

Italy

## Taking the Best from the Past to Build a Better Future

**B**edeschi S.p.a./IT was established in 1908, and today it is one of the oldest European companies in the industries in which it operates.

Representing the 4<sup>th</sup> generation of his family, Managing Director Rino Bedeschi (RB) has been running the company since 1992, with three diversified business units and more than 300 employees. Bedeschi can provide customers with complete turnkey solutions for: Bulk Handling – Marine and Mining, Container Logistics and Bricks.



**Fig. 1** Managing Director Rino Bedeschi

**cfi:** *How has COVID-19 affected your business in recent months?*

**RB:** We enjoyed a good start in 2020 for all three segments. When logistic chains were suddenly disrupted by the pandemic and travel restrictions put in place, it was therefore a huge challenge to keep projects on track in line with the set timelines. A lot of our business is outside Europe, and, like all other international players, we faced really new problems.

We worked hard in the second half of 2020 to prepare new projects for 2021, today, we can say that in Q4/20 and Q1/21 we had some good new orders, of course with customers we have known very well for years but also with new investors. We see a higher level of investment in the pipeline outside Europe. Now, our first priority is to grow again!

Despite landing a major greenfield project orders for bricks in Europe, that is in the UK, we have to say that the brick business in Europe is on a decline. One reason are competitive alternative building materials.

**cfi:** *Could you give us some more details about this project in Great Britain?*

**RB:** The plant realized for our client Forterra PLC will be capable of producing 180 million bricks per year, once it is fully commissioned, compared to the 85 million bricks per year at the current plant. For this project, we decided to open a new branch in

Great Britain at the end of 2020, adding one more subsidiary to the Group. We are very happy to be closer to the UK market and get underway with the realization of this major project.

**cfi:** *Europe is the slowest region to overcome the pandemic. What effects will China/Asia have on global market activities as they have been quicker to recover to a healthy economy?*

**RB:** It is not new to us that markets in Russia, USA and also Emirates have a higher growth potential for us. We have established subsidiaries in these regions to be closer to customers there. During the pandemic, it has been very important to have skilled staff in the different regions to maintain good customer service.

**cfi:** *How have you responded to the effects of the pandemic and adapted your customer support?*

**RB:** In our business, tailored technological solutions are definitely the key, but an in-depth customer relationship over many years is also important.

One example is the big player Wienerberger, which placed two new orders in April 2021. The scope of supply will include handling equipment for wet material loading, dry material setting and fired material unloading. We have been working with them over 30 years, further developing solutions

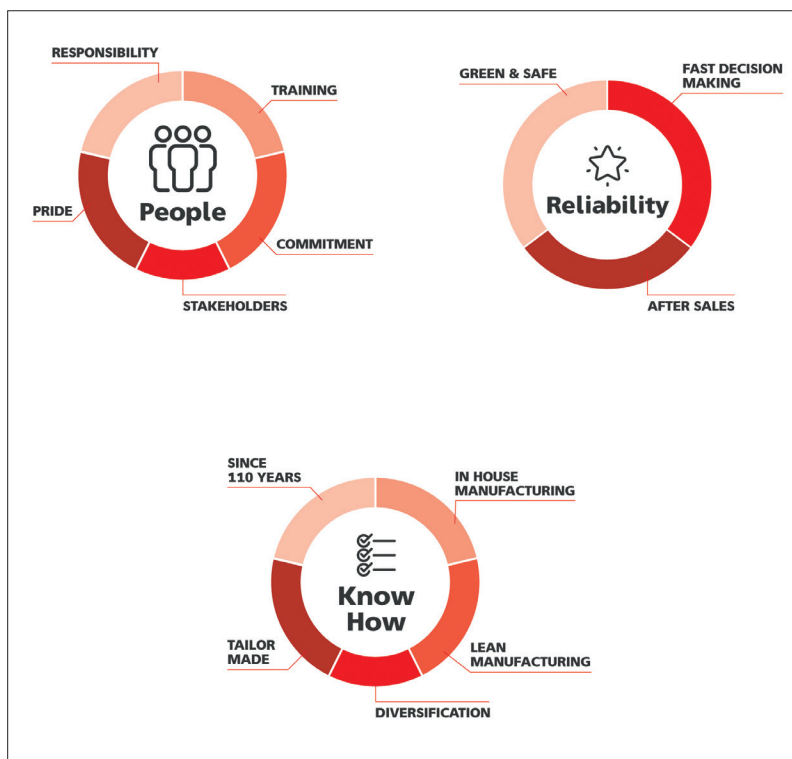
together as partners – a win-win situation for us both.

Of course, we have had to switch to virtual meetings in recent months, so we shall be glad when we can talk to our partners face to face again.

When we work on new projects, we go through four phases: think (feasibility studies, general consulting and cost analysis, plant revamping), design (simulation, engineering, process integration), build (manufacturing in-house, supervision of local supply, on site project management) and run (start-up testing, training on site, temporary management where needed, full-service troubleshooting, remote control, full-service maintenance programmes and spare part service).

**cfi:** *Are positive effects looming in the post pandemic period with regard to digital production or greater efforts for environmental protection and material efficiency (circular economy)?*

**RB:** To be honest, digital transformation, environmental control, and energy efficiency are not new, these targets had already been set before COVID-19 appeared. Our traditional field of industry will make its contribution to a much wider approach that has been headlined circular economy and green manufacturing. But this is a complex system, which also needs governmental and political support.



**Fig. 2** Bedeschi's "values" regarding the company strategy (Figs.: Bedeschi)

**cfi:** Will you need other skills from your technicians/engineers in future?

**RB:** We strongly believe that our success lies in people, not only in know-how and

reliability. We can only give a fast reliable response to our customers if we have a lean organization and trained people on all levels.

A couple of years ago, we started the project beB (Be Bedeschi). Its core mission is to train people in problem-solving. Not only technically, but with a 360° angle approach. This means an effective approach which also calls for soft skills. Our projects run a minimum of 10–12 months. We certainly have to solve problems caused externally or internally. An important issue in this process is to clearly and quickly identify customer needs and cater for these. A structured problem-solving process has to provide fast answers.

**cfi:** Has this beB activity helped during the corona pandemic?

**RB:** Certainly, as we have had to react quickly and perform well.

**cfi:** What changes do you expect in the near future?

**RB:** We can observe stronger consolidation in Europe's brick business and a concentration of customers. This means bigger groups expecting a high level of service in turnkey projects (safety issues, documentation, quality certificates, etc.). We at Bedeschi are well prepared as these procedures are already routine in the other business segments (e.g. cement business, port services) in which we also operate.

**cfi:** Thank you for talking to us. KS