

VareseNews

“We’ve got ideas and courage at BTicino”

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✖ “If there’s anything new to be studied and carried out in the field of electrical material, we’re the ones who should do it first.” This statement by **Gigino Bassani**, the founder of **BTicino**, now the **Legrand Group**, has been reproduced in the wing of the factory that houses the **domotics** department, the most recent development in the business of electrical switches. The words are joined by pictures of a number of switches made from **1948 to today**, including the “**Salvavita**”, the **1965** circuit breaker, with the big red button, the icon of a country that was looking to modern times.

Innovation is a process that requires one quality above all others: **courage**. And any entrepreneur that lacks this quality, cannot give it to himself. In fact, he cannot even describe himself as an “entrepreneur”. It is now almost thirty years since the Bassani family handed the reigns over to the French, and yet the imprinting of the founding father is still deeply ingrained in the new managers. “We’ve got ideas here, and the courage to try them out,” **Paolo Cortinovis**, the plant manager, repeated several times to the visitors of “**Venti dell’Innovazione**” (Winds of innovation, *ed.*), a monthly event that, on this occasion, the **Chamber of Commerce** had organised at the factory in Varese. This short visit was dedicated to the **galvanic** process, that is, the industrial treatment of metal surfaces, the heart of the manufacturing process at **BTicino**, which vertically integrates all the manufacturing stages, from mould design to the packaging of the switches. **Environmental sustainability and efficiency** are the two goals driving the managers, technicians and factory workers. Here, only **water-based paints**, polymerised with infrared rays, are used, and a **lean method** is adopted, the same as the one used by the Japanese at Toyota, which allows optimising everything and avoiding the wasting of time and materials; and the water used in the manufacturing of materials is purified.

Around **1.7 million pieces** are produced every year in Varese; there is no warehousing, and resources are not tied up uselessly; people adopt a “just-in-time” approach, and can therefore respond to customers’ requests in a flexible and punctually way. “Planning and forecasting don’t represent the real demand,” said Cortinovis.

The actual strength of this industrial group is its extremely large catalogue, which is the result of a continuous product innovation, guaranteed by the balance sheet entry “**research and development**”, to which **5% of the turnover, amounting to €4.5 billion**, of which €481 million is produced in Italy, is destined. **BTicino** employs over **2800 people in Italy, 1400** in Varese Province (there is also a production unit in **Tradate**, which makes electrical panels and containers), and **35,000 people** all over the world.

There are a lot of young people working in the plant in Varese, where a hooter still sounds at the end of the shift, but there have been **no apprenticeship contracts** for a long time. “This is the fault of the continually changing legislation, which creates uncertainty,” said **Mauro Scaglioni**, of the human resources department. Peaks in production are covered by

temporary employees, but the chance of coming into the company with a good contract is better for graduates, especially those with engineering and marketing degrees.

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redazione@varesenews.it