

From family business to global player: HELIOS QUARTZ's evolution

Highlighting HELIOS QUARTZ's strategic expansions, multidisciplinary innovation and tailored solutions, as well as recent milestones that include investments in production marked by a celebratory gala, Helios Quartz CEO Armando Giro speaks here to GTI Senior Editor Nick Fouché about the group's 85-year journey to its current ranking as a global leader in quartz glass and infrared technology.



**GTI:
ARMANDO,
REGARDING
THE BIOGRAPHY
OF HELIOS
QUARTZ, WHAT
CAN YOU TELL
US ABOUT ITS
HISTORY?**

Armando Giro: Helios started in 1939, during WWII. My grandfather took it over from a Swiss citizen who wanted to return to Switzerland. Back then, the company specialised in quartz glass. Between 1980 and 2000, we extended our footprint abroad - first to Mexico, then to China. So from what was initially a specifically European context, my father transformed Helios into an international company, such that it started to generate a significant turnover abroad. I've been CEO of the group

since 2015. Production for the Helios Quartz group is both in Switzerland and Italy, which was our strategic decision to meet the requirements of clients who needed their suppliers close by. Now, we also have Helios in mainland China and Turkey. We're also fully integrated: beginning from the raw ma-

terials, we create the filament and then customise. In the 60s we started with manufacturing lamps. Then in the 70s and 80s my father developed appliances. The 2000s saw us specialising much more in the lamp that's used inside the application itself - essentially making the best one for whichever application we were working with.

GTI: Moving to what sets Helios Quartz products apart from the competition: what makes the group's solutions so special?

AG: That's easy. It's the infrared that's behind our best product. Over the last 20 years, we've offered a premium product, given that we work in a niche market - essentially providing our clients with tailor-made solutions in the infrared module. In a nutshell: whether we're speaking UV or infrared, I give you the lamp that you will use for the system in, say, a steel cabled box within your machine. I then assemble the lamp system for you, whether it be cooled by water or air,

whereupon I also give you the heating system - as well as your control system according to the optimization you need. So it's turnkey in every sense, but it's also the most premium system that's out there today. All this means that we only work according to particular client needs and unique specifications in each case. So it's no wonder we have 80,000 product codes to match variable machine performances. When we examine heating systems, those can be very specific, which is why our specialised know-how lies in being able to meet very particular specifications for very different machines. Here we need to be multidisciplinary. What works in wood can potentially be applied to automotive or plastic. Indeed, it's precisely by that multidisciplinary expertise that we're able to offer the possibility to innovate in very different industries. In this way, we become the pliable instrument in their hands that gives them the practical working tools to develop their goals. In other words, we work across indus-





tries in every market sector - essentially providing solutions in everything from printing to gas to wood. The list is interminable. We also work with OEMs - usually starting from ambitious projects that come from R&D, whereupon we move to mass production once that's become possible for us, having effectively become the drivers of the process.

GTI: Could you explain how Helios Quartz has approached its investments in recent years?

AG: Well, from the early 2000s we invested a lot in production, which means we revamped all our machines. Thereafter, we established excellent quality control. We're now ISO-certified with complete traceability of our products, with every one seri-

alised. With its number on each lamp we produce, we know exactly which raw materials were used, which operator produced it, and exactly when - all essential for recalls should any problems arise which, to date, has fortunately never happened.

GTI: Tell us about the expansion of the Cambiago plant.

AG: What we decided to do here at the Cambiago site between 2020 and 2022 was make a big investment for our Italy site. Back in 2005, we moved here from central Milan, which was during my grandfather's time. Logistically, that was an important decision because it immediately made us well-positioned for east-west traffic nationwide but also for transport to the

north -so we could take full advantage of the Lombardy highways. Here, we've built three new warehouses- all to increase lamp production but also to meet the demand for our solutions that come from our clients. Of course, these warehouses have represented a significant investment.

GTI: You recently celebrated an important milestone at Helios Quartz. Can you tell us more about it?

AG: Sure! Almost certainly you're referring to our 85th anniversary as a company, which we celebrated in grand style here at Cambiago at our gala event on September 12th. That was a great bash, which we mainly dedicated to our amazing employees from all over the world. In that sense, it turned out to be a mega team-building moment

during which we were also honoured to host some of our suppliers and strategic historic partners, as well as various collaborators from the finance community. The gala was our way to jointly celebrate a shared success story - having all manned the tiller so winningly over these past eight-plus decades in business.

GTI: What would you say is unique about the Helios Quartz team?

AG: To answer that question I'd need to begin by saying that Helio-Quartz self-identifies as a small multinational. That's because we experience many of the difficulties any multinational would typically experience, given that the group now includes various companies. That notwithstanding, we're proud to still have the flexibility of a family business in which any decisions that are taken can be immediate. That peculiar business model facilitates the quality of support we can give to business investors while affording us the kind of robust resources that will meet the opportunities out there that can drive growth.

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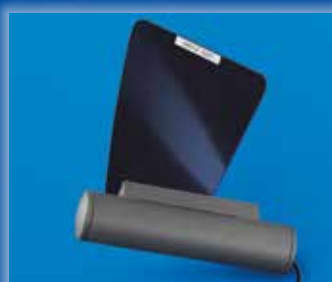


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