

GEAR SAMPLE: INTERVIEW WITH ANTONIO MACCAFERRI

Q: What are the keys to success for a family-run business now in its third generation, operating on a global scale?

A: SAMP is in fact only a part of the family business, the Maccaferri Industrial Group, which is an international company boasting a rich portfolio of activities ranging across the widest of sectors, from environmental engineering solutions to real estate and construction, from the food industry to tobacco, going through biotechnologies and the field of renewable sources of energy.

One of the main keys to success can be found in the fact that our Group has always relied on a strong team of experienced managers and high-skilled professionals specialized in their own field, whereas family members take care of the strategy and coordination.

Q: How has the gear industry evolved since you took over as President in 1995?



A: Surely the industry has dramatically changed, especially as far as internationalization and diversification on a global scale are concerned. For example, when I started in 1995 nobody could imagine that China would grow in such a spectacular way, to the point that today SAMP has three manufacturing plants in Shanghai, one for each business unit of the company (Samputensili, Sampsistemi and Sampingranaggi).

Another important effect of the globalization was represented by the huge opportunities offered by the North American market. For this reason, in 2002 Samputensili started a strategic partnership with Star Cutter Company through the creation of the joint-venture Star SU LLC, the sole go-to-market organization based in Hoffmann Estates, IL, responsible for the sales and distribution of cutting tools and machine tools technology for the North American market.

Q: What are your goals for SAMP in both the near-term and long-term with regard to being a supplier to the worldwide gear manufacturing community?

A: We have always followed a global, international approach both as a company and as an industrial group. Our main goal has always been the satisfaction of our cus-



tomers' needs with high professional skills, capacity and quick actions driven by our will to constantly improve.

By doing this, we have always worked hard in order to be close to our customers as a reliable manufacturing company, providing them with the support and service they need in a fast and comprehensive way. This approach had led us through the decades to the creation of a broad network of manufacturing facilities, such as the one in Brazil in 1974, the one in South Korea in 1995, the creation of our American joint-venture Star SU in 2002 and of a Chinese joint-venture between Samputensili and STW in 2005. This has always been our philosophy and we will certainly continue to do so also in the years to come.

Q: What do you see as your major challenges in both the near and long term, both as a company and as a manager?

A: Our major challenges will be represented by the continuously evolving technology, the ever growing competition amongst machine tool manufacturers and gear cutting tool manufacturers, as well as the features and new technologies that are specific to each market in which we are present and to each market that we serve. These are and will continue to be our major challenges both in the near and in the long term.

Q: What regions of the world are showing the most promise for growth for SAMP in gear manufacturing and why?

A: We are closely following the evolution of China, South-East Asia, Brazil and South America in general. Of course, in terms of volume, Europe and the United States remain our most important markets for high-quality gears and gearboxes, supplied by our business unit Sampingranaggi, and we expect these areas to recover very shortly.

Q: What innovations, changes or trends do you see in the coming years that will impact the worldwide gear manufacturing community?

A: The innovations we are experiencing around us are not real revolutions. More than anything else, we are seeing production centralizations, large companies merging together, especially in the automotive sector, and we believe that the average size of corporations in the future will continue to grow.

Q: What are your goals for SAMP over the next five years? Do you have any plans on expanding in the near future, outside your existing operations?

A: We will surely strive to remain among the market leaders and further increase our market penetration in those segments where we still are not a reference brand. At the moment we do not foresee

THE HISTORY OF SAMP

BY ANTONIO MACCAFERRI

The history of SAMP and its brands has always been eventful, and it represents a perfect example of company verticalization. At the end of the 19th century, in Casalecchio di Reno near Bologna, Italy, my grandfather's uncle began to use wire mesh to assemble gabions (boxes filled with rocks, concrete, or sometimes sand and soil) to repair dams destroyed by floods of the river Reno. At the beginning of the 20th century, he purchased a patent for a new type of wire mesh box gabion and started the industrial production of gabions for civil engineering use.

As a consequence, in 1936 Gaetano Maccaferri, my grandfather, started out with a small workshop for the production of wire machinery. The production included wire drawing machines, looms for weaving metallic meshes and general mechanical parts. He called his company **S.A.M.P.**, which translates from the Italian as "Company for Precision Metalworking." Since it was difficult to find good quality gears at that time, he started manufacturing his own.

During the Second World War, SAMP supplied the Italian air-force with precision gears, but the demanding quality requirements forced the company to produce its own high-precision gear cutting tools. For the same reason, the company was later to start developing its own tool grinding machinery, manufacturing equipment that set the standard at those times.

With a wide range of quality gear cutting tools on board by 1949, SAMP decided to establish **Samputensili**, an ad hoc structure and trademark through which to trade these products. In the years that followed, this new company was to grow into a worldwide supplier of gear cutting tools and, later, also of grinding machines for cylindrical gears, shafts, worms, rotors and screw threads.

