

Quality as a Strategic Factor

FROM EMPLOYEE TO ENTREPRENEUR, FROM THE SPHERE OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO THAT OF PRODUCTION, FROM A TINY COMPANY TO AN INDUSTRIAL COMPANY OF INTERNATIONAL STANDING. THESE HAVE BEEN THE KEY CHANGES IN THE WORKING LIFE OF ADELIO LATTUADA AND OF THE COMPANY THAT TAKES HIS NAME. IN THIS INTERVIEW, THE HEAD OF THIS COMPANY OFFERS US HIS ANALYSIS OF THE MARKETS AND OF THE ROLE OF THE COMO-BASED COMPANY



The story of Adelio Lattuada's working life is typical example of the development of a typical Italian small and medium-sized enterprise, which – in this country more than in others – constitute the very foundation and core of the nation's industrial system. It is the story of a man who has combined his professional integrity with his real fascination with glass processing machines. He acquired his first important working experience as an assistance service engineer, looking after machine maintenance and repair: it was a period of great professional growth that gave him the opportunity to visit numerous glass works and to understand the production requirements of this particular world.

"I had the sensation - Adelio Lattuada begins - that there was room for some new ideas in the world of glass processing machinery, and I was encouraged in this belief by the clear demand for new technology on the part of the users. This is how, in 1978, I came to the decision to set up my own company: after a short period spent concentrating on providing technical assistance and making minor modifications to existing machines, I decided to make a leap forward in quality terms, moving on to the construction of our first glass-processing machines."

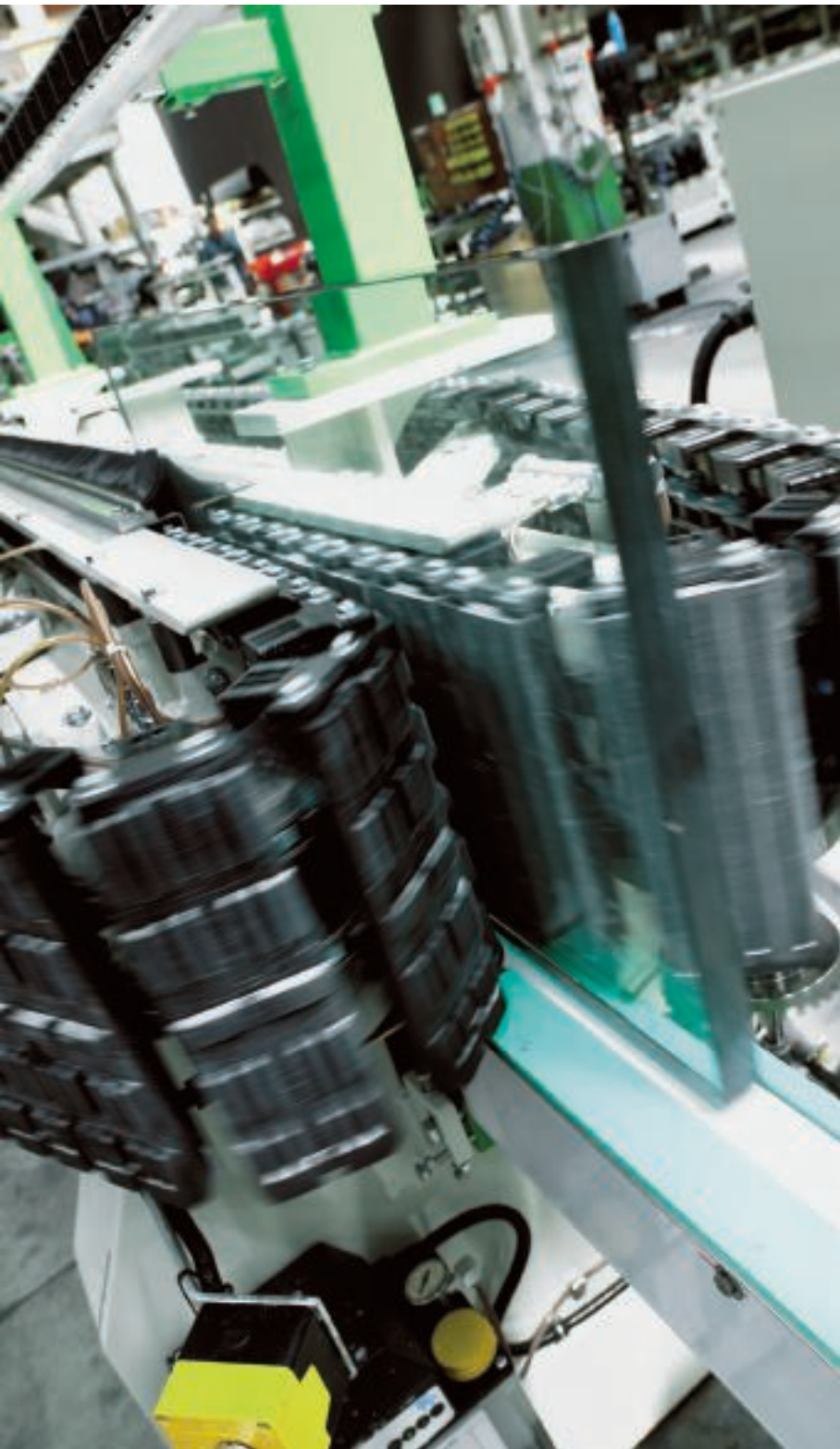
From 1978 to today the company has grown constantly and gradually; one need only think that its founder, Adelio Lattuada started off working on his own, yet now manages an industrial company with 35 employees engaged in the design, assembly and testing of the company's machines. Right from the outset, it was decided that the production of the relative components and subsystems would be entrusted to careful-

ly selected subcontractors. Currently, this company based in Como operates at a plant that covers a surface area of 3,000 sq.m and the recent purchase of a separate factory has enabled it to double the area given over to production.

