (2013):	€27,8m

“Willingness to share your home with guests is a virtue not possessed by everyone.”

Family Štern
Kovačnik Tourist Farm,
Planica nad Framom





Family Štern

Kovačnik Tourist Farm, Planica nad Framom

Located in the small village of Planica nad Framom, not far from Maribor, is the 'Pri Kovačniku' tourist farm. While the farm's main activity is animal husbandry, in recent years, food preparation, using seasonal ingredients grown in the kitchen garden and fields, has become a major feature. The Štern family enthusiastically welcomes local and foreign customers alike to their farm and serves tasty home-made food and drinks. Although the Šterns' business is not typical, it is still one of the most successful local stories, stretching over more than three decades.



They have 30 head of free-range cattle, bred in a modern barn



Traditional Kovačnik lunch



House beef soup with liver quenelles

The Kovačnik ancestors can be traced back as far back as 1770. Although the family name has changed, the Kovačnik farm's name has been handed down over generations.

In 1981, Angelca and Janez Štern began welcoming visitors and their became one of the first tourist farms in the Maribor region. This new venture began with a single dining room, which could accommodate 20 guests, and just three guest rooms. In 1995, Angelca and Janez expanded their capacity by building a dining room for up to 40 guests. Over the next decade, many hundreds of celebrations and events took place there.

When their son Danilo married Barbara in 2002, she immediately left her town job to join her husband, and together they continued building a family tradition. Soon after their wedding, they renovated the guest rooms and this proved to be their wisest investment. They wanted to take advantage of their knowledge of foreign languages in dealing with visitors from abroad.

"I used to be a town girl, whose cooking skills comprised little more than making vegetable soup and pancakes, but after our marriage I learnt a tremendous amount from Angelca," reflects Barbara about her early days at the farm, adding that even today she is happy to accept valuable advice from 'mother' Angelca. "Today, as an independent cook in my own kitchen and in my own original way, I create culinary delights using a blend of traditional methods, alongside a fresh new approach."

Work at the Kovačnik farm begins with the sunrise. "Once I have prepared the bread dough, I put it in the oven, then after milking we collect freshly-laid eggs and serve a hearty, warm and fresh breakfast to our guests. At other times you might catch me making walnut cake, which is an indispensable feature of every family table on major holidays," she adds.

Welcoming guests from all over the world

'Pri Kovačniku' is the only tourist farm, in the area between Maribor, Ptuj and Zreče, which also offers accommodation.

"We work hard and don't try to re-invent the wheel. Instead, we are guided by our love for people and tradition. We are proud to have made it possible for numerous dignitaries, couples young and old, as well as family groups, to enjoy delicious food, while resting their hearts and souls at our family farm," says Barbara.

The family welcomes guests from all over Slovenia, as well as many foreign countries. Most visitors want to escape the anonymity of mass tourism and are looking for peace and tranquillity in the countryside, with organic, freshly-prepared meals, which are lovingly created. "What could be nicer than being woken by the smell of freshly-baked bread and served a lovely, free-range breakfast?" smiles Barbara, adding that everybody strives to make the guests feel at home.

Home comforts and home-made gourmet delights

Barbara feels that home comforts and the friendships they have forged with their guests over the years, along with the menu of gourmet culinary delights, are the key elements of their success.

“Land, livestock and timber are things treasured by all the people of the Pohorje region. They nurture our whole family and, therefore, to us they are most precious. We are proud that we can sell all our farm produce. We

have 30 cattle, which freely graze in the fields during the day and return to a modern well-equipped barn at night. We also have pigs and poultry, while in our carefully-tended herb garden we grow over 60 medicinal plants.

In total, we care for 11 hectares of arable land, mainly meadows and pastures, together with 25 hectares of forest. We are breaking new ground by cooperating with nearby farms, which supply additional food during the peak tourist season. Thus, we are becoming a kind of centre of events and contribute our share to the development of Slovenia’s rural economy for a better tomorrow,” points out Barbara.



Barbara Štern prepares traditional culinary delights with an innovative approach that adds a contemporary twist



Walnut potica, a typical Slovenian dessert, which is prepared for every holiday



Owner Danilo Štern makes all the guests feel welcome at the Kovačnik tourist farm



Opened in 1981, the Kovačnik family farm was one of the few tourist farms in the north-east region of Slovenia



Guests are moving away from mass tourism and are looking for peace and relaxation in the countryside



Every member of the Štern family strives to make guests feel at home

Tourist farm “Pri Kovačniku” in a nutshell: “A fairy tale tourist farm in Pohorje”

Long-term project

Although the Šterns' is not a large family business, they fully identify themselves with this term.

