



# DAVIDE CIGNA, SALES MANAGER OF **BOTTERO**, TALKS TO GTI ABOUT PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE IN THE GLASS INDUSTRY

**GTI:** Bottero celebrated an important milestone this year. Can you tell us something of the history of the company?

**DC:** Yes, Bottero has been celebrating 60 years in the glass business. We are very proud to say that we have been involved in every aspect of the industry – flat glass machinery, hollow glass machinery and production equipment – right from Day One. We are one of the few companies (perhaps the only one) who can claim a 360° experience of glass machinery from the very beginning. That intuitive decision to get involved across the board was an early winning move by our owners. Bottero is a private company owned by a group of local families in the Cuneo area. The original founder, Pasquale Bottero, died very



Bottero celebrated its 60th birthday in 2017 with very significant contracts from large international groups

young, unfortunately, but the company was in good hands and has been successfully guided from the

“Sixties” to its 60th birthday. We’ve had some very good periods – like the last two years – and we’ve also

had some not so good, but one of the characteristics of the people here at Cuneo, starting with the owners,



is that we work together to overcome problems. I've seen this myself in my short ten years here, but it is very clearly central to the company culture, and it's something I'm very proud to be part of.

**GTI: What are the future prospects for Bottero?**

**DC:** Since the restructuring of the group a few years ago, the future prospects for the company are really quite promising. In 2016 we drew up a Five Year Industrial Plan to manage growth and set ourselves the rather ambitious target of reaching a turnover of 200million by 2020. This will be achieved by working to different targets for flat and hollow glass; the growth will not only be in terms of turnover but also in terms of improving and developing new products for the market, like the new 548LAM Laminated glass cutting table by Bottero Flat Glass; in terms of people and here we mean not just in numbers but we also want to improve the quality of the skills and professionalism of the Bottero team around the world. We also want to improve in capillar-ity, which means we want to be able to get closer to our customers – not just for new sales but also for better service. We want to grow in new technology; we are on the threshold of a new era which will begin on January 1st, 2018 with the introduction of new European

CRM Systems, which will be implemented by Bottero from New Years Day.

This transition is absolutely essential to Bottero to enable us to optimize our structure to manage all our data and customer information so that we can react to the market demand ever more quickly.

Will there be challenges? Of course there will; we are continually reorganizing to bring production and manufacturing more in-house and give us more control over quality and more reliable lead times and allow us to grow. This is an ambitious plan for Bottero, focused on growth – everyone wants to grow, and this is how we will grow.

**GTI: How do major players like yourselves operate in such a complex market?**

**DC:** There are four or five major players in the world and Bottero would certainly count itself among them, and while they do not act in concert – because they are in a competitive situation – I hope they have a similar approach in that they support their customers by modernizing and industrializing the concept of their production and manufacturing facilities. I think Bottero has an important advantage over the others because we have been working with the big groups and international players for sixty years – since Day One. It is partly due to the nature of Bot-

tero itself, and partly because the big names (like St. Gobain, Asahi Glass-AGC, and Glaverbel before that, Pilkington, NSG, Guardian) came looking for Bottero because of its flexibility and innovation in finding new solutions. What applies to the big groups also applies to the not-so-big customers – we shouldn't think of them as "small" – they have fewer people and produce or process less glass, but they are as important for us as the multinational groups. They spend their own money, they invest their own resources, they work in a competitive environment just like Bottero does every day. I really hope that the big players – Bottero included – can support them by giving them a vision of what they could do.

If they want to automate some specific part of their production, we can help them with that; if they want to think about reorganizing or finding another layout, Bottero can help them. We have been working a lot in the last 24 to thirty six months with companies of every size all over the world in supporting them in this way.

In Italy there is a tendency to see Industry 4.0 as making all kinds of everything automatic, but let me give you my personal take on that: I think that Industry 4.0 is fantastic if we focus on "Industry" first, before focusing on 4.0 or 5.0 or



any other "point zero". I think that the real challenge for everyone –suppliers of machinery and customers alike – in the next few years is the transformation of the glass business into a much more organized industrialized process.

