

# FORMA ITALIANA

*for 50 years only one motto:*  
**customer satisfaction**



INTERVIEW WITH CLAUDIO GABBAI,  
FORMA ITALIANA S.P.A. CEO

**EXPORT MAGAZINE: What is the expertise of Forma Italiana?**

**CLAUDIO GABBAI:** *Absolute knowledge of the products and of the market in which it operates. We are a company based on competences, thanks to a precise division into sectors of its various operative departments. Our logo, a double arrow, expresses our core business: collaboration with and loyalty to our suppliers, customer satisfaction and rapid service to our clients.*

**EM: What are your main activities?**

**CG:** *Forma Italiana is organized into five business units, each*

*with its own director, who sets the policy both of purchase and of sale of the line.*

*The first business unit, which represents 40% of our turnover, deals with products for the mass market, a very large category of goods which ranges from personal care to products for the home. The second business unit deals with luxury products for perfumery and cosmetics. We have recently started and the third business unit deals with this, the distribution of our products on the Italian market and we are obtaining a good success: the Pilaten face mask, and Jean d'Arthes, a brand of perfumery*

**90 MILLION EUROS REVENUE**  
**4 WAREHOUSES: 12.500 SQM CAPACITY**  
**5 BUSINESS UNIT: TOILETRIES - PERFUMERY - COSMETICS - WEB - RETAIL**

*for mass retail. Cosmetics deserve a separate business unit, with products for treatment and make-up by major brands.*

*Distribution takes place with great attention in appropriate countries, without causing damage to the brands. The fourth business unit, which came into being three years ago, us for the Web.*

*With me, Dr Lara Lorenzini has brought her expertise in the world of luxury, so we offer our know-how to many companies on the Web which sell through e-commerce. We have set up the largest platform that exists in Italy today to offer a B2B service. Our customers are the most important European sites: Amazon, Saldiprivati, Dalani, Showroomprive, Privalia and Groupon. The fifth business unit handles retail sales.*

**EM: What service do you offer the aforementioned websites?**

**CG:** *Once again, our expertise in the world of beauty. The web operators are excellent technicians of sale and marketing; we offer our knowledge of the market. We buy goods in all areas of the world and we bring them to land, i.e. we work so that the products are always available*

*in the warehouse. Each works in the area of their competences, and the result is 'win-win'. For some clients we supply 'pack and ship', i.e. we deliver to the address of the final user.*

*This service of door-to-door shipping is very popular with our partners, so we have decided to implement it. It is a costly service which requires great attention and an investment in software. Logistics are our icing on the cake. We are equipped for small and large shipments.*

*We have four warehouses, one in the Netherlands and three at our headquarters, just outside Milan. One warehouse is for traditional wholesale and ships boxes, one ships pallets, so large volumes, and one is dedicated to the Web from which individual parcels leave.*

**EM: It is clear that the business of Forma Italiana has changed greatly in time.**

**CG:** *We started 50 years ago as a trader anti-litteram and today we are offering a full-service service. We have become 'logistics' for ourselves, starting from an immediate need and now we are making it available to others as well.*





We are seriously thinking of forming a new business unit of pure logistics. Compared to other logistics companies, we can boast of a commercial mentality as, by serving the supply chain, we can better understand the client's needs.

**EM: In your opinion, are online sales threatening traditional distribution? Is it right that the latter is also getting ready for e-commerce.**

**CG:** In thirty years of activity on the beauty world, where I have had direct experience in the perfumery channel, first with our Cosmix retail stores and then as Chairman of the Marionnaud perfumeries in Italy, I have followed the evolution of distribution with interest. The decisions taken have not always given the hoped for results, many mistakes made opened a spiral first and now a real space

for other systems of selling. I am deeply convinced that each person has to do their own job well and defend their position. The various sales channels of cosmetic products ought to worry about defending their own position as it is difficult for a leopard to change its spots, i.e. completely change your activity to become a big player on the Internet. Let's leave it to those who were born on the Web, sites like Amazon which are practically monopolizing sales. can even afford to lose money, as their final objective is to conquer customer loyalty to offer more profitable services, such as banking or insurance. One possible compromise, and that is already in course, sees for example a channel such as mass retail starting to do a B2C discourse to offer a complementary service to its customers, using external logistics. Keeping the primary activity done in the points of sale.

**EM: Is it true that today's consumer is less loyal, and tends to jump joyfully from one channel to another?**

**CG:** Absolutely, today those who guarantee the best customer satisfaction win. The consumer, thanks to the Web as well which has democratized information and made it accessible, is more educated. Thanks to the completion existing, a person today can buy something on the web, find another opportunity in a store or be attracted by a telesale.

**EM: Which product categories are most in demand today?**

**CG:** Health & beauty care is always a must-have. Fragrance is very much in demand, and not only in the luxury category. It has become a product of daily use, at every social level,

the price scale varies, so that everyone can afford to have at least one in their bathroom. We are lucky to operate in a sector that can only grow. However, a great flaw consists of the continuous and excessive arrival of new launches on the market; this is why at times we see rotations in sales that are too low, with the consequent overloading of the warehouse of the retailer. This is not a health business...

**EM: Everything is changing very fast; what is your interpretation of this very particular time of the market?**

**CG:** Madame Lauder used to say, "Even in wartime a woman will always have a lipstick in her bag." The cosmetics sector today has nothing to fear, paradoxically other sectors of consumer goods have been more affected by the reduction in the consumer's spending power. We operate in 61 countries and we can say that Italy is one of the most interesting and complex markets. The classic perfumery has been attacked on two fronts, from below with the arrival of fierce drugstores, and on the other by pharmacies, which have incorporated the cosmetic business intelligently and competently, with the correct quality-price ratio.

C.S.