“Our entire family has been involved in our business, which boasts over 300 years of tradition. Each of our family members is a small piece of a larger mosaic, reflecting the lives of our guests, and we all feel a great sense of responsibility towards them. Our personal and business lives are inseparable and the willingness to share your home with guests is a virtue not possessed by everyone. To care for them on a daily basis, ensuring they leave with happy memories of freshly baked home-made bread, jam-making or herb-gathering, and of course our hospitality, requires cheerful dedication from morning until night. Cooperation, assistance, perseverance and a harmonious family certainly help, and ours is a long-term project,” confirms Barbara.

It warms the family's hearts to see happy guests and to receive their greetings, good wishes, photographs, postcards, e-mails and sincere high marks in reviews posted on the most-visited tourist websites, such as Trip Advisor, Booking.com and Facebook. “Our guests report on their experience and regularly give us top marks,” Barbara is proud to tell us while adding; “This confirms our family's success. If just one single family member disagreed with our common efforts, things could not run as smoothly as they do. Each and every one of our guests must be made to feel the welcome of our home and it's important that they feel our positive energy the moment they cross the threshold.”

Continuing the tradition

Their daily farm duties play an essential role in their lives. Eldest son Aljaž is already closely involved in the family endeavours, and Barbara and Danilo also strive to pass on their knowledge and experience to their daughter Julija.

“It is our heartfelt wish that our children should decide to follow the route, outlined 30 years ago by my parents-in-law Angelca and Janez. We hope our children will see it as a choice with a prosperous future. Both our children have been raised caring for animals and with a love for farming.

We teach them how to carry out and assist with all farm work and we feel that the transition to the new generation will be as successful now as it was when my husband and I took over the farm. At that time, most didn't even realise that the running of the farm had been entrusted into the hands of the younger generation,” says Barbara. “Aljaž has already experienced the fact that every morning and night, barn animals need to be fed and that during the summer months one has to ensure there is a sufficient amount of hay in the barn stored for the winter. It is the kind of responsibility you need to learn to love. As a family cultivating its own land, we know what needs to be done, and as the owners and workers we see things in a different light. We are happy that even now, when times are rather difficult, our house is filled with happy and satisfied people,” adds Barbara.

Sustained growth

The tourist farm brings sufficient income to allow for lasting growth, development and the continued high quality of the family business. Each year they turn their hand to renovation of one of the farm's facilities. “In recent years our largest investment was a new barn for free-range farming. Another project was the creation of our own brand and consequent revitalisation of our web site,” recounts Barbara. Several years ago they developed their own brand symbol of their tourist farm, which is used in all presentations and on all their products. “We make some of the best jams, fruit juices, liquors, teas, traditional meat products, cakes and confectionaries. The whole range of our products can be found on our website, kovacnik.com, and currently we are planning our own web store to cater for the ever-increasing demand for our home-made products,” says Barbara, adding that their plans for the future of the family are bright.

“Our dreams will come true providing we can continue to enjoy life at our fairytale home in the idyllic village of Planica nad Framom, which we like to call: ‘Planica, the queen of Pohorje!’” they all agree.

"Success and top quality are assured by a tradition of continuous improvement."

Drago Lemut
Le-Tehnika d.o.o.





Drago and Jadranka Lemut

Owners, Le-Tehnika d.o.o.

Le-Tehnika d.o.o. is the leading producer and distributor of a wide range of telephony components, employing a total of 76 staff and generating six million euros in annual revenue. Additionally, it produces hydraulic, cryogenic and LED lighting systems and a few years ago, opened a successful new hotel, the Azul in Kranj. Success and top quality are assured by a tradition of continuous improvement.



The company also focuses on production of hydraulics, cryogenics and LED lighting

Before Drago Lemut established his own company in 1989, which he started in the covered terrace of his flat, he was employed in the Iskra factory. His career there was marked by imaginative ideas and numerous innovations, including classic telephone adaptors for the global market. One of the first products he, together with a business partner, placed on the market of the former Yugoslavia, was an electric hair curler.

“The orders were numerous and I had to think about marketing, advertising and logistics, in order to make the company function. I even had to drive individual components from suppliers to assembly points, while final products had to be delivered to shops and stores; I had to do it all. This was the first product of my independent enterprise. I named the next product, which I developed without the financial help of my business partner, after my daughter Anja,” muses Drago, remembering those early days.

As a telecommunications engineer, he was keen to pursue his dream further and next he purchased a second-hand telex machine. Towards the end of the 80s he began to source international purchases of raw materials to be used in his production, based in Kranj. By the end of 1990, the company had four employees and soon afterwards his wife Jadranka also joined the company. A mere four years later, the company’s workforce had risen to 100.

