



The business idea

The business idea is the result of an intuition that develops over time after a great deal of reflection. There are intuitions that pass through your mind and are forgotten and others that you cannot shake off and become fixed ideas. Young people are generally quick to realize their ideas, while older people are more prudent.

Observations:

- **if, after due reflection, you start with courage and determination** you are already half way there;
- **advisers are crucial**, and those from your family are certainly disinterested, they take care of you and try to save you from missteps and disappointments;
- **as you go on you will encounter many problems**, overcoming which is a conquest in itself;
- **wise and prudent people** may judge your idea to be a crazy one, but if you overcome the first hurdles, you won't think of yourself as crazy and you will have the strength to carry on - **you must stay calm and free your desire to do what will be useful for many**;
- **turning your idea into reality** is certainly a matter of great personal satisfaction. **There are entrepreneurs who have brought to fruition ideas that only they believed in** - in such cases a great deal of perseverance and a bit of luck are needed;
- **conversely, an idea that is born in a social context** and realized together with other people, with all participants giving their contribution, can certainly produce great results, provided all the partners wish to work as a team and succeed together. In a group there can be people with a creative imagination, experienced producers, and leaders who know how to motivate others and get them excited. Working together, collaborating with others, sharing sacrifices and achievements, and supporting one another through difficult times, can be more rewarding than doing everything yourself.

The entrepreneur and the contemporary crisis

The world nowadays has a particular need for brave and willing young people who want to devote themselves to the organization of work. Until the end of 2008 the economy was booming. In Italy, politics and trade unions, blocked by conservative theories, had



failed to make the reforms that the rest of the industrialized world had implemented about a decade earlier. Therefore, the outbreak of the economic crisis, which after seven years is still making its recessive effects felt, found our country unprepared. If it's true that Italy today is on the path to economic recovery, that means a saint has been praying for us. We should thank all the entrepreneurs who continued to operate within a system with outdated rules and difficulties



of all kind. **We also must thank the labour scholars and politicians who faced sacrifices and unpopularity to press ahead with the reforms** that have been recently approved and those in the process of being approved.

The reformist front has had its martyrs: Professor Marco Biagi was killed by the Red Brigades on March 19th, 2002 with the same weapon that three years before had assassinated Massimo D'Antona, who was also committed to labour reform.

Extremism is not new to these forms of crime, which we had thought we had left behind: it's something that grieves us, an unacceptable violence that draws citizens away from politics. Thirteen years have passed since then and the economic situation has worsened, debt has risen from 108% to 135% of gross domestic product, and the number of jobs has continued to decrease while unemployment has been steadily rising.

By contrast, after approval of the first reforms, the economy has reversed the recessionary trend. We don't want to get lost in assessments that are not closely connected with the topic of this article, but will just report that **by reading the newspapers and watching the news we have learnt that the world of work is reviving, pessimism is decreasing, employment has given clear signs of recovery, and GDP has increased.**

Italian industry has been decimated by this crisis, as the companies that saved themselves are mainly those that have been established for years on foreign markets. These are companies that today are able to withstand the competition of countries where labour is largely underpaid and the tax burden is fifty percent lower than ours. What these industries, which are about to relaunch the economy in our country, were able to achieve in Italy during these years of crisis is a new Italian economic miracle.

It is still early days to feel safe and there is still a long way to go as far as constitutional reforms are concerned, but wishing to be positive and looking ahead, we think we can state that - with a transformed legislative and governing system, in which industries and all businesses will no longer find in their way institutions and bureaucratic laws hindering and shipwrecking all recovery projects like drifting mines - Italian industry in a few years will bring our country back to a steady economic normality.

The problems that continue to hinder industrialization projects.

The industries that went abroad and those that work both in Italy and abroad, can compare the work conditions in Italian industry with work conditions in industries in European and extra European countries, and provide us with information about them.

It is common knowledge that doing research in Italy is increasingly more difficult, because bureaucracy responds to grant applications with truly unconscionable formal obstacles and timings:

- **in foreign countries, the answer to a properly documented application for funding is given after about two months and, if the application is approved, the grant is paid immediately;**
- **in Italy the same answer takes from 18 months to two years, after approval financing schedules have no limits, they can take years, and no explanation is found for these delays.**

We know of companies that, because of the bureaucratic red tape, chose to give up in order to avoid wasting time. We believe that prudent business management must budget for research costs as well. In short: we prefer doing with our own tools what we can get done quickly. All this seems absurd but, unfortunately, it's only too true, all the more so as obstacles are not



confined to research funding but can complicate the simplest and most natural business operations.

Internal company problems

As if the difficulties that the entrepreneur finds in his way were not enough, a company's life can also be troubled by ungovernability. The company keeps all employees informed and involved about company choices and then everybody's generous participation is needed. It is inadvisable to allow arguments to drag on after the choices are made, as a decision that has been taken cannot be rehashed unless significant, objective issues are raised.

