THE GLOBALIZATION OF AN ITALIAN FAMILY COMPANY: ZOBELE CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES (1919-2006)


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ABSTRACT

The case history of the Italian family company, Zobele Chemical Industries, one of the world’s leading suppliers of insect repellants and deodorants, describes the synchronous evolution of the firm and three generations of the Zobele family over 87 years, from 1919 to 2006.

The Zobele Company, located in Trento, Northern Italy, was founded in 1919 by Enrico Zobele Sr., who became famous when he invented his first “killer product” in 1930 – flypaper. After the Second World War, the bombed-out factory was rebuilt by his sons, Luigi and Fulvio, who introduced new products for home hygiene and home care. The company globalized under the joint leaderships of CEO Enrico Jr., son of Luigi, and Franco and Giovanni, sons of Fulvio. In 2005, Zobele Chemical Industries reported sales of €202 million with profits of €11 million. The company had 3300 employees, factories in Italy, Spain, Brazil, Paraguay, India, Hong Kong, Mexico, China with continuing expansion in Italy, India and China.

The case centers on the challenges faced by the family members for ensuring global leadership while maintaining the continuity of family ownership and control. The case is rich in implications for family owners – executives in their dual roles of family members and managers of global entrepreneurial companies.

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