From telephony to cryogenics

Le-Tehnika produces several hundred telephony products in 3000 variations, with small batches originating here in Slovenia and larger quantities produced in China. It also manufactures a wide range of components used in the hydraulics industry, including cylinders, valves, gears, pistons, pumps and motors. Under the LUXTELLA brand name, LED street lights are supplied for roads, parking areas and many other public spaces. Following the move of other major European manufacturers such as Siemens to China, Le-Tehnika d.o.o. also based its telephony production in China. In recent years, a highly-specialised range of bespoke cryogenics products has been added to the company’s range.

“Nearly 30 years of experience has enabled us to specialise in cryogenics, including development of technology used in miniature cryogenic coolers, their production, component assembly and their integration into complex systems,” Drago and Jadranka explain. The main cryogenics products include specialised miniature coolers, made according to the Joule-Thompson principle (self-controlled, continuous, fast reacting and non-standard), as well as refrigeration units made under the Stirling principle (rotary drive). These products are intended for the cooling of IR detectors used in a variety of industry sectors. The cryogenics system has been presented at international conferences and trade fairs in the USA, the UK, France, Turkey and elsewhere in the global market.

The company has obtained ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 certificates, which assure the high quality of management. In 1998 the 'Podjetnik' magazine voted Drago and Jadranka entrepreneurs of the year, and in that same year the company was awarded the Excellence in Business Management Award by the International Institute Deloitte Tohmatsu in Vienna. In 1999, Le-Tehnika d.o.o. was awarded the Special Achievements Award of Enduring Importance in Entrepreneurial Development by the Slovenian Chamber of Commerce.

"These awards are the result of our tenacity and hard work, reflected in the balance between the quality and price of our products. Altogether these factors are mirrored in the increases in sales and the implementation of new developing production programmes, which are achieved in global markets," confidently explains Drago. In his opinion, Le-Tehnika d.o.o. differs from other companies by being an innovative and market-penetrating enterprise, focused internationally. Above all, it is distinguished by a broad spread of activities, which is crucial, particularly in times of crisis.



They manufacture more than 300 products in 3000 variations



Le Tehnika produces various telephone components



Laboratory

Le-Tehnika d.o.o. in a nutshell: “Recognition, innovation, international presence, ideas leader.”

Across the world

As much as 80% of total sales are from foreign markets, in 32 countries of Europe, South America, Asia and the Far East. “Direct sales are made to major customers such as Siemens, and Samsung, whereas smaller customers are reached with the help of our network of distributors in countries such as Italy, Switzerland, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. With their initial installation in telephone handsets and laptops, our products are present all over the world,” Drago and Jadranka proudly explain. Today Le-Tehnika d.o.o. employs 76 staff and in 2013, it generated around six million euros of revenue. Several globally-renowned companies rank among their major clients.

The future

The company’s values include a rigorous approach to work, good relations among employees and a focus on international markets. “Success, tradition and high quality are maintained with a system of continuous improvements. As a family business, our standing is closely tied to our stability and long-term growth,” says Drago, who heads the company as owner, while both his children, daughter Anja and son Anzej are already involved in the business. “All through the years, they have both been involved in the company to a certain degree and they show a keen interest,” he continues. “It is always extremely difficult to draw a line between private and business life. You can imagine how it works - we spend most of our time at work and real vacations are short and broken up by numerous communications by phone or e-mail,” honestly admits Drago.

The company’s future rests, above all, on the continued development of existing ranges of products, particularly in the fields of cryogenics and LED lighting. In recent years, it has sought out and hired young, qualified talent. “We aim to reach all key customers in the cryogenics industry and penetrate the global market with our range of LED lighting. Thus we devote much attention to our R&D, which has continually assured our development of new products and technologies.”

Drago and Jadranka Lemut

Owners

Company name:	Le-Tehnika d.o.o.
Employees (2013):	76
Revenue (2013):	€6m

“Our tradition dates back to 1949 and we are one of the oldest family businesses in our sector in the area.”

Štefan Pavlinjek,
Roto d.o.o.

roto
SLOVENIJA
LOGISTIČNI CENTER





Štefan Pavlinjek

CEO and owner, Roto d.o.o.

With over 4,000 products, more than three million kilograms of polymers processed annually, production facilities in four countries and exports to 52 markets worldwide, ROTO is among the leaders in “roto-moulding” technology (polymers heated inside rotated moulds). This international company, a European pioneer in polyethylene products, has recorded continuous revenue growth. This is the result of sustained product development, investments in modern production capacities and successful sales penetration on all continents.



