

VareseNews

It is from the common good and the local area that a business can start

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After seven years of economic crisis, there is one question that a businessperson today must answer before asking a second: **which values do you start from, to build a new business?**

Massimo Folador (see photo above), the director of the **Ethics Study Unit at the LIUC University**, in Castellanza, has written a book on this topic, *L'impresa possibile* (The possible company – published by Guerini Next), which provided the starting point for a discussion among local businesses and businesspeople, on the stage of the **Santuccio Theatre, in Varese**. Although participants each had very different experiences, they did have two factors in common: the awareness that they are bringers of shared values within their organisations, starting with the specific nature of the context in which they operate, and their knowledge of the needs of the people they address.

To explain what has happened over these years, the moderator, **Marcello Vitella**, used the metaphor of salmon (the businesses), which despite everything (the crisis) and everyone (the widespread loss of confidence), continue to go upstream.

“Right now, in order to channel resources towards a common good, we must understand whether we’re at a crossroads or just tired,” Folador began.

The writer was inspired by **two important historical figures**: the physicist, **Albert Einstein**, who saw crisis as a factor of change that could generate value, and **Mahatma Gandhi**, who put the person and

talent back at the centre of existence.

Crisis, in all of its forms, forces you to change, to have an outlook that is different from the usual one, to make choices that go against the trend. This was the approach of **Libero Donati, the CEO of VHT**, a firm that produces electrical hoists, a product that is as old as the hills. Machinery for lifting weights off the ground has been produced since the time of Archimedes. It is a sector that is “overripe” and, therefore, difficult to revive, but this is a challenge that only a group of very “hungry”, talented people, led by a somewhat “crazy” guy, with great experience, like Donati, could win.

A crisis provided the turning point also for **Paolo Orrigoni, the head of the Tigros Group** of supermarkets, a crisis in the burglar alarm sector, on which the family had focused their business until 1997. Today, the firm is led by the second generation, employs 1500 people and is healthy, as demonstrated by the figures showing growth (+10%) even at the height of the crisis.

“Difficulty spurs us to find new solutions. In order to grow, we started out with two important values: knowledge of the area and of the people’s needs, whereas our advantage was the size of our company, which was smaller than our competitors in large-scale retail,” Orrigoni explained.

And the support from his father, Luigi Orrigoni, from 2004 to 2007, until his death, was essential in understanding the direction in which to go. It was a time that Paolo considers “more useful than a bachelor degree”.

According to **Father Michele Barban, the founder of the Gulliver Centre**, the starting point was and still is “the people’s call for help” and the resulting need to have services that can respond to the problem of addiction. In order to work well, complex organisations need to bring out talents, to acknowledge and respect the dignity of work, and most of all, to use the collective intelligence. “Groups of smart people do extraordinary things, even if they are led by fools,” Barban explained.

However, the shift from individual talent to common good, from individual leadership to common leadership is by no means certain, even though this should be the direction to take because today, it is very hard for one person alone to put together all the pieces that make up the puzzle of the globalised world.

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