

Green Entrepreneurship

Successful business cases of Green Entrepreneurs in the Mediterranean



Regional Activity Centre
for Cleaner Production



Generalitat de Catalunya
Departament de Territori
i Sostenibilitat

Valcucine: The Italian company leader in the production of sustainable kitchens

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Name:	Valcucine
City, country:	Pordenone, Italy
Name of entrepreneur/ founder:	Giovanni Dino Cappellotto, Gabriele Centazzo (CEO), Franco Corbetta, Silvio Verardo

Description	Valcucine was founded in 1980 to produce high-end sustainable kitchens, and from the 1990s becomes world leader in this sector, with increased annual sales and growing recognition by a number of international organisations. At the heart of its approach is a constant research to innovate towards sustainability –for example by constantly reducing the amount of materials to use in its kitchens– and a detailed attention to the aesthetics of ‘engineered design’. Alongside its market leadership, Valcucine deserves to be mentioned here for its engagement towards environmental causes, including its support towards public campaigns aimed at educating people towards more sustainable behaviours.
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Investment	Not available.
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Stakeholders	All the actors involved in the manufacturing process supply chain, from woodland management and conservation actors to third party suppliers of specific components; end users of Valcucine kitchens; the manufacturing sector as a whole, as it becomes exposed and influenced by Valcucine’s leadership role and its sustainability approach.
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Employment generation	175 employees as of October 2011.
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Timeline	<p>1980: Birth.</p> <p>1981: GHIANDA. Creation of the first kitchen set with 'soft line' kitchen cupboard doors.</p> <p>1983: 5STAGIONI. Creation of the first 'just in time' kitchen cupboard door.</p> <p>1984: QUADRIFOGLIO.</p> <p>1988: ARTEMATICA. Creation of the first kitchen cupboard door with invisible aluminium core.</p> <p>1991: SEMANTICA. New kitchen assembly line.</p> <p>1993: FABULA. Creation of the first kitchen with painted wood and carved cupboard doors.</p> <p>1996: RICICLA. Creation of the first 2mm thick cupboard door.</p> <p>1996: Selection ADI index.</p> <p>1996: LOGICA SYSTEM. Revolution in the ergonomics of the kitchen.</p> <p>1997: Creates the MAZZOTTI prize in support of environmental culture.</p> <p>1998: Creates BIOFOREST, the first environmental association for entrepreneurs.</p> <p>2001: First Italian kitchen manufacturing company to get ISO 14001 certification.</p> <p>2002: AERIUS. Creation of the first cabinet in glass and aluminium.</p> <p>2006: LACUCINA ALESSI. Valcucine and Alessi, two top Italian design brands, join forces.</p> <p>2006: CONFINDUSTRIA award for excellence.</p> <p>2007: RICICLANTICA. Creation of the first cupboard door 100% made of aluminium.</p> <p>2007: Selection ADI index.</p> <p>2008: The ARTEMATICA VITRUM kitchen shown at the MOMA in NY.</p> <p>2009: INVITRUM. First 100% recyclable and reusable kitchen base system.</p> <p>2010: VALCUCINE LIVING, everything changes.</p>
Feasibility study	Not available.
Geo-social-economic setting	Not available.
Key features	Sustainable manufacturing; sustainable design; recycling and reuse; CO ₂ emissions abatement; cultural sustainability.
Overall rational and motivation	<p>The company embarked on a green entrepreneurship route thanks to the vision and passion of one of its founders, Gabriele Centazzo, who is a chemist by training and brings a strict scientific approach to the way the company approaches its environmental mission. The way the company expresses its environmental credentials is by investing a lot of resources into researching and developing 1) ways to reduce material requirements for the kitchens they produce; 2) ways to ensure as much as possible of their kitchens are recyclable and reusable; 3) ways to reduce CO₂ emissions and other toxic emissions and 4) ways to ensure the longest duration possible for its products. In today's consumerist society, one of the main problems that manufacturers have is their inability to last a long time, partially because manufacturers have an interest in ensuring their products get bought over and over (for example in the ICT industry) or because their design and aesthetics go out of fashion. Valcucine is investing a lot of time and energy into trying to decipher the underlying principle of long-term design from an aesthetic perspective. If consumers buy something that is considered beautiful over time, this in itself has a positive environmental impact. This is an area in which Valcucine is spearheading a number of Italian design companies, trying to find a way to see this aesthetic feature recognised in international sustainability certifications.</p>

