

ICT – TRANSFORMING TRADITIONAL BEARING COMPANIES to lean, agile enterprises

ICT is an Italian technical, organizational and commercial consulting company specialized in bearings and bearing components industry. Founded in 2012 by two professionals in the precision mechanics sector, with decades of experience each conducted within organization of multinational bearings companies, it operates worldwide through its team of highly skilled engineers and technicians.

Bearing Review met and talked to the company founders Giuseppe Panaccione and Osvaldo Aghemo in ICT offices of Pinerolo, a town located in north-west of Italy, at a few kilometres distance from Turin, in the geographical area unanimously considered as the bearings capital of Italy and one of the most important centres in Europe for this industry. What follows are the excerpts of this interview:

Q. Please tell us about your company and what you do for your customers.

Osvaldo: "Our aim is to provide added value to any company who operates in the bearings and bearing components industry, wherever there are high precision requirements (expressed in tolerances of micron or fraction of microns) and not repetitive series production. We have a team specialized in advising

the customers for technical issues relative to the main processes of this industry: from cold pressing to heat treatment, from grinding to lapping and not-destructive controls, just to mention a few examples."

Giuseppe: "We can also support companies in their transformation from a traditional (functional) organization towards a modern agile

company, capable to face the difficult challenges of global competition. The target is to free the big potential typically hidden in the traditional companies behind rigid departmental processes and compartmentalization of human resources. Using in depth the tools set of Lean Thinking, this brings to a radical change of perspective for the company, with extraordinary results achieved in



MR. OSVALDO AGHEMO,
ICT - Co-Founder

MR. GIUSEPPE PANACCIONE
NHB VP, Business Development,
ICT - Co-Founder



terms of products and process quality, customer service reliability, reaction speed to the market, customers' perception and – of course - financial results."

Q. There are many consulting companies who advise industries on Lean Thinking. What makes you different?

Giuseppe: "We have at least two important differentiating elements. First, we work with a holistic Lean Thinking approach means we look at all company processes (not only the manufacturing one) and we align the actions to the long-term company strategy and vision, choosing accordingly the priorities where to focus. Second, we have the capability to benchmark the customers' processes with the best international practises of the bearings industry thanks to our specific know-how in the field: we are not "generalist" in Lean, we are specialized in bearings industry."

Oswaldo: "In this regard, allow me to add that we are capable to put our hands on the gemba, to show how things should be done really and to train the employees to do by themselves, in the optimal way. This is possible because our engineers and technicians are not only theorists but also experts with very pragmatic approach. Furthermore, we are able to assist clients in implementing Lean Accounting practices and in setting

ERP in line with lean company set-up."

Q. Which is the key factor to determine the success of such company transformation projects?

Oswaldo: "Without any doubt the key factor is the convinced and genuine involvement in the transformation by the entrepreneurs and/or top management of the customer company. They must work close and in perfect alignment with ICT personnel. Consider that to change the manufacturing technologies or the plant lay-out is relatively an easy job. The most difficult part is to work on human resources, who are the most important company assets. It is not possible to succeed in such lean turnaround without a 180° change in the employees mindset and this is not possible if employees perceive that top management speaks and acts in a way not in line with Lean Thinking principles."

Q. How long do such projects last normally?

Oswaldo: "It depends on the size of the company and its complexity, as well as on the starting state. They can last from 1 year (in the simplest cases) to 5 years."

Q. Do you operate also in India? Can you mention to us one example of successful transformation project concluded in our country?

Giuseppe: "Yes, of course we do work also with Indian customers in Lean Thinking projects. The best example of successful transformation completed in India is NHB Ball & Roller, the company nowadays leader in high precision steel and aluminium balls for bearings, automotive

and cosmetics packaging industries. NHB came from an history of several customer complaints, poor customer service, very low manpower productivity and human resources empowerment and motivation. Using the tools of Lean Thinking and training all the employees to new working methods, it was possible to create value streams to enhance the flow speed, to reduce the inventories and the reaction times to market, so dramatically increasing the service levels and the products quality."

Oswaldo: "NHB is long term partner of ours. We take care of the company business development for the customers outside India and Giuseppe himself plays the role of company Vice President."

Giuseppe: "I would like also to add that these lean transformation projects are endless, even for a successful company like NHB. We are sure that there are still further tremendous opportunities to catch for NHB, whose top and middle management is now able to see and has the internal competences to reach."



Q. Does ICT have partners other than NHB?

Oswaldo: "Yes, we established in the past years long-term partnerships with a selected number of European, Asian and American companies able to offer the bearing industry both the main components and the best tooling and technology. A combined team of more than 4000 employees, with presence in 8 countries and 3 continents, assures top class service and competitive pricing to our own clients."

Giuseppe: "We have chosen our partners so that they meet two fundamental requirements: high quality of their products, offered at competitive conditions, and - above all - a still untapped high company potential. We have been working on this potential - together with the partner's management - in order to develop it both from a technical and organizational point of view and to strategically bring the company to compete internationally with the main players in its sector."

Q. Which are the components and technologies that you are able to offer to your clients through your long-term partnerships?

Oswaldo: "Practically everything that is required to produce and assemble bearings: besides balls, rollers, cages, shields and rings. We can operate also in niche and very difficult segments like aircraft bearings industry, with silicon nitride balls and rollers too. Furthermore, ICT has a strong recognition from the market in grinding abrasives technology (by

the way, through our Indian partner Cumi (Carborundum Universal), in the whole range of stationary diamond dressers - from single to multipoint - and in the rotary diamond dressers too."



Giuseppe: "Our peculiarity is the ability to assist customers in choosing the best technical and most competitive solution, analysing their needs on a case-by-case basis, taking care of all the logistics and customs aspects and remaining competitive even in the case of small lots requirements."

Q. ICT provides also machinery solutions for the companies who manufacture bearings or bearing components. Please tell us more about this products line.

Oswaldo: "Through our long-term Italian partners in machinery, we are able to offer to Indian bearings and ball screws customers both grinding and assembly machines, together with dimensional, visual and non-destructive testing solutions. Everything is customized and based on the highest international standards of shortest cycle time, full automation and extreme precision. Among the many different types of automation solution, I can mention the large brass cages assembly machines, the radial and axial clearance measuring equipment (both static and dynamic), the bearings noise and rings/rolling elements measurement equipment and the electronic impulse demagnetizers."



Q. Through your Advisory Division you declare to support the bearings industry in Merger and Acquisition projects too. How can you do that?

Giuseppe: "Lawyers, tax experts and chartered accountants are also part of our team. Using the deep knowledge of worldwide bearings industry and such integrated technical, legal and financial set of competences, ICT team is able to assist customers also in M&A projects, both on buy and sell side. Thanks to our reach international network of contacts in the industry, ICT can help in finding the right M&A opportunities also for geographical expansion, partnerships and joint-ventures projects and to assist customers during any business, technical, legal & financial due diligence." ■

ICT mission is to provide Customers Strategic, Technical and Commercial Solutions for High Precision Mechanics. And to help them to be more successful!