The company received the Gazelle 2010 award for the fastest growing company in the Dravska and Pomurje regions. The photo above shows three generations

The Pavlinjek business dates back to 1949, when it started producing agricultural machinery and locks in Murska Sobota. In 1974, Štefan Pavlinjek opened his workshop 'Kovinoplastika Pavlinjek' and made products from plastic using roto and thermal moulding technologies. In the 80s the company began producing agricultural containers and machinery. In 1989 it moved to new premises in the Černelavce district of Murska Sobota and assumed the new name of ROTO.

Just over 20 years later, following a number of acquisitions, ROTO had grown into a holding company. A turning point was signified in 2008, when they entered foreign markets and started the expansion of their sales network to cover the whole world. Only two years later, the company built a new plant in Macedonia, which by 2011 had enabled a major production expansion. Currently, its largest customers include multinationals involved in the production of motorcycles, agricultural machinery and boats (KTM, KRONE, LASER).

Values and development

After 40 years of success in manufacturing plastic products, the ROTO Group is represented by 10 entities with production facilities in four European countries. Among several important values, in which they invest heavily, are continued improvements in knowledge and competencies. Their own development department employs 20 staff and is instrumental in yearly expansion, inventing up to two new products a week.



They are developing numerous new products, on average two new products per week

Nuša, Štefan's daughter, who is responsible for sales and marketing, quickly identifies a more comprehensive list of the company's key priorities: "R&D, innovation, attention to detail, enthusiasm, positive energy, vision while respecting tradition, technical excellence, efficiency, safety, production flexibility and environmentally-friendly products." The emphasis on the education of employees is reflected in extensive investments in training, which led in 2002 to the establishment of 'The ROTO Academy'. Its most important activities include organization of marketing and development conferences, as well as numerous seminars and workshops for the ROTO Group, with participation of renowned local and foreign experts as lecturers.

Twice listed in the Top 10 Slovenian companies providing continuous staff education, additionally the company has been awarded several prestigious honours such as the Exceptional Industrial Achievements Award by the Slovenian Chamber of Commerce, the award of the Slovenian construction institute ZRMK and the Environmental Partnership award by the GV.

Local and foreign markets

The ROTO Group employed over 250 staff in 2013 and generated 36.3 million euros of revenue. It particularly promotes an internal entrepreneurial spirit, since some members of staff are also partners or co-owners. They are confident that family businesses instil confidence in their business partners: "It does not concern only our close family

members who are employed in the Group, but also the extended family of all our employees. Our responsibility is equal to everyone." Nuša stresses that both she and her brother Matjaž felt that carrying on the tradition of family involvement in the company was a natural progression.

Štefan proudly continues: "Our tradition dates back to 1949 and we are one of the oldest family businesses in our sector in the area. My father embarked on an entrepreneurial venture in a small workshop and I grew up surrounded by a business environment. I became used to meeting customers at an early age and learning the trade. We are keen to pass tradition on to the next generation and one of my objectives has been to always support enthusiasm for work and creativity. Since both my children

showed interest in the business, I have gradually shown them the ins and outs." A large business, however, brings with it daunting responsibility. "We are not talking only about our responsibility to employees, but also to customers, the local community and to suppliers. In addition, we strive to maintain the company's reputation and the market position of our brand."

A fine line between private and business life

As every entrepreneur knows, you can never 'switch-off' completely and all those involved in any family businesses find it difficult to draw a dividing line between private and business life.



The company has been present in the domestic and foreign markets for more than 35 years as a successful manufacturer of plastic mass products



Roto has penetrated the African market where they see a future in the supply of water tanks



Young Štefan with his brother and parents, founders of the company



They are constantly expanding their professionalism, adapting to new technologies and business organization



Daughter Nuša is responsible for sales and marketing of the Roto products

Roto in a nutshell: “International, reliable, innovative, environmentally-friendly, family business.”

“Enterprise is a way of life and thus it is extremely important that our family members understand this and continue to provide their support,” says Nuša, explaining how their family successfully treads this tricky dividing line. “The danger is that at times emotional aspects may prevail over economic and rational ones. One of the advantages of a family business is that family members grow up with it, gain an in-depth insight and thus are able to make informed decisions, based on authentic data and with a large degree of responsibility.” The Pavlinjek family are planning their long-term strategy by raising the fourth generation in this entrepreneurial spirit: “One of the most important things is to instil the right values into the younger generation, in addition to their responsibilities toward the business and the family.”