The second spin-off of SAMP, **Sampingranaggi**, came into being in 1973, extending the company's gear production program to include bevel gear sets and high-precision gearboxes. Before long, Sampingranaggi was able to sup-

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the opening of new manufacturing plants, but we are working towards the creation of new sales and distribution offices in India and in South-East Asia.

Q: How have your customers' demands changed in recent years? What is SAMP doing to accommodate those demands?

A: Our customers are becoming more and more price-sensitive. In addition, we have experienced an increase in the request for technical support and production optimization, as a consequence of the internal restructuring that many companies have carried out over the past few years.

In order to meet these needs, we have established new sales and technical capacities and have further expanded our network. In our main markets we are locally present with manufacturing plants to supply our customers with fast, reliable and excellent sales and after-sales service.

Q: Tell us about your North American distribution, sales and service oriented representation.

A: SAMP S.p.A. and SU America have a strategic partnership with Star Cutter Company through Star SU LLC (Hoffman Estates, IL) to sell

our machine tools, gear cutting tools and tool services under the highly visible Star SU brand in North and South America. Star SU is supported by 30 direct regional sales managers and eight service engineers.

Our partnership with Star started in 2002 and was further extended in 2013 to include not only the sales organization, but also the manufacturing plants in the United States, the service center in Mexico and the Samputensili plant in Brazil.

Q: What do you see as your major challenges as a supplier to the gear industry?

A: We are challenged to supply a broader range of support activities within customer facilities. We are managing this by extending full product support and manufacturing support activities with Star SU on-site engineers. Though challenging, this is a tremendous opportunity to supply these services as an added value proposition at a reasonable cost.

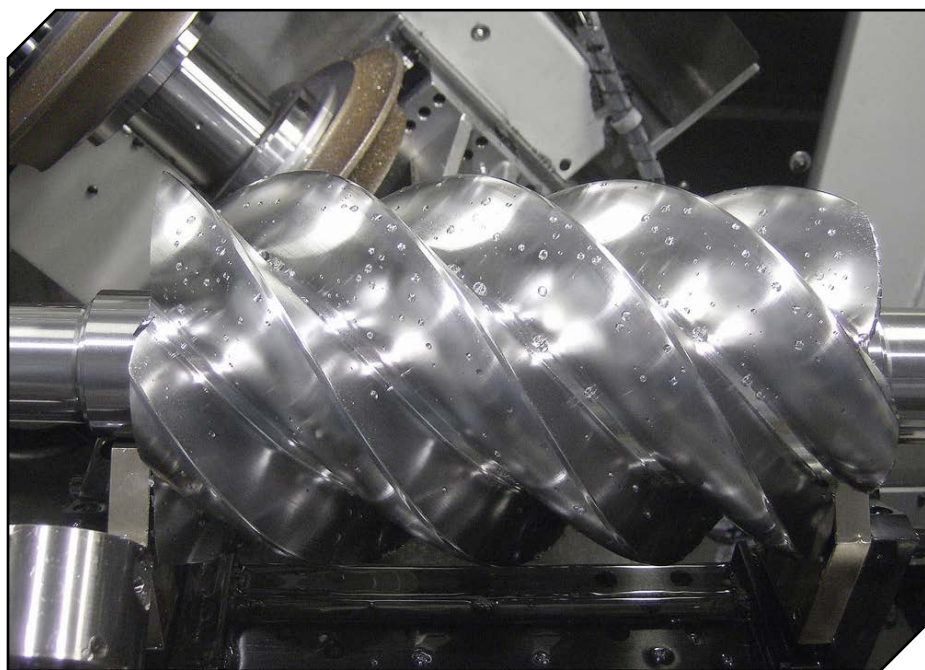
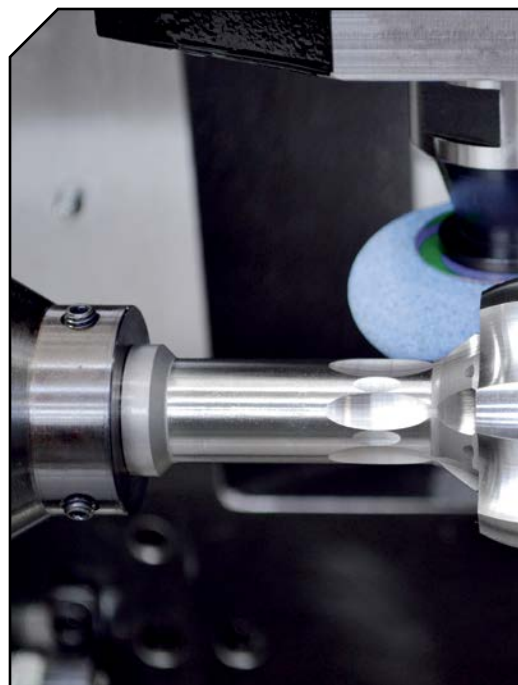
Q: Do you have any concerns regarding recruiting and retaining skilled workers in your workforce?