Those who have lived the crisis first hand, while they do not indulge in exaggerated hopes, see the recovery as a liberation from forced immobility and as transition stage to be considered a period of regular competition, certainly not a time for resting on their laurels.

A time of crisis is also a time of sacrifices, and therefore of tensions that can easily degenerate into serious issues. The economic crisis has put Italian industry through the crucible. Faced with these difficulties, some companies have given up, while those that have endured are toughened and have perhaps become more prudent and self sufficient, and therefore more likely to survive.

These companies weathered the crisis because they were able to adapt to the national and international context that was created. Industries produce goods that must be accessible to all and therefore reasonably priced. The reduction in demand and the competition of the new industries in developing countries has encouraged European industries to eliminate waste and reduce profit margins in order to increase sales, compensating for the lower earnings with the improvement of production processes. In addition, new technology and research have made available to industries the means for improving outputs, perfecting them with new performances, reducing their weight and volume, and making them safer, more lasting and environmentally sustainable.

If over the years private enterprise has been through easy times, this experience is very unlikely to be repeated. At the end of the Second World War, when Italy had been devastated by bombing and lacked the basics of life, the spirit of initiative and the ingeniousness of Italians invented an industry that had never before existed in the country. The early years of the Cattani company, founded in the 1950s, were easy years, as demand always exceeded production capacity. **Doing research at that time meant "letting running water flow away"**, a very meaningful saying. On the other hand, others would say: don't worry about that, "just put the hay away for winter." Also a profound truth. As is often the case, balance lies in the middle: those who let some running water flow put away less hay, but did research and were ready when times became hard.

Industry cannot overlook research, it must keep pace with technological developments, update production, and ensure environmental sustainability, work safety, constant training of staff at all levels, etc. These are important preparation experiences that involve all people in the company. In the latter part, we have highlighted a company's difficulties and the virtuous behaviour which makes it stronger, and which requires the generous participation of all employees.



The entrepreneur whose life is not closely bound up with the company is destined to fail

Every day the entrepreneur, together with his employees, takes the field like a football team and fights his battle. He is not on the bench, as everyone must do their part to earn, each day, the right to work that nobody can receive as a gift.

The importance of the company's governability in overcoming difficult times is indisputable. When needed, everybody must pull in the same direction, everybody must go beyond personal issues and disagreements in order to support team action for the good of all. For this to take



place the entrepreneur and his principal collaborators must set the example.

The entrepreneur believes strongly in his business idea and when he talks about it he communicates his excitement so well that the listener experiences the same emotions. Real entrepreneurs are people who lose themselves in their work to the point where they no longer feel tired, or even hungry or thirsty. I know of an entrepreneur who, not infrequently, at the end of the working day would remain in the factory to test the running of new machinery. Late one evening his

family, who knew his habits, tried to ring him but received no reply; worried, they went to the factory, where they found that the noise of the engines prevented him from hearing both the telephone and the people calling him from outside. It was three o'clock in the morning.

What is important to these leaders, more than profit or personal success, is the future of the company, its social function and the wellbeing of the employees. As we already mentioned, every day, just like a sportsman, the entrepreneur takes the field with great concentration, because he know he cannot lose a single battle.

The law of the market

The client always rides on the victor's chariot, it is a law of the market: the client is loyal to his supplier until the day a new supplier offers him something better. Employees trust the owner because they are inspired by the generosity and spirit of sacrifice with which he works for the company's benefit and therefore for everyone's benefit. They admire his perseverance and confidence, which is not arrogance or the presumption of omnipotence, but simply the awareness that on the job what is needed, rather than geniuses, is dedication and generous and constant commitment. One needs to deserve work, nobody can give it as a gift, everything must be well deserved.



The future of humanity

Every day the news scares us by reminding us that in thirty years' time we won't have enough water, that the consumption of raw materials has exceeded what nature can produce, that the earth will no longer be able to feed its inhabitants and so on.

In our future there is just one way forward, that of sustainability, a combination of technological choices and procedures to be implemented in order to reduce waste and unnecessary consumption: the supporters of this theory have now reached a very wide audience.

- **The worst crisis in human memory**, one we are still experiencing, has served to increase awareness about the absolute necessity to adopt more moderate consumption habits.
- **Given this need, the question that arises is: will humanity manage to live more simply?** It seems so, as research shows increased worldwide awareness about waste reduction.
- **Science and technology have proved that we can make smaller, safer, longer lasting and more powerful machines**, which are cheaper to buy and to run, saving raw materials and energy.

Environmental sustainability is no longer a choice: the survival of our planet is in jeopardy, and alarms raised by researchers are now scientific news. We all have a duty to do all we can so that those who will come after us can still find liveable conditions on our planet, and the free resources that have enabled us to reach our current level of affluence.

Keep up the work
Augusto Cattani