Quality and future

“The competitive advantages of the Roto Group are derived from flexibility, innovative marketing, and a high-level of technical support to customers. We cover the market gaps which occur during an individual product’s life cycle when its mass production is suspended. We increase products’ added value by enhancing their functionality of design, intelligently using materials and modern production technology, ensuring quality craftsmanship and providing after-sales service. Our products provide comprehensive solutions for customers’ individual problems,” explain the Pavlinjeks, adding that their outlook for the future is positive: “Ours has been a gradual, progressive development and we know how much effort, dedication and expertise each step has required. Thus we know that in order to continue on our successful path, we need to make one step forward at a time and never look back.” Following continuous investment, while constantly searching for new markets, the company was ready to face the challenges of the global economic crisis. They export products to a large number of countries all over the world from Japan to the USA. “Future generations will no longer differentiate between domestic, local and global markets, and nor do we now. Our long-term objective is our focus on foreign markets. We continually improve our expertise, our reliance on high-tech solutions and internal organization, whilst at the same time relentlessly pursuing new markets,” agree father and daughter.

Štefan Pavlinjek

CEO and owner

Company name:	Roto d.o.o.
Employees (2013):	250
Revenue (2013):	€36,3m

“I remember my father’s advice that I should not ask others what they have done wrong, but rather focus on finding the solutions.”

Boštjan Šifrar
President and owner, Sibio Group





Boštjan Šifrar

President and owner, Sibio Group

For the past 47 years, SIBO G has been a leading local player, primarily in the international pharmaceutical and medical industries. The company's foundations were laid by Franc Šifrar in 1967. Today his son Boštjan, who took over the reins in 1993, successfully steers it through numerous challenges, especially in foreign markets. Currently, the company has 256 employees and is present in the markets of 57 countries. It produces 10 million bottle tops a day. In 2013, it exported 2.9 billion tops; while so far this year, at the time of our interview, a total of 3.3 billion had been sold.



They develop solutions for technically demanding products in the pharmaceutical, medical and electrical industries.

The history of the company dates back to 1967 when the founder, Franc Šifrar, began to pursue part-time crafts. From its humble beginnings, a large full-time production process gradually grew to the one carried on by SIBO G from Škofja Loka to this day. The company today offers packaging solutions: tops and closures for tubes and other types of packaging, solutions for technically complex products for the pharmaceutical, medical and electrical industries, as well as development of products and manufacturing of tools.

“In addition to plastic components and the processing of thermo-plastics, which was our primary activity at the end of the 60s, in the 70s my dad also introduced tool-making. Thus, the business expanded and with it the company which continually grew and developed,” explains Boštjan Šifrar, director and owner of SIBO G. He joined his father in the company in 1988 after he graduated from the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering in Ljubljana, and at the beginning of 1993 he took over management. As a fluent speaker of English and German, it was a natural progression to steer the company towards exports. It was in 1991 that the company first directed its attention to foreign markets. Whilst in the past, the majority of production was aimed at the Slovenian market and those of the former Yugoslavia, nowadays things are very different.

“Although a market economy was introduced in Slovenia after 1989, the break-up of Yugoslavia meant that the Company’s market shrank significantly. Today, 90% of our production is for the export market,” says Boštjan. Currently, SIBO G has 190 customers, 150 of which are regular customers in 57 countries worldwide.



Boštjan Šifrar and his father Franc Šifrar, founder of the company

Quality and sales

In the early years the Company employed only 10 members of staff, working from a small workshop utilising five machines to make plastic products, compared to a total of 256 employees today. Ninety percent of employees live locally and their average age is 38. “More than 50% of staff were first-time job seekers when first employed here, and staff turnover in this particular segment is almost non-existent, while overall staff turnover has been reduced to around 5%. In addition, we sponsor 10 students and devote a lot of time, energy and funds to the systematic training of all our employees. Since innovation is the key to our future success, even with such a small, and for some rather insignificant product as tops, in the tools and construction departments we employ individuals who work on the development of new products,” explains Boštjan, adding how proud he is of his dedicated workforce. Boštjan is eager to stress that all 256 employees are responsible for both departments: quality and sales. This focus on quality in all phases of production and sales processes (development, production, implementation and sales activities) has been confirmed by the award of the ISO 9001/2000 standard, which the Company obtained as early as 1999.

“Tradition has remained strong in the Company, spanning its 47 years of perseverance, dedication and commitment to following a common path,” proudly adds Boštjan. “Times have changed and so have working methods and the methodologies used.”

Challenges and achievement of objectives

Boštjan remembers his father saying, as he handed over the Company to him: "Everything you earn is yours, including both success and failure. The responsibility is yours. You should not ask others what they have done wrong, but rather focus on finding the solutions. Your employees are chosen by you, they are an integral part of this company and key to its success."

As a director and owner, Boštjan has been successfully managing SIBO G for the past 21 years. During this time the company assumed a new role and he had to overcome a number of challenges.

