

E80 Group

The Italian company that is creating the factory of the future

Manufacturing has long played an important role in the Italian economy, with Italy being the second largest manufacturing nation in Europe, operating in sectors as diverse as tools, fashion, food, pharmaceuticals and automotive. Pre-pandemic, the domestic market for advanced manufacturing solutions was up 22% year on year in 2019, and is likely to continue as the government is allocating €13.4 billion in tax credits for investments in advanced manufacturing technologies.

This comes at a critical time globally, with the worldwide warehouse automation market valued at roughly \$15 billion in 2019 and expected to grow to around \$30 billion by 2026, according to research and advisory firm LogisticsIQ™.

One organization that both anticipated and drove this growth is E80 Group, an Italian company established in the 1980s that specializes in the development of automated intralogistics solutions for the manufacture of daily consumer goods, working with companies operating in the beverage, food, and tissue sectors in addition to other diversified areas.

While the last two years have been challenging for companies worldwide, E80 Group has long been prepared for the new working environment. "In 1992 we decided to establish our first integrated, digitized factory; over the past 30 years we have been developing smart factories around the world and have maintained them over time through 24/7 remote customer service," says Enrico Grassi, president of E80 Group.

E80 Group's systems now include palletizing robots, laser-guided vehicles, robotic stretch wrappers, empty pallet control systems, picking solutions and **automated high bay warehouses**. The company has almost 300 integrated factories across various parts of the world and has installed over 2000 robotic systems and more than 5000 automatic laser guided systems to date.

"We started as an electronics company, not as a mechanics company," says Grassi, adding that this has helped them in many ways, especially in terms of perspective. "We felt the need to develop all the machinery ourselves, because the problem is not in manufacturing the system, but in managing the integration of systems and supporting them at speed throughout the life of the plant."

Part of E80 Group's success is that its solutions are scalable and designed to allow customers to respond to and often anticipate market demands.

"Our laser-guided vehicles replace



kilometers of conveyers, handling goods from processing to the warehouse and then on to shipping without any physical constraints," says Grassi. "As all our systems are synchronized via our unique software, SM.I.LE80, they adjust their activity to the mission they are assigned in real-time. It's like changing the engine on a plane without having to land it. We adapt to certain conditions, and we will continue to do so."

Grassi says they now have strong possibilities to grow vertically as well as organically, though they're not considering any acquisitions at this stage. "There are not many companies that could give us any strategic advantage at this point, but if some startup appears we'll react quickly, as long as it provides added value," he says. One key advantage for E80 Group is that it manufactures its own systems and software, helping it guarantee quality and reduced supply chain disruption.

Grassi says the main elements of the company's success have been passion and vision, followed by active and long-term engagement with its key partners. "I have summarized our success into five

letters: ECCUS - enthusiasm, competence, charisma, umiltà (humility) and saggezza (wisdom). You need these qualities to get started doing anything" he adds. "The most difficult thing to do in a company is not managing the market but managing the internal knowledge transfer. A company and the surrounding environment work well if internal communications work well. If they don't, it is impossible to engage the pillars of ECCUS and the company inevitably fades away."

In 1994, E80 Group opened its first subsidiary in the US. "The idea was that it was the strongest market in the world, and if we could succeed in America we could succeed throughout the whole world," says Grassi. The US and Canada account for over 50% of E80 Group's turnover, with the focus now on growing the US business even further.

Even so, the company is present in almost every major international market, with the exception of China and India. "We don't neglect other markets; each and every one is important for us, including Russia, because there will be moments for every market. Our strategy is to be global," says Grassi. In order to be closer to its customers, E80 Group has set up physical branches in Australia, Brazil, Chile, the United Arab Emirates, France, Mexico, Poland, Russia, Spain, Sweden, the UK, the USA and Thailand.

At the same time, as an Italian company, Grassi believes it is essential to strengthen the image of Italy abroad, especially when it comes to doing business. "I think that Italy has a problem that has been around for centuries - too many smart people in a relatively small place," he says. "There's a lot of local competitiveness in everything that emerges, and when there's a lot of that, companies that could become very successful in other countries often struggle here. We need to do much more to change this and support our creative and intellectual capacity."

