

RETAL Plastec: We Are Family

by Guest post, Emma-Jane Batey

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Integrating a proudly family-owned company into an established global manufacturer without losing the precious elements that make it a profitable workplace for a loyal workforce is a story of generosity and open-mindedness. Emma-Jane Batey reports.

Seeking diversity and inclusion at work comes in many forms, with the increasing understanding that corporate life is not the only way to have a successful career. As previously stuffy corporate companies embrace flexible working and integrate well-being into HR policies, so too do family-owned companies appreciate that boundaries and targets help tangible results. Yet there are lessons to be learned from all approaches, with perhaps the most valuable the acceptance that everyone can learn something from someone.

While mergers and acquisitions can have the reputation of asset stripping for short-term gain for a small number of shareholders, the most beneficial way is for the essence of the business to be maintained and for as much as possible to carry on as normal. Acquiring expertise valued alongside acquiring equipment. Appreciating people as well as property and products.



The acquisition of Italian plastic bottles and preforms producer Plastec by global packaging solutions provider RETAL is an exercise in valuing the whole business, in seeing the unique benefits of the team and its character together with the reports and the KPIs. Established by Giampaolo Gatti and Vincenzo Pizi in Ascoli Piceno, Italy in 2006, Plastec manufactures PET bottles. Giampaolo and Vincenzo worked together for nearly 30 years in the plastic bottle industry before founding Plastec. Many of Giampaolo and Vincenzo's family are employed by Plastec, with those employees who are not actually related soon feeling like family too.

Noemi Gatti, Giampaolo's daughter and the finance controller at Plastec, shares how growing up with Plastec is a familiar story. "There are so many of us here that have grown up together. Many children of friends and colleagues of my dad and Vincenzo have worked here and still work here. Plenty of people here have worked together for 40 years; there's a true sense of family because we all rely on each other and have seen the business grow from nothing."

Power of the people

Being part of a successful business that has grown strong thanks to continuous hard work and careful development is as evident in Giampaolo's approach to leadership as well as in the shared mentality of the team. Noemi adds, "Giampaolo always says 'we can fix equipment but we can't fix people'; he knows that people being happy, motivated and rewarded at work is the most important thing. He's always known that Plastec employees must be sure that there is a job here forever, not just today or tomorrow. Loyalty goes two ways."

In 2016, Plastec was acquired by global plastic packaging manufacturer RETAL, who already owned a facility in Italy, and was keen to expand its local capability to better serve its multinational brand owner customers in the food and beverage industries. The agreement for RETAL to acquire Plastec was appealing to Giampaolo and Vincenzo after the first meeting with RETAL. Noemi explains, "They could see that the reputation they'd worked so hard to build would be valued as a philosophy as well as a business. They met with the RETAL board of directors, and all agreed that Plastec must continue to run as it always had, but with the additional reach and support of a global group. Giampaolo told them 'When we all use our hands together, we can make something that can only be reached by a family', and the RETAL people said that this philosophy connected with their way of working too.»

Under the strong leadership of packaging industry stalwart Renzo Imperia, the general manager at RETAL Italia, Plastec continued to flourish with the day-to-day management of Giampaolo and Vincenzo from 2016 until 2021, when Renzo's move towards retirement saw Giampaolo being named as general manager for RETAL Plastec.

Noemi says, "There is a great symmetry in Giampaolo as the general manager of RETAL Plastec; during the initial meetings with the company, he felt they had great trust in him, and this is a continuation of being able to repay that trust, to continue to demonstrate to the group that we're good at what we do and bring value and expertise to our customers. Plastec is very much part of RETAL, but we are also true to our roots."

As the RETAL Plastec family continues to flourish, so too does it add value to the global RETAL group of companies, all striving to bring that sense of trust, pride and expertise to their own local markets. Noemi concludes, "We are always looking for our family to continue to grow; we welcome new people to our team and love the way they help us to stay connected to our community and our customers."

- Emma-Jane Batey is a freelance packaging writer specialising in making technical things interesting.