**GTI: What do you think are the opportunities offered by Industry 4.0?**

**DC:** We think it is a very great opportunity for us because we see a great number of companies who have to make their machinery Industry 4.0 compliant. At Bottero our machines have been Industry 4.0 compliant for



at least five years. Industry 4.0 requires that the machines collect process data. Our machines have always been open to data collection. Industry 4.0 requires automation, and our machines have always been ready for automation – even very basic machines can be equipped with automation! In addition Bottero also has an internal section, Engineering, which is a division of Bottero Flat Glass that deals with special equipment, special applications,

special solutions. Four or five years ago, when we had to deal with the first thin glass (0.5mm thickness) handling and “cold end”, Bottero was chosen by customers all over the world because of its innovative approach. When we had to handle solar panel glass (PV glass) some years before that, Bottero was chosen because it elected to handle these panels with robots rather

than with traditional methods and it was a success because we were ready “in our soul” to size the opportunities of Industry 4.0. Customers can rely on us to meet their expectations of Industry 4.0, and not just to get the benefits of less tax.

**GTI: What does networking mean to you, how do you break into new markets**

**and what are the new markets?**

**DC:** I’ll take the last part of that first. New markets. A new market is wherever there is a transition from manual cutting to using a cutting-table, so southeast Asia is an obvious area – there is a transition situation with increasing



demand from Thailand and Vietnam for machines. A new market is where a manually operated process or machines handled by operators can be turned into an automated system, glass-handling by automatic warehousing – all products that Bottero can supply. A new market for me is what we refer to as a “mature” market, where they have to find a new approach in order to survive, but not just to survive but to be profitable. All over Europe, float glass lines were being closed down. Now with new innovative products and a different approach, some of these have been refurbished and

are opening up again; there will be less glass made in Europe, but it will be more advanced glass. Also the new “low emission” coatings for building and residential use is another new market because Bottero makes the glass-handling equipment for the coating machines. So, everywhere you see a challenge, everywhere the market has a new approach, that’s where you will find Bottero. Now, going back to the first part of the question, about networking. Italy is not a country with a culture where networking comes naturally; competition between neighbouring towns, individualism is where we

have come from. It’s our history; we can’t change that. We will never be a model of highly synchronized collaboration, like some more northerly countries. On the other hand, we have a lot to give the industry in terms of our flexibility, creativity and innovation. I am very proud of our contribution in this respect, and we take second place to no-one. So we go to our customers as an Italian company proud of our record of flexibility, creativity and innovation. We will work happily with other complementary companies: they don’t have our products, we don’t have theirs. In our own field, however,

we are very competitive, we aim to be the best.

**GTI: What are the new strategies that companies will have to use?**

**DC:** We are not magicians at Bottero and we have no magic wand to find infallible solutions but our strategy is to strive to be more organized and to bring the industry to a greater awareness of the benefits of effective organization. Our organization and strategies are based on the analysis of data and help us to be quicker, to react to changes in the market, and to be closer to our customers. Working with real-time data with dedi-



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cated ERP software is the main pillar of our operation, but the second line is always people. Big Data needs analysis. Social media needs management. At the moment Bottero is working towards a social media management plan. We could be described as a data driven company, but there are people driving the data.

**GTI: Final question, is dumping by price-cutting an effective strategy?**

**DC:** In the very, very short term, the answer is "Yes". We are all negotiators, we are in an industry where one economy can produce a

large number of acceptable-quality products, so controlling the price is one of the options open to the manufacturer, and it happens; however, it is not as common as it was in the past. You can't corner the market with unrealistic prices; you may get a customer here or there. There are companies who are prepared to invest in dumping, and there are industries where dumping is resorted to from time to time, but while special pricing can be part of the strategy, it can never be all of the strategy. There may be some disturbance from someone dumping on price but this can never amount to a real structural competitor surviving. We base our structure on restoring our products; where we

are weak we try to build up our product, where we are strong and lead the market with innovative products like the float-cutting or the lam-cutting, we try to stay in the market. We can't ask for premium prices because we are talking about technologies that have alternatives. We are not inventing i-phone X. We are just giving our customers what they need, better than the competition, so our price should be a market price. There will probably always be someone dumping, but it is not our way; I don't think you will find major players dumping. And that's it. We are very proud of what we are doing here at Bottero and of what we have achieved over the last sixty years.