"When I started, it was a rather small enterprise and I remember how, as a student in high-school, I made a commitment to myself that once I became the company's manager, I would ensure sufficient growth to employ no fewer than 120 staff," says Boštjan. After 10 years of managing the company, in 2003 he achieved the first of his goals set during his high school years: to raise the headcount from 10 to 120. "In 2005 we appointed a professional manager to manage the business; however, he only stayed with the company for nine months. Our expectations and visions of the company's future differed and we went our separate ways. This meant that I had to focus again on the day-to-day running of the company. In 2009 I appointed a new director; however, we parted after three years and I am again at the head of the company, successfully

managing its business." Boštjan is eager to stress how managing a family company of this size is a rather large responsibility: "We have a responsibility not only to our suppliers, customers and employees, but also to all other businesses participating and cooperating with us. It is for this reason that we need to be successful, and in recent years we have achieved this particular goal."

Twenty-one percent EBITDA

"It is usual in Europe for competitors to report EBITDA of between eight and nine, and possibly up to 20%. Ours has been no lower than 18%. Last year's EBITDA reached almost 21%, while according to current figures, this year's EBITDA will be even higher, projected to reach 22%," Boštjan proudly points out, adding that such an excellent outcome is the result of the overall organisation of the company. "Around 75% of production is accounted for by our own products, meaning that we do not rely only on the instructions of one or two buyers, but that our sales are currently dispersed among 190 buyers. Development and production of our own goods enables us to set prices independently. The result of our work is visible in significantly higher EBITDA, compared to our competitors in other countries," points out Boštjan.



The company produces 10 million plastic caps per day



They supply world-renowned companies, including GlaxoSmith Kline, Unilever, Procter & Gamble and Colgate



Quality is the focus of each phase of the production process



The company has two production halls in Škofja Loka



More than 50% of employees have been with Sibo G since their first employment



This year they will invest one million euros in five new production machines

SIBO G in a nutshell: “Family, satisfaction of business entities, growth, profitability, export.”

Strategy and objectives

The company's business strategy is directed towards growth by pursuing its goal of becoming one of the leading suppliers of plastic tops, high-tech tools used for producing plastic tops, technical thermo-plastics and products used in the medical and pharmaceutical industries. Since the company is investing largely in development, it is no surprise that Boštjan's vision for the future is clear.

“In the field in which we are the experts, we intend to become a truly global player with an even higher market share.” To this end, the company has, with its customers, jointly outlined good strategic plans and agreed on new products and further new projects scheduled for the next year or two. “The economic life-span of a top's design as well as packaging for the pharmaceutical and medical industries is a minimum of 10 years; sometimes even 15 or more. Once new business deals are agreed, we lose only a relatively small percentage, while every 10% of new deals translates into growth for us.”

It is therefore no surprise that the company has been profitable and growing continuously for a great number of years. In addition to excellent business results, it boasts a large number of awards: in 1997 it was awarded the prize for exceptional business and entrepreneurial achievements by the Slovenian Chamber of Commerce, followed a year later by an award from the inter-municipal chamber of commerce of Gorenjska. In 2003 it was awarded the silver coat-of-arms of the Škofja Loka municipality for successful performance and development, and in 2011 Boštjan was voted Entrepreneur of the Year. “I am driven by my aspiration for the company to be better and bigger,” he says.

Future prospects

The company realised 28 million euros of revenue in 2013, which grew to 31 million in 2014. The company is facing organic growth of between 10 and 12%, as well as growth fuelled by acquisitions of competitors and new long-term projects agreed with existing and new customers, which will ensure the company's future growth.

In the past seven years, the company has completed five takeovers, while for the future the plan is one takeover every two years. Currently, they are also planning new plants in Europe, Mexico and Asia.

“We supply tops to the world's leading companies and we have agreed long-term strategic contracts with four of our major customers: GlaxoSmithKline, Unilever, Procter & Gamble and Colgate.” The fact that Boštjan's wife, sister and niece are also employed by the company is more proof that this really is a family enterprise. We also touched on the topic of the division between work, family and spare time, and Boštjan feels that for him the dividing line has been all but erased: “My work in the company has become my way of life. Work doesn't stop after eight hours and quite often I bring work home to keep up to date with the business and ensure everything runs smoothly. Employee relationships in the company are professional and any family ties are forgotten during the working day. Every one of us has specific obligations and no one has any special privileges.”

Boštjan Šifrar

President and owner

Company name:	Sibo Group
Employees (2013):	256
Revenue (2013):	€28m

“One has to
maintain high
moral principles
and a clear
conscience.”

Petra Melanšek
Vivapen d.o.o.





Jože and Petra Melanšek

Owners, Vivapen d.o.o.

With over 47 years of tradition, Vivapen has become globally-renowned for its good business relations and original ideas. In cooperation with major business partners worldwide, it exports approximately 90% of its output, including various types of pen, ancillaries and other stationery. From its base in Celje, Vivapen continues to develop and manufacture innovative products.



