

Family Business **Slovenia** 2024



Shape the future
with confidence



Family Business
Slovenia
2024



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Looking back at all the stories we have collected in this series, I can confidently say that family businesses will continue to play a key role in shaping the economic landscape of Slovenia.



Janez Uranič

Country Managing Partner
EY Slovenia

Foreword

Before you lies the tenth book in our EY Family Business Slovenia series. This milestone edition is a testament to the enduring legacy and crucial importance of family businesses in the economic and social fabric of Slovenia.

Family businesses whose stories we have collected in this series have survived economic challenges, adapted to market changes, and remained steadfast in their commitment to excellence and sustainability. They embody the values of hard work, integrity, and perseverance, as well as innovation and adaptability, which are the foundation of every successful business.

In this edition, we highlighted the work and achievements of the following businesses, which have left an indelible mark on the Slovenian economy:

The DOBA business group, which includes a technical college, a language learning center, an international business academy, and most prominently the DOBA Business School, was the first in Slovenia to offer the possibility of online study. They are well aware of the importance of staying up-to-date – both for their success and the success of their more than 11,000 graduates.

At DOM TRADE, where they offer comprehensive solutions for home construction and renovation, they are aware of the importance of cooperation and connection. As a founding member and co-owner of the TOPDOM group, they know how to leverage the synergies created with other companies in the group. With the Triangel Boutique Hotel, they have successfully expanded their business knowledge into the tourism sector.

Collaboration and synergies have also been well utilized by RLS Merilna Tehnika, where success in the field of sensors and measurement technology is forged through both innovation and partnership with the English company Renishaw, which is also a co-owner of RLS Merilna Tehnika. Despite international connections, the company remains firmly rooted in the local environment.

Although they generate all their revenue in foreign markets, Metalika, which specializes in furnishing the interiors of large ships and yachts, also remains embedded in the local environment. Their recipe for success is a combination of tradition and modern approaches.

The importance of tradition and history is also emphasized at Malalan, where they sell luxury watches and jewelry. They are particularly proud of

the timeless jewelry collections created in their own goldsmith atelier and the fact that the family story continues with the next generations.

Through hard work, strong will, and a clear vision, Gabrijel Aluminium has grown from humble beginnings into a global supplier of aluminum components for renowned world brands. Today, they do not shy away from any challenge and always find a solution for their customers with their innovative approach.

Innovative solutions are also offered to customers at Robotehnika, where, in addition to CNC metal processing, they are increasingly focusing on the automation and robotization of production processes. With their ingenuity and adaptability, they compete with much larger rivals in this field.

Tuli has created an optimized online store to deliver machine elements to customers almost all over the world. Although their future plans lie in digitalization and expansion into new markets, their guiding principle remains the same as when they served customers from their home garage: to provide each customer with the best user experience.

The story of the Marovt Group, which today includes five successful synergistically connected companies (Marovt, d.o.o., MTEH, d.o.o., Inkolteh, d.o.o., Aklimat, d.o.o., and Enset, d.o.o.), began in a simple workshop. Today, they are among the most advanced in their industries. However, one thing that has not changed over time is the close intertwining of family and business life, which is one of the factors of the Marovt family's success.

The Gorjanc family has also successfully tested their entrepreneurial spirit in several areas. The family business story began with the famous Old Post Office, a famous building in the old town center of Kranj, which, along with other properties, is managed by the umbrella family company Jason. Additionally, they independently or in partnership run the company Olma, the Istrian Monte Rosso estate with vineyards and olive groves, and the company GALVNOTEHNIKA.

Looking back at all the stories we have collected in this series, I can confidently say that family businesses will continue to play a key role in shaping the economic landscape of Slovenia.

I want to thank everyone who embarked on this journey with us, and I hope the stories on the following pages will inspire your future successes.

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Each edition in this series provides valuable insights into the characteristics of Slovenian family entrepreneurship. Our publication has become more than just a collection of stories; it has become an important source of understanding family businesses.



Mojca Emeršič, CFBA
Family Business Leader
EY Slovenia

Introduction

It is with great pleasure and pride that I present to you the 10th edition in our series EY Family Business Slovenia. For ten years, we have been following and documenting the stories of successful Slovenian family businesses that, through their perseverance, innovation, and dedication, have contributed to the development of the Slovenian economy.

