

A Surprising View on Business in the US



A couple of nice family success stories set the tone for this issue.

First, we feature the grand opening of Sofidel’s mill in Circleville, Ohio, which was quite an event, a fulfillment of the vision of CEO Luigi Lazzareschi. The efforts of his family along with those of the Stefani family have led to the creation of a world leader in tissue production.

The company has certainly come a long way from humble beginnings in Tuscany, Italy. And the next step is not far away as construction of the mill in Enola, OK, is well underway. For more about the history of Sofidel, see *Tissue360*° Fall/Winter 2018, p. 20.

Then we turn to a family less in the news, but whose story is no less interesting. The Corzo family had a thriving business (Papeleria Internacional) in Guatemala, but a horrible kidnapping crime involving the family forced them to rethink the future. Heading to Miami to restart, they established South Florida Tissue Paper. It is now headed by Juan Corzo, Sr., son of the founder.

The third generation of Corzos is also involved. Juan Corzo, Jr., is vice president of the firm, which is strictly a converter. But with a papermaking tradition started in Guatemala with Papeleria Internacional, he says there may come a day when South Florida Tissue joins the ranks of the producers. To read about their saga, see p. 19.

A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE

It is always interesting to get a fresh view on things, to question established wisdom. At the first TAPPI/RISI Tissue Event, held in Miami in 2017, one of the speakers was Peter Oksakowski, managing director of BHM (Austria), who spoke about the company’s involvement with Sofidel’s Circleville investment.

BHM had a large role to play providing consulting services and project management for the investment. This was BHM’s first foray into the US. I had the chance to speak with Peter over coffee one morning during the

event and he had some interesting views about doing business in the US.

Peter attended the opening ceremony at Circleville and I had the chance to renew the acquaintance. Peter also provided information for this month’s text (page 12) concerning BHM’s scope of supply.


He added some general views, too. These are most interesting. About BHM’s debut in the US, Peter said, “Due to the fact that BHM has already performed services for many projects in other foreign countries, we knew that it was important to learn about construction and construction methods in the US.

“Of course we learned also a lot about differences concerning mentality between people from Europe and the USA. Sometimes it has been a challenge for us to understand specific means and methods applied by American companies, but I assume they had the same challenges with us Europeans.

“In general, I can state we had very good cooperation with all US design firms and contractors throughout the whole project period and we learned a lot about how design and construction is done in the US.”

However, it is this last statement, which he also said in Miami, that many may find surprising: “What astonished us most was the price level for construction in the US. Compared with Europe, the costs for construction are at least double.”

Now, for all of us who suffer from sticker shock when we travel in Europe for pleasure and/or business, this is quite a revelation.

To close, I’m happy to say that TAPPI and RISI have renewed their agreement for what is now called TissueCon. The 2019 event will be held in Orlando, FL, Oct 1-4, at the Gaylord Palms Hotel. For a review of the 2018 event and a preview of what to expect this year, see p. 22. 

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