Production of fountain and roller pens



Assembling roller pen's components

The company's humble beginnings date back to 1967, when Jože Melanšek began plying his trade in the cellar of his birthplace in Žalec, where he later built a workshop and offices. The company's first customer was Galip from Šoštanj, who ordered a handle for part of a kitchen. Not long afterwards, an order for a watercolour receptacle from the customer Aero Celje, marked the beginning of more serious production. In 1975, Jože hired his first employee, who stayed with the company right up until two years ago, only leaving on retirement. At the end of the 70s, Jože's wife Vanda Melanšek began to pursue a similar craft interest, combining metal and plastic components. The 80s saw the company embracing new technology, used in manufacturing ink cartridges for Aero; also their ultrasound ink cartridge welding technology was patented under the system of the former Yugoslavia. At that time, one of their most successful products was a technical drawing ruler, which was their first export. As the local economy began its downslide towards the end of the 80s, the company focused its attention more closely on foreign markets.

Soon they became major suppliers of ink cartridges to a German customer.

"Whereas previously we had made six million ink cartridges to supply the whole of the local market, the German customer purchased as many as 20 million in a single year," proudly points out Petra Melanšek, daughter of Jože and Vanda.

After Petra joined the company, exports were extended to other global markets. "At first we exported to France and Algeria and this rapid growth and great success in the export market resulted in an Exceptional Industrial Achievements Award from the Slovenian Chamber of Commerce in 1994."

At that time, 27 employees manufactured over 150 million ink cartridges for export and, as little as two years later, the output had increased to more than 220 million. This meant that the company had become the third largest manufacturer of ink cartridges in the world. The next step forward was the production of ink erasers, closely followed a year later by the purchase of machinery, from Herlitz, for the production of felt-tip pens.

"We were producing 43 million felt-tip pens for the German market and our headcount had risen to 49. Our first self-produced fountain pen, "Spirit", which was made using in-house tooling, was successfully sold to the Austrian company Brevillier-Urban, which marketed it under the "Jolly" brand, whilst in the Aldi and Hofer discount stores, this pen is sold under the trade name "Starter". In the next few years we developed our own tools for the production of ball pens as the basis for the development of roller-ball pens. Development of technology for processing surfaces with plasma meant that the company was placed among the major producers of pens with their own ink feeder system," adds Petra, continuing by explaining the origin of the company name. "VIVA is a combination of: Viki, being the second name of founder Jože Melanšek and Vanda, his wife's name. In 2002 the Company changed its name from Viva trade d.o.o. to Viva pisala d.o.o."

2007- a pivotal year

Petra, who was strongly involved in the company's development, took the reins in 2007. To reflect its high profile in foreign markets, it assumed a new name, VIVAPEN d.o.o., and marketing efforts have since been directed exclusively towards export. Today, 99% of total revenue is generated from foreign markets, including Germany and other EU countries, as well as the USA, South America, China, Taiwan and India. Only three years after she took over, and as a result of organisational changes, the company's exports exceeded five million Euro while the headcount had increased to 74. "Restructuring meant that automation of production became important. This resulted in significant changes in production processes, which were reflected in increased revenue," proudly adds Petra, who was herself awarded the Exceptional Industrial Achievements Award by the Slovenian Chamber of Commerce in 2012.



Vivapen received the Golden Award and Public Award for Innovation in 2014 for their Switch Pen product

Energy and experience

"Hard work, quality, flexibility and innovation are the key elements which attract customers to forge partnerships with our company, thereby pursuing common development goals. We build good personal relationships with them, and years of dedication have resulted in good references," confidently adds Petra, who is today the head of the company, employing 85 staff. Her advice is to be fair, sincere and original, striving for further development and education, while putting your heart into everything you do. Petra is aware that among the most important factors are that new employees are inventive, eager to learn, ambitious, professional and willing to expand their knowledge and education further. This means that there are no age limits when hiring for our workforce.



The company produces ink cartridges for fountain and roller pens in various colors



Vivapen's slogan: "We design for those who write. We write ourselves....but not just anything. The impression we make has to be superb."



Vivapen is run by the second generation of the Melanšek family. Daughter Petra took over from her father Jože



Receiving the Gold Award for Innovation in 2013, as they also did in 2011 and 2014



The company works with the world's biggest business partners in production of multicolored pens

Vivapen in a nutshell: “We create for those who write.”

“A family, innovative and development-oriented company.”

