

Sinfo One, anticipating innovation to remain one step ahead

Once again, 2017 has seen the Parma software house continue to grow (+9%), thanks to the development of soft skills and the development of the Sinfo College. Not to mention the use of experiences to enhance delivery of solutions to its customers. All strategies that led to Rosolino Pomi receiving a knighthood

Interview with Paola Pomi, General Manager of Sinfo One

by Dario Colombo

Sustainable growth. Relationship with the local area. Valorising people. The development of Sinfo One, the Parma software house which has stepped up to support businesses on the road to innovation, is ongoing. It is not by chance that on 2 June 2017, Rosolino Pomi, Chairman and founder of Sinfo One, was awarded a Cavaliere all'Ordine della Repubblica Italiana (a knighthood of the Italian Republic) by the Prefect of Parma – following the decision taken by the President of the Republic, as proposed by the Prime Minister – for his experience in field of Information Technology spanning thirty years. It is a 'club for a chosen few', which numbers around 139 thousand individuals decorated since 1800.

"It was a wonderful surprise, and one which was unexpected both at home and in the company", recalls **Paola Pomi, General Manager of Sinfo One**. *Sistemi&Impresa* met her less than a month after the nomination of "Pomi Senior" – as the Chairman is referred to by Paola and Patrizia, the latter of which is Commercial and Marketing Manager – on a hot afternoon at the start of summer in the company's headquarters, a few kilometres from the centre of Parma.

"In spring, we received two letters from the Quirinale: the first announced my father's nomination to receive a knighthood, the second gave the details of the

investiture," Paola Pomi says, recalling those moments and how the Chairman of Sinfo One decided not to announce the news, even though it's not every day that one receives a letter from the chief of State...

"He wanted the award to be kept quiet until two evenings before the official appointment," explains the company's MD, who was 'guilty' of having broken the silence by publishing the news on the social networks, much to the disappointment of Pomi Sr. who "would have preferred less publicity": "He is a leader in the company and with the clients, but he remains a shy and humble person," Paola Pomi states. So much so that staff at Sinfo One heard about the investiture online, confirming the low profile approach of the Chairman. "The awarding of a Knighthood strengthened and confirmed our vision of Pomi Sr. as a person who knows how to manage complexity and a protagonist of growth in a market in which he has always had something new to say for 30 years: in an ever-changing world, Sinfo One evolves to ensure it is always one step ahead of its customers' needs," Paola Pomi explains.

So the knighthood awarded to Rosolino Pomi was an impressive result for the whole team...

In actual fact it is an objective we hadn't even set ourselves, and the nomination





The Sinfo One people have outstanding talent and team-work skills; so much so I consider them part of our IT team. Good job!

Paolo Michielin, CIO of Calligaris

was entirely unexpected. It is certainly not an accomplishment. The newly-knighted Pomi Sr. chose to celebrate in a low-key way: a party with his closest friends and family members. But at work, nobody calls him “Cavaliere”. And the staff at Sinfo One offered him their own personal congratulations by going to see him in his office. It was seen as an important moment for everyone, not least because the title was awarded for having helped create work in the area, and because of the considerable attention he has dedicated to helping young people grow. It is a tribute to the sense of responsibility in managing the company and helping it continue its growth process.

On the subject of growth, last time we spoke the figures were confirming an increase in turnover: what are the forecasts for 2017?

For this year we are predicting further growth of 9%. Since the start of the tax year (November 2016, -Ed.), we have already hired 20 people: all thanks to the partnerships with the University

of Parma and the College for Agrifood Management and Economy (SMEA) of Cremona, which have allowed us to find the best profiles for us to include as consultants. Amongst the new resources, most are engineering graduates. I like to highlight the fact that 50% are girls; female engineers are still rare, but our aim is to increase the number of women working in the company. By increasing diversity, we increase creativity in generating answers for clients.

After the crisis, many companies rediscovered their social role and the importance, particularly on a local level, of weighing up their impact in local terms. How do you reconcile growth with sustainability?