Following the market's demands for quality

"Constant exchanges with the end user – points out Lattuada – have always been fundamentally important for us, because it is through the glass works that we are able to pick up on





the trends emerging in the market, and it is a market that has changed considerably over the past decade. Formerly, the technical trend setters were the glass works that supplied the furniture sector, now they have been joined by those operating in the building sector: and for these operators, traditional machines are no longer enough.

As I see it, the building sector is expanding everywhere, all over the world. Even Asia is recording strong growth and I do not believe it will be long before there is a considerable increase in the number of glass works concentrating on the processing of special glass which, at the moment, is often ordered from European glaziers.

Therefore, we machine manufacturers need to pay very close attention both to local users, encouraging them to modernise their systems, and to European users, particularly those based in northern Europe, which are the main interlocutors with the Asian countries.

Going by our sales figures, the South American market is growing and, to a lesser degree, the USA market too. It has to be said that we European manufacturers are penalised by the exchange rate of the euro to the dollar and therefore we must strive to increase our competitiveness, focusing on the technological excellence of the machines we build; an excellence that must be developed with a view to increasing the quality of the processing, boosting productivity, and increasing flexibility, while at the same time offering a good price/performance ratio.

Even though there are plenty of foreign competitors out there that are recording strong growth, particularly with regard to the construction of large systems destined for large glass works, the Italian manufacturers, from a technological point of view, continue to be the benchmark in Europe. This competitive advantage is derived from the presence, in Italian enterprise, of a more deep-rooted tradition of establishing direct relations with glaziers, as well as a greater willingness to develop personalised machines. This approach favours the technological evolution of the basic machine and faster responses to the demands of the market."

Adelio Lattuada products and markets

This company, which is based in Carbonate, in the Italian province of Como, specialises in the design and construction of a wide range of glass processing machines, each of which can be easily tuned to the requirements of the individual customer. The machines by Adelio Lattuada share a number of distinctive technical and functional features that range from their advanced technology to their operating flexibility; from their user friendliness to their low maintenance requirements. Around 80% of the machines are exported to the main for-



foreign markets both within and outside the EU. In addition to the Italian market, northern Europe is Adelio Lattuada's main market; here, several technical-commercial branches have been set up that, in direct contact with the parent company, look after consultancy and technical assistance services.

The most important of these branches, with a staff of ten people, is located in the Netherlands and covers the German, Austrian, Dutch, Belgian and Luxembourg markets; similar organisations, also highly active, are present in other key markets, including France, the UK, Ireland, Spain, Poland, Turkey, Australia, Brazil and Mexico.

"All our agents distributed all over the world - Lattuada adds - come to our headquarters periodically to spend a short time being updated on our machines. At the moment, we are pouring our energies into our bid to extend and strengthen our

sales network, and in this regard we are paying particular attention to the United States, India and the United Arab Emirates.

Our company's commercial philosophy continues to be very much bound up with the idea that low-cost machines do not produce high quality and that it is therefore worth investing in technically advanced manufacturing solutions that offer a good price/performance ratio."

The range of flat glass processing machines produced by Adelio Lattuada is made up of: electronic and NC straight-line bevelling machines with from 6 to 14 wheels; electronic straight-line edgers for flat-edge, variable angle and peripheral grinding, with from 4 to 16 wheels; automatic machines for pencil and right-angle edge grinding operations; bevelling-edging machines for shaped edging jobs; combined straight-line bevelling-edging machines (electronic or NC) for carrying out, simultaneously and in a single step, the processing of flat edges, with arrises and bevels polished with cerium oxide; machines for automatic edge grinding and polishing of round and oval glass; vertical washing machines; ar-risers; washing machines.

Furthermore, since 2006 the company has also been producing double-edging machines.

"The products we focus on most, for the foreign markets, are the straight-line edgers - Lattuada says - and these can be divided into three main ranges. The T.L.R., which sells particularly well in northern Europe, is aimed at glass works that produce considerable quantities of large thick sheets. This type of machine can process glass up to 100 mm thick and weighing up to 1,500 kg. The T.L. range includes medium-to-large machines for flat-edge with arrises, variable angle and peripheral grinding jobs with from 9 to 12 wheels: their high quality also makes them ideal for operators involved in processing glass for the furniture sector. Finally, there is the A.L. line, which, we might say, belongs to the more economical bracket and includes small and medium-sized models for flat-edge with arrises, variable angle and peripheral grinding operations with from 4 to 9 wheels: these machines are aimed at small glaziers and stand out for their high productivity, being able to run unattended for more than 8 hours.

The other machines we focus on are the bevelling machines and the double-edging machines. As regards the former, the European market is currently going through a stagnation period, whereas things go better in the USA and in south America; with regard to the latter, we are confident that our new machine might be able to find its niche on the markets thanks to its high productivity levels, very important for those processing tempered glass, and its quality, crucial for those operating in the furniture sector."