“The fresh energy of youth and the experience of the more senior staff are excellent complements.” A company can only grow if employee relationships are fair and trusting and the workforce has job satisfaction, as this will ensure that it is productive and successful. “In 47 years of the company's existence, employees have been regularly rewarded. Also, through a number of initiatives, we have endeavoured to provide a good working atmosphere. We organise free weekly Pilates exercise sessions for all employees, publish a monthly on-line newsletter, hold a tombola and an employee of the month competition. Additionally, outings, visits to the theatre and ideas for awards all help to maintain positive working energy,” adds Petra.

Transfer to a younger generation

Although having a family business means you carry a large responsibility on your shoulders, Petra is extremely proud to be a part of it. “I have great respect and love for my parents and it is important that I justify the trust they placed in me when they accepted me into the family business, and to somehow repay them for all the time and effort they invested in me,” says Petra, adding: “Entrepreneurship is not just about numbers. Work is our life and I have been a part of Viva since my birth, as has my son. The boundaries between private and business life have thus been somewhat eroded. Our Sunday lunch would not be the same without some discussion about the business, since all of us are involved. When you close your office door, the worries and concerns stay with you. Similarly, our working day does not finish after eight hours.” Petra hopes with all her heart that one day she will be able to pass on her knowledge and experience to the next generation, her son Luka and her nephew Tomaž. “In a small way they are both already involved in the company in sharing their ideas. Tomaž is already working, while Luka is currently a student and has some time before he needs to decide what he would like to do. However, it is they and they alone who must search their souls and see whether they have the will, desire and determination to continue the family business in the future. They can only be happy and successful in whatever they turn their hands to, providing that they love their work, as this is the only thing that can ensure the further development and growth of our firm.”

Our vision

The company's plans for the future are clear. Several years ago, Vivapen outlined its intended developments, focusing on offering increased value to its range of fountain and roller-ball pens, whilst increasing capacity across all products, with the aim of attracting new, demanding customers in an international environment. “A well-qualified workforce, innovation, new technological development, quality, penetration into new markets and care for the environment are the clear foundations of our business philosophy. Our wide experience, development and originality are our competitive advantages which the company intends to continue to nurture,” reflects Petra Melanšek. “Fundamental objectives which are based on the company's vision will be achieved with close cooperation and participation of all highly-motivated and qualified employees. One has to maintain high moral principles and a clear conscience, listening to constructive criticism and customer feedback, as well as to one's own heart. First you need strong and solid foundations on which you can build and ultimately, reach for the stars,” points out Petra, as she is confident that her own personal motto best illustrates the vision she has for the future: “A thousand mile journey begins with a single step in the right direction!”

Jože and Petra Melanšek

Owners

Company name:	Vivapen d.o.o.
Employees (2013):	79
Revenue (2013):	€5,8m

EY NextGen Academy: fostering entrepreneurship across generations

Family businesses need an entrepreneurial spirit that not only ensures that the pioneering mindset and values that established the business continue to flourish, but also creates future opportunities to deliver innovation and financial and social value. However, when planning for business succession, potential business leaders may benefit from a little encouragement. We have therefore created the EY NextGen Academy Program, which offers a range of unique and exclusive one-week training events that help the next generation to explore their individual potential and introduce them to the challenges of running a family business. The EY NextGen Academy Program aims to inspire, motivate and encourage self-exploration by combining teaching from leading international executive business schools with practical experience and advice from EY, thereby creating a targeted offering aimed at the next generation of entrepreneurs and family business leaders.

In addition, the EY NextGen Academy builds the framework for a unique network of young potential entrepreneurs from around the globe, where all those who have attended the EY NextGen Academy are invited to join the EY NextGen Club and are given access to an online community to stay connected to their peers and EY professionals, wherever they are around the world. This provides these potential entrepreneurs with valuable networking opportunities and interesting insights to support them on a journey to success, which can continue for generations to come.

NextGen event for 2015:

EY NextGen Academy First Program: push your limits!

Orientation: aimed at young people, aged 16 to 20, in family businesses, this program will help the next generation of entrepreneurs discover their business potential.

- ▶ 19-25 July 2015, Ashridge Business School, Hertfordshire/London, UK
- ▶ 9-15 August 2015, University of St. Gallen, Switzerland

EY NextGen Academy Advanced Program: seize the opportunity!

Personality: aimed at 21 to 25 year olds in family businesses, this program will see the leaders of tomorrow build on their entrepreneurial talents.

- ▶ 4-11 July 2015, Kellogg School of Management, Evanston/Chicago, US
- ▶ 22-29 August 2015, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST), Hong Kong

EY NextGen Academy Excellence Program: make a difference!

Visionary leadership: aimed at family business professionals aged 26 to 30+, this program encourages young global leaders to act as agents of change and learn how to turn innovation into value.

- ▶ 2-9 August 2015, Columbia Business School, New York, US

For more details, please visit ey-nextgen.com

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