Strengths

Valcucine's strength lies in its pioneering vision and in the firm's deep-rooted culture. The 4 drivers of its sustainability approach ('de-materialisation'; recycling/reuse; lowering CO₂ emissions and aesthetic durability) pushes the company to innovate continuously and creatively. Thus, Valcucine is perceived by all stakeholders as a leader in the sector.

Challenges and constraints

The company's identified challenge is living up to its reputation and self-imposed 4 drivers (see above), especially the one of turning into a no-impact firm, in which every item produced is recycled and reused. Gabriele Centazzo's idea is of a 'tree-firm': a firm that –like a tree– only uses renewable resources (like the sun) and only produces waste which is beneficial to its own future and to that of the planet (like oxygen and humus).

Direct activities and Impacts

Social and environmental:

Alongside its environmental policy, Valcucine founded in 1998 Bioforest (www.bioforest.it), a non-profit association created with other socially and environmentally responsible businesses to promote a new way of doing business, rooted in a new-found balance between industry and the environment. The main objectives of the association are to help its members find new ways to reduce energy consumption, eliminate toxic elements from the production process and promote environmentally-conscious R&D paths. The organisation aims to do this in particular with an eye towards the natural resources of emerging economies, financing projects like the re-forestation and biodiversity conservation initiative "Operation Otonga" in the Amazon Forest of Ecuador. Alongside international bio-conservation and research initiatives, Bioforest works on a reforestation project in Cordenons, in the north-eastern province of Pordenone, where a particularly important plant biotype has been singled-out. Finally, from a purely social perspective, Valcucine supports the "Occhione" environmental education project in several secondary schools, always in the Province of Pordenone.

Use of innovative Technologies

In terms of specific innovations developed by Valcucine to reduce their environmental impact and footprint, one of the main ones is their 'just in time' kitchen cupboard door system, made in aluminium with a flat panel just 2 mm or 5 mm thick. This means an 86% reduction in the amount of material used to build a traditional kitchen cupboard.

Also, several kitchen components in glass and aluminium developed by Valcucine are 100% recyclable and reusable, a system which was introduced within the company's broader interest in designing 100% recyclable, reusable and de-constructible kitchens (see www.recyclablekitchen.com).

Evidence of a holistic approach/world view

Valcucine's holistic approach can be easily seen in both its environmental policy and in its leadership role within the Italian manufacturing sector in trying to promote a more sustainable approach to industrial production and consumption. Its 4 axes of environmental policy sum up its holistic approach, and its work through the Bioforest association give a glimpse into its world view, especially with regards to maintaining a balanced relationship with countries where a lot of natural resources come from. When it comes to its role in promoting a more sustainable production and consumption culture, its focus is mainly on the Italian market, but it also reaches wider audiences, having international representations in 47 countries across the world, including the US and Russia.

Scale of benefits

As stated, there are numerous beneficiaries to Valcucine's approach: first of all the environmental elements that link up to their production chain, which benefit from a sustainable approach –for example– to resource management; secondly, other industry firms that benefit from being exposed to Valcucine's successful approach and message; thirdly, consumers worldwide who, by buying into their successful design and message become themselves promoters of a more sustainable lifestyle; and finally the beneficiaries of Valcucine's work through the Bioforest Association, both locally and globally.

Policies, incentives and regulations needed

Not available.

Lessons and recommendations

Valcucine's main lesson is that being sustainable means trying to improve a company's actions day after day, looking at how to reduce impact, at both organisational and personal level. For Valcucine, every day brings a lesson in self-improvement, a lesson that is shared as widely as possible amongst all its stakeholders. And the main lesson/recommendation: perseverance pays off in the end!

References

valcucine.com/en/
twitter.com/valcucine
www.flickr.com/people/valcucine/