Slovenian family businesses are crucial for the sustainable development of our economy. These businesses not only create jobs and stimulate economic growth but also preserve and strengthen local communities. With their commitment to values such as honesty, transparency, innovation, technical expertise, care for their employees, and the development of the local environment, Slovenian family businesses are building the foundations for a future that will benefit everyone.

The 10th edition of the book EY Family Business Slovenia represents an important milestone that encourages us to reflect and evaluate the journey we have taken. Each edition in this series provides valuable insights into the characteristics of Slovenian family entrepreneurship. Our publication has become more than just a collection of stories; it has become an important source of understanding family businesses.

On their journey to success, family businesses often seek advice and form partnerships. We are happy that, in working with entrepreneurial families,

we have also formed many such partnerships and, through these connections, have (re)learned entrepreneurial courage and drive.

Among other things, while preparing this and previous books in the series, we noticed that many family businesses face challenges in the area of generational transfer of ownership and management of companies, where an external professional perspective and advice would often be beneficial. We responded to this by developing advisory services in collaboration with our tax and legal experts that take into account the specifics of family businesses. I am pleased that in recent years we have helped many companies overcome challenges in this area. Although each company and each family has its unique story, we have also found parallels and similarities among them. What I find most important is that every successfully completed project brought a wealth of emotions and open conversations among family members, in addition to strategically important foundations and agreements.

I would like to thank all the companies that shared their stories with us and all the colleagues who contributed to the success of this publication. Our enthusiasm for family business entrepreneurship is still going strong, and I look forward to sharing news about our upcoming projects with you soon.

DOBA Fakulteta

Jasna Dominko Baloh, Director of DOBA Business Group

Polona Baloh Kremavc, Director of DOBA Business School
Academic Programmes

Peter Baloh, Director of Finance

First to introduce distance learning – even before the turn of the millennium

DOBA Business Group derives its name from the founder, Jasna Dominko Baloh, combining her two surnames. Over time, it has become synonymous with what the company is striving for and bringing to life every day: the concept of lifelong learning. The group consists of four units: a technical college, a language learning centre, an international business academy, and – most prominently – the DOBA Business School. Many students, balancing full-time jobs, enrol in the DOBA Business School to gain new practical, up-to-date know-how, advance their careers through promotions, and ensure personal growth. The teaching staff responds to this decision with a profound sense of responsibility. This is felt by all employees, including Jasna's husband Peter Baloh, who is the Chief Financial Officer, and their daughter Polona Baloh Kremavc, the Director of Academic Programmes at DOBA Business School. For several years, they have been actively facilitating a smooth transition of leadership to the second generation. This entails a strong focus on supporting employees and their families.





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Developing programmes that will allow our graduates to be promoted is an important responsibility for us. More than 70% of graduates are promoted in the year after receiving their diploma: they get promoted or earn a raise, or else they change their employer. In short, they graduate with the intention of improving their quality of life.

Jasna Dominko Baloh,
Managing Director



The DOBA Business Group started its journey with language courses for the youngest.

It all began with languages

Founder Jasna explains that the origins of the DOBA Business Group came about through a stroke of serendipity. In the early '90s, the teacher and psychologist got the idea to begin organising language lessons for young children. Within two months of its founding, the company had received more than a thousand applications. They also organised language lessons for adults, with German lessons being the most popular. "The first two years were exhausting because our network of teachers wasn't large enough," Jasna admits. "I don't know if I'd do it again." They tackled these early challenges successfully and expanded their activities by working with the Employment Service of Slovenia. They used special programmes to introduce adult learning techniques to adults and help them discover their career goals.

Building on their gained experience, the team then set up a high school, under whose auspices they organised lessons for final exams. It distinguished itself from other local high schools due to its teaching approach, specifically designed for adults returning to education: "The adults who opt for this path often have had bad experiences in their

earlier schooling, which led them to drop out. Our key advantage was our ability to adapt to their needs," Jasna explains. In the late '90s, she was joined at work by her husband, Peter Baloh, the company's current Chief Financial Officer.