Sustainability is undoubtedly more important than in the past, but it has always been pivotal here at Sinfo One, and we try to support projects that are in keeping with our own ideology. If we want to continue to grow, it is necessary for the ecosystem surrounding us to keep up, which makes it necessary for us to provide our own local contribution. For example,



On 2nd June 2017 Rosolino Pomi was awarded a Cavaliere all'Ordine della Repubblica Italiana



Paola Pomi with her father Rosolino and her sister Patrizia, Sales & Marketing Director of Sinfo One

we have been committed to sport for some time now by sponsoring the women's volleyball team of Casalmaggiore. The team plays in the A1 league. But we also help young volleyball teams because we want young people to grow up learning the value of working as a team. We also invest in culture and music by sponsoring events in the area: music allows people to find beauty, and experience deep emotions

each individual can bring his or her own value and feel a part of the solution.

At the start of 2017 you told us about the 'Sinfo College'; several months have passed since then. What are the first results?

Sinfo College is the training that allows us to take on new resources, whether they are profiles from experiences in the markets we work with, or young new de-



A consultancy which has forged real relationships and friendships

Remo Grassi, Deputy Chairman and MD of Banfi

that affect how people are formed. We are also involved in managing greenery in municipalities near Parma. Last but not least, we have decided to support a number of activities for the disabled to allow them to express their skills as a value. And within the organisation itself, we have created an environment in which

gree or master's graduates. The 'course' – which lasts four or five weeks – includes technical modules but it also covers process and organisational analysis and prepares candidates for managing customer relations.

The last courses were made even more interesting by opening up the technical



Our ties with Sinfo One are about more than just long-term consultancy. There is a reciprocal esteem which allows us to trust them as a proper technological partner more than just an ordinary supplier

Lorenzo Fava, General Manager of LSI

modules to Italian and foreign customers: this means being able to measure up against different experiences and cultures. We have already concluded three training courses since the start of the year.

A recent study showed that 2016 was the year of Hybrid Jobs: does Sinfo College combine hard and soft training?

The last meeting with the Client Managers at Sinfo One (project managers for individual clients, -Ed) revealed that we are not considered technicians so much as problem solvers.

This means we have managed to convey our philosophy: to adopt a solution, you have to have a clear idea of the client's business goal, whilst always ensuring the result achieved is in line with the target to be reached. Proper communication is crucial; and it must be combined with fast delivery of an effective solution.

What are the soft skills you need most?

Communication is central to our business. It involves active listening, which in turn

requires a series of steps to be taken. Active listening not only means understanding what the client is asking for: it is necessary to understand the context, and know what levers to suggest for managing change. This skill reflects on the person who has to deliver the solution, who has to be able to tweak the solution along the way if needed. Lastly, it is important to maintain ties with clients and ensure the solution adopted actually takes off.

Could you explain these steps in greater detail?

We managed a clients' request to change the release of the platform, although it could not be merely viewed as an ordinary technological update. So we added the objective of operative efficiency, introducing the aim to lower the number of clicks needed to carry out certain operations by 15%. By the end of the project, we had managed to reduce the number of actions performed by the operators as part of their everyday tasks by no less than 43%, whilst also providing more



Paola Pomi is graduated in Electronic Engineering: She's working in Sinfo from 1989. In 2011 She became General Director



Sinfo One was founded in 1984 by Rosolino Pomi: Sinfo One supports companies on the road to innovation

information: a result that demonstrates just how important the close partnership between Sinfo One and the client really is, because clients don't just want to optimise; they want to replicate projects that work.

This is pay back for clients, who are increasingly requesting more 'sustainable projects'. At the same time it shows how transparent Sinfo One is in outlining customer results in figures. It is a positive

to accompany them with indicators that provide guidelines for achieving the target. In practice, they highlight the aspects that make the solution a suitable one. In addition, the entrepreneur also needs clear, transparent information to assess the projects his or her company is implementing. Projects also require the cooperation of the entire company, and making objectives and results clear increases internal commitment.



We speak the same language as Sinfo One.
We share the same cultural affinity
and the same mentality

Silvio Grassi, Managing Director of Molino Grassi

approach more akin to that of a partner than a supplier.

But in the SME, the decision-maker is almost always the company boss; how do ties with the client change in this context?

Nowadays, the ROI is no longer requested as an element for assessing projects: some are well received by the entrepreneur, but it is always necessary

So soft skills are a discriminating factor for success?

Without a doubt they are the cultural baggage to be used when tackling new challenges, and they are vital for introducing innovation into our market: possessing vertical knowledge in the specific sector or knowledge that is spread throughout other sectors allows us to find new and as yet unexplored solutions for some sectors.



Sinfo One has been a present and reliable partner for years

Andrea Bondioli, Chief Financial Officer of Itaipizza

After 30 years on the market, do you not think that – not least owing to the large number of players – we are nearing saturation point?

