

NTS

LALLIO

FROM PLASTICS A CONCEPT THAT IS INNOVATIVE AND SUSTAINABLE



The Nts directors in front of an automated printing press: from left to right, Ombretta Invernizzi, Marinella Manzoni, Marco Manzoni; top left, Alessandro Manzoni and Fabio Daminelli

A friend and a teacher, plastic is the great protagonist of NTS' history. An enterprise that, over 60 years, has always adapted to new systems – including managerial systems – by widening its gaze to undertake an innovative and sustainable modus operandi. Between generational moves forward, technological advances and constant market challenges, today the company, headed by Marinella Manzoni, president and CEO, daughter of the founder Alessandro Manzoni, has become a reference player in Italy in the field of moulding plastics, thermoplastics and thermosetting as well as building moulds for third parties. It was precisely the mould construction shop that was the lively heart of the company, founded in 1959 as the individual enterprise Manzoni Alessandro.

It was an artisan company that produced moulds for forming plastics with the first machines installed under the stairway of his house. Sacrifice, commitment and work were the key

words of the economic boom of the late Fifties. Thanks to the founder's entrepreneurial aptitude, the first important orders soon arrived, especially from companies in the electromechanical sector. In the Seventies the company began compression moulding of thermosetting materials, starting with the prevalent use of polyester masses and prepregs (BMC and SMC), which in those years began to be offered on the market. The use of these new materials immediately proved ideal for applications in the electricity sector, which has become the main outlet for the company's products. After the early death of Alessandro Manzoni in 1976 at the age of 50, he was replaced by his son Gianrenzo, a mechanical expert. Gianrenzo had already been working in the company but, from one day to the next he found himself moved from the workshop to the desk.

«Sometimes we can make a crisis into a virtue. This approach has forged all our generational advances», recalls Marco

Manzoni, son of Gianrenzo and executive vice president of NTS. He is in charge of strategy, marketing, CSR and quality. «At the time it was an artisan enterprise. My father took over as owner, technical director and sole director. A company must always keep moving forward, regardless of the obstacles along the way: this is why we have never given up. At times we took chances, like in the Seventies with thermoset moulding, which led to today's integration into the supply chain». «We were pioneers in this area – continues Marco Manzoni –. In the Lallio-Dalmine-Stezzano triangle there were numerous electromechanical companies which needed such products. We rode the crest of the wave of demand for these materials». The Bergamo market believed in the company that, in 1982, moved to Dalmine, opposite ABB, and tripled its surface area. The sole proprietorship became Termostamp Snc and then Srl and, in the mid-Eighties, production was integrated with the moulding of thermoplastics, especially technical polymers. At the same time we started the injection moulding of polyester resins (BMC).

«It was the years of the industrial leap and the turning point in production, with expansions and new chains, machines and technology – confirms Marco Manzoni –. There were also investments in the plant, the organization and industrial skills. In the early Nineties managers with high technical skills were hired to raise the bar of moulding quality. Additionally, in 1995 we were among the first to obtain the ISO 9002 quality certification».

In April 1996, after the death of Gianrenzo, the company's helm was passed into the hands of the two sisters, Marinella, president and CEO, and Rosanna, who in the meantime has resigned: «We had to have the strength to go on and show our muscles to our competition. Moreover, our customers had been accustomed to interfacing with only male technical directors, so that was another challenge to overcome, a wall of clichés to break down – Marco Manzoni explains –. Our courage to believe in the company has boosted its growth and allowed it to acquire new markets, especially abroad». Exports thus started to appear in the company's balance sheet: today exports represent over 50 percent of our production. In 2004 we started our assembly activities, the last link in the supply chain, followed by logistics services for the direct management of warehouse stocks and orders: an approach that allowed NTS to manage not only large-scale production but also «just-in-time» orders.

Between 2005 and 2006 the company moved to Lallio. The opening of the new headquarters, where we are today, represented another turning point in the history of NTS, from a small workshop, it had become a large industry with growth ambitions, which materialized with the opening of the first and only branch abroad, Termostampi Rom, in Arad, Romania. This company occupies 3,000 square meters and employees 110 people. It performs compression moulding of thermoset materials and assembles components.

«In two years we exceeded the 8 million euro investment, and feared we had bitten off more than we could chew, because turnover was less than 10 million – Manzoni pointed out –. In reality it was a prudent and far-sighted investment. On the 20,000 square meters of the headquarters in Lallio, which accommodate offices, the design and production departments and the warehouses, the departments were immediately positioned to facilitate logistics and production flows. This solution led to total quality for our customers, ensuring not only a product without defects but also a certified process in conformity to standardized protocols and procedures, with dimensional and mechanical resistance tests and raw materials certified at purchase».

«The continuous introduction of new technologies in the construction of moulds and in moulding also allowed us to acquire new capacities in the transformation of a wide range of plastics for technical articles and also offer co-design services, expanding the market for products ranging from electromechanical ones – today the main application – to automotive components and mechanical parts, textile machinery, household appliances and electronics».

With 120 employees and a steady turnover of around 30 million euros, NTS is a company that for some years has been entering the «Industry 4.0» phase, with machines and software designed for hyper-connectivity for monitoring and control, even remotely, and the acquisition of data by a data analyst engineer who defines the parameters for the ongoing improvement of production performance. But the company's daily challenge goes beyond our ongoing investments in innovation and technology: machines, robots and automation are just as important as the training of direct and indirect operators. In a nutshell, human resources.

«Since I joined the company, after various experiences abroad, I have given an “imprint” centred on values and not just on numbers – the vice president affirms –. I put every person at the centre to make the most of human resources, from continuing education to well-being at the Olivettian-inspired workplace. Even the new logo with the words “beyond moulding” was designed to convey our strong value identity and depict the evolution of our core business. In fact, we want to go beyond moulding. This is why we have launched business networks that project NTS into an entrepreneurial synergy with other companies, allowing us to position ourselves as a single player that provides advanced services, technical and productive solutions with a high value added. A business model that we are already applying and that paves the path to new goals».



Bird's eye view of the thermosetting mould production lines