As a businessman with experience in economics, bookkeeping, and finances, Peter was well-prepared for entrepreneurial challenges. The transition from the corporate world to entrepreneurship also brought many novel experiences. In his new role, he had to assume more responsibility and navigate a greater degree of uncertainty. In the corporate world, tasks were highly specialised and structured, but as an entrepreneur, he had to master a wide spectrum of tasks, from strategic planning to operations.

In the early years, the team had to pay considerable attention to establishing a solid foundation for the company. These included drafting a business plan, establishing financial structures, and exploring growth opportunities. Building trust among employees and customers is essential, while also setting up efficient processes to ensure high-quality services.

Exceptional breakthroughs in higher education

With the dawn of the new millennium, DOBA began making important breakthroughs both in Slovenia and abroad. As the first private educational institution in Slovenia, DOBA established a private technical college with the Business Secretary programme, which is still in operation today. "Even back then, we worked hard to bring higher education to full-time employees, mostly to avoid having them attend classes several times a week," Jasna explains. By looking at examples from abroad, they discovered distance learning. They approached its introduction systematically and analytically. They assembled a team that studied best practices by visiting foreign institutions already active in online learning. In 1999, DOBA became the first institution in Slovenia to offer distance learning and the first in Southeast Europe to earn international accreditation for it. They remain the only higher education institution in Southeast Europe with international accreditation for the quality of their distance learning.

Since setting up DOBA Business School, the company has undergone numerous changes, mostly in how they carry on their activities: "Due to declining interest, we closed our high school and discontinued language lessons for children in response to cheaper competition," Jasna explains. They retained online language lessons to a limited extent, offering them to individuals and groups, and companies.

Responsibility for the future of students and society

DOBA Business School is the best-known part of the DOBA Business Group. In Slovenian higher education, DOBA is regarded as the leading provider of distance learning. However, as Jasna explains, their reach extends beyond Slovenia: "Thanks to our international accreditation, around half of our students come from abroad. The fact that we're so influential in a demanding field like education is proof positive that we're offering quality services." Today, more than 2000 students are enrolled in the school, while more than 11,000 alumni have earned their degrees there. As part of its research work, DOBA Business School participates in national and European projects that enable the exchange of knowledge with various experts, joint research of current challenges, and the development of high-value innovative solutions for its target groups. Because of this highly competitive environment, they are especially proud of projects run under the auspices of DORA Business School.

In the meantime, Jasna's daughter Polona has taken on the role of Director of Academic Programmes. She envisions the school's future rooted in providing strong mentorship support to students and maintaining affordable tuition compared to schools abroad. Many people imagine distance learning as individual students sitting in front of their



In the early years, the team had to pay considerable attention to establishing a solid foundation for the company.

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The DOBA Business Group, a private and market-oriented educational institution, is navigating the waters around the challenges of operating in the demanding field of education.



Under the mentorship of more than 41 full-time employees and 230 associate faculty members, students gain experience in ten study areas at all academic levels.



More than 11,000 students, from Slovenia and abroad, have graduated from DOBA (both DOBA Business School and DOBA Technical College).

DOBA Business School in a nutshell:

visionary attitude, agility, uniqueness,
a development-friendly orientation,
and cooperation.

computer screens, but Polona stresses that this is not the case. “Our programmes are based on a lot of collaborative learning. Students are assigned groups in which they tackle projects and tasks through teamwork. Our goal is for them to apply all their acquired knowledge in practice.”

Under the mentorship of more than 41 full-time employees and 230 associate faculty members, students gain experience in ten study areas and all academic levels, from undergraduate and master’s to doctoral. “By tracking trends in the corporate world and in Slovenia, we can gauge which professions and programmes will be needed in the future,” says Polona, while explaining how she sets up programmes. Jasna emphasises the team’s commitment to preparing students for the future: “Developing programmes that pave the way for our graduates’ career advancement is a significant responsibility for us.” More than 70% of graduates are promoted in the year after receiving their diploma: they get promoted or earn a raise, or else they change their employer. In short, they graduate with the intention of improving their quality of life.”