Compared with the past, we have noted that there is greater demand for ERP solutions, but also for new technology. As for the risk of saturation – an aspect I have thought about several times – there are at least three factors that constantly force the market to keep up-to-date.

So all you need is these three factors to realise that constant technological updates are essential to meet ongoing challenges.

It also means regularly keeping in touch with clients: what is your strategy?

Sinfo One manages around 150 clients, a sizeable number for a company like ours. Each client has a dedicated Client Manager who covers the role of both



Firstly, technology is subject to 'natural' obsolescence. As a result, companies are forced to renew their instrumentation. One shouldn't forget that organisations today are part of a supply chain, and this can impose major changes. Then there are the new needs linked to strategic objectives, like expansion in new markets.

Project Manager and of management and delivery. We have around twenty Client Managers working for us, who can choose the various profiles they need internally. Nonetheless, whilst they might have different styles, the Client Managers are part of a work organisation that resembles a matrix, so that all Sinfo One



The partnership between Consorzio Casalasco and Sinfo One is strong, and has consolidated over the course of time; like the true entrepreneur he is, Rosolino Pomi identified this personal and professional growth and nurtured it over time

*Costantino Vaia, General Manager
of the Casalasco Consortium*



people – including managers – are called upon to make their own contribution to bring new experiences.

Can you tell us more about how work is organised?

The Client Manager manages the work team, which is in turn guided by a team leader. The latter can, however, be the Client Manager of other projects: nor is it unusual for me to be asked to lead a team and report to a member of our staff. In this structure there is also a support team – made up of other Client Managers – that guarantee the quality of the projects. For example, they might work alongside the work group to put together sales proposals, or develop innovative solutions.

Are you saying that there is a different hierarchical structure in the projects to that of the company organisational chart?

Alongside the traditional hierarchy, every day each of us is an active part of the ‘puzzle’, providing our own innovative contribution in relation to our own personal skills. I was recently asked by a Client Manager to give my contribution: for me it’s a way of maintaining links with the team and the client. It is also a powerful message for new people at Sinfo One who see the General Manager getting involved every day. They learn that everyone plays a vital role in the organisation and its growth.

How do you look for new clients to get on board?

The work done by the pre-sales team, prospecting and telemarketing, is combined with taking part in trade conferences such as the Food Innovation Summit, an event that brings the largest food companies to Europe to discuss product innovation,



Santerno has learned to identify the partners it can count on: Sinfo One is one of the companies that has undoubtedly supported our growth and which we feel sure will continue to support us

Alberto Furlanetto, CFO of Santerno



Sinfo One, everything else is dull

Alberto Fenati, Group Controller at Olitalia

mega-trends and technologies dedicated to the food industry. In 2017 we gave a speech on innovation processes in the food sector: these occasions allow us to come into contact with clients whose size and geographical distance make them hard to reach. In addition to conventions, we also maintain our presence on social networks and the Web to raise awareness of our values.

In 2017 you also promoted a group of users on PLM technologies: can you tell us about it?

At the start of the year, the European PLM user group set itself up independently. It brings together users of Oracle PLM solutions in Europe, and puts forward the best practices developed in the food sector (the group includes some of our clients). But the group's goal is not just to share experiences but also to keep up to date with new regulations (it is particularly useful for foreign organisations wishing to invest in the Italian market) and technology: this sharing process then yields requests that the market players have to satisfy. This year we met up for a day in London, but we have decided to do twice as much in 2018 with a two-day convention to be held in March in the English capital.

As is traditional, we mustn't forget the VBC Pallavolo Rosa: after two years of successes, 2017 has (until now) been 'uphill'...

We kicked the season off at a fast pace and won second place in the world club Championship, after having won the championship, the Italian Supercoppa and the Champions league. Perhaps it was hard to keep up that pace after all those successes, although I must admit that the championship is well balanced in Italy: we closed the first part of the season graduating as 'winter champions' and closed the regular season in second place. In spite of getting knocked out in the semi-final play-off (against Igor Novara which went on to win the title, -Ed) we were still happy because we really put on a show at the start of the championship; then a drop-off in fitness and a few injuries took their toll. Now we have decided to turn over a new leaf: only a handful of the players have been reconfirmed, so we want to start afresh. It is a new challenge, and one we will be tackling with our usual passion.