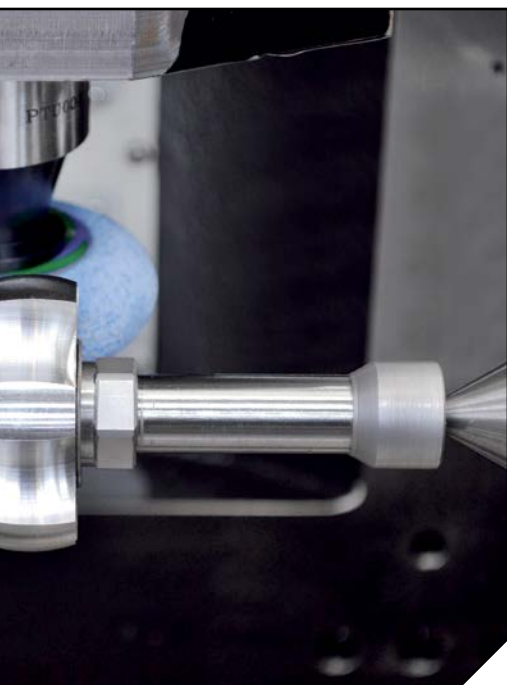
A: In manufacturing, we are faced with the great challenge of making our business attractive to young, skilled engineers and technical people. This involves a great commitment to promote and educate potential employees by our company and private industry, but it must also work in cooperative partnership through universities and high schools. Once we have recruited these young workers we need to have the right training available to them and growth plans in place to keep them.

Q: Are there any other subjects you would like to talk about?

A: SAMP is known to the world market not only for its high-quality and reliable gear manufacturing tools, but also for its wide range of grinding machines. At Samputensili we began producing machine tools some 50 years ago to improve the manufacturing quality of our gear cutting tool range.

In particular, our horizontal grinding machines are amongst the finest machine tools for gear, rotor and screw manufacturing in the world. Our experience stems from our own manufacturing needs in terms of prototyp-





ing and in-house job shopping. Know-how matured in such a way has flowed directly into the end product, and this is what distinguishes our solutions from the rest. Our machines are extremely flexible and allow customers to use both ceramic grinding tools and electroplated CBN grinding wheels. Therefore they represent the ideal solution both for prototyping/small batch production and for high-volume gear manufacturing.

For more information:

Star SU, LLC
5200 Prairie Stone Parkway, Suite 100
Hoffman Estates, IL 60192
Phone: 847-649-1450
Fax: 847-649-0112
sales@star-su.com
www.star-su.com

Maccaferri Industrial Group
www.maccaferri.it

SAMP
www.samplingranaggi.com
www.sampsistemi.com
www.samputensili.com

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ply both single components and finished gearboxes.

In 1997 SAMP's wire drawing machinery division took the name of **Sampsistemi** and, thanks to the acquisition of competing companies, it broadened its portfolio to include extrusion equipment for the manufacture of finished cables.

In 2000, with the acquisition of the former Modul company based in Chemnitz (Germany), Samputensili added hobbing technology to its manufacturing program, becoming one of the few players in the world to offer a complete gear manufacturing program, covering both roughing and finishing operations.

In 2002 Samputensili started a strategic partnership with Star Cutter Company through the creation of the joint-venture Star SU LLC, the sole go-to-market organization based in Hoffman Estates, IL, responsible for the sales and distribution of cutting tools and machine tools technology for the North American market.

In 2006 Samputensili, Sampsistemi and Sampingranaggi merged to form SAMP S.p.A, a new holding company which put together the three macro-sectors of its business:

- Samputensili, global provider of complete solutions (machine tools, tools and services) for the production of gears;
- Sampsistemi, manufacturer of machines and systems for wire and cable production;
- Sampingranaggi, specialized producer of high-quality spur and bevel gears as well as complete gearboxes.

Each of the three business units has its own technical department, sales force and after-sales service, whereas corporate services like human resources, procurement, IT, finance and administration are shared among the three divisions.

In 2009 SAMP moved to a brand new plant in Bentivoglio (Bologna), Italy, which integrates all European manufacturing sites of the three divisions in one modern, state-of-the-art plant.

For more information:

Star SU, LLC
5200 Prairie Stone Parkway, Suite 100
Hoffman Estates, IL 60192
Phone: (847) 649-1450
Fax: (847) 649-0112
sales@star-su.com
www.star-su.com

Maccaferri Industrial Group
www.maccaferri.it

SAMP
www.samplingranaggi.com
www.sampsistemi.com
www.samputensili.com