The same rules for everyone

Polona, a member of the second generation, acquainted herself with the workings of the company when she was a student and later with her first full-time job. “It was difficult at times, especially at the beginning,” she admits. “Jasna insisted that the same rules – or even stricter ones – applied to me. She was firm about that. When I was younger, I didn’t realize what kind of advantage that was, but when I became a part of the company, I realised that my mother was right.”

Jasna is convinced that DOBA, with its outstanding team, will remain successful for years to come. She explains: “Education is a very complicated process. We need to follow the legislation in our field, but we’re also active on the market, so we must be able to sell ourselves. That’s why we have support services, a marketing department, and IT support for everyone involved in the study process, as well as many

positions that other schools lack.” The fact that this is a family business seems to be a big if not the biggest advantage when tackling challenges, so the company has been working on a transition with the help of outside advisors. She adds that it’s important to stay mindful of risk factors, including those relating to sustainability: “We have 41 employees. These are families who have worked here for years and I feel a great responsibility to them.” We can’t rest on our laurels. We need to develop new programmes, and this calls for additional engagement. There’s no progress without that.”

Jasna Dominko Baloh and Polona Baloh Kremavc

co-owners

Company name:	DOBA Fakulteta
Number of employees (2023):	41
Net sales revenue (2023):	€7.7 million

DOM TRADE d.o.o.

Polona Tičar, CEO

Matjaž Tičar, Deputy CEO

Jan Tičar, works in Sales

Eva Tičar, Student and occasional help at the company

Nej Tičar, Student and occasional help

From Foundation to Roof and Beyond

DOM TRADE, based in the Gorenjska region, has been a trusted name in the builders' merchant sector for over three decades, offering comprehensive solutions for home construction and renovation. Their slogan, "Everything for construction from foundation to roof plus renovation," embodies their commitment to providing comprehensive solutions and ensuring customer satisfaction. The sale of construction material, ceramics, and bathroom equipment is their core business, complemented by home deliveries and customer service advice on the right choice of materials. The team advises customers on everything from building materials to specific products for the final phase of construction, as well as maintenance products for the home and garden.

The third generation of the family is now contributing to DOM TRADE's success story. CEO Polona Tičar took over the company from her father Marko Hafner. Her husband Matjaž Tičar works in the company as Deputy CEO. In addition to more than 90 employees, their children Jan, Eva, and Nej are also involved in the company. Jan works in sales, while Eva and Nej, as students, assist on occasion.

A man with short brown hair, wearing a green t-shirt with a small "TRAIN" logo, stands in a store with white shelving units in the background. He is smiling and has his hands clasped in front of him.

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We don't want to compare ourselves with others. I'm happy that we get along well as a family and that we're all proud of what we've accomplished.

Polona Tičar,
CEO





In addition to their mother Polona Tičar and father Matjaž Tičar, their three children, Jan, Eva, and Nej, also help in the company.

Opening a builders' merchant in their own home

The company's story began in 1989 at the Hafner family home in the village of Žabnica. Marko Hafner, the company's founder, had a background in the construction industry and recognised the need for a local supply of building materials. They converted their front garden into a warehouse, borrowed a forklift, and opened their own store selling building material, naming it Dom, which means "home". They gradually expanded, bought plots around the shop, expanded their offices, and

finally renovated the entire building. They also expanded their product range and added a ceramic tile store to their range of building material.

In 1993, the company was renamed DOM TRADE, marking the first major step toward establishing a reputable brand. Growth continued with the expansion of storage facilities and the opening of new retail stores. In 2000, they opened a retail store in Lesce, followed in 2011 by another one in Kranj.

The company is also a founding member and co-owner of the TOPDOM Group, formerly known as Mreža Trading. Initially, five entrepreneurs

joined the group to secure better purchasing terms. Together, they purchased materials in bulk and offered their products at more competitive prices. DOM TRADE is now one of the 12 shareholders in the TOPDOM Group, which has emerged as the leading provider of construction material and ceramics in Slovenia.

Even while in high school, Polona and her brother helped out with the company. After completing her studies, Polona joined the team full-time. After her father experienced health issues, the entire family had to step in. "It was a life-changing experience. It taught us to take responsibility and handle various tasks. I think we managed quite well back then," Polona recalls. She realises that the company is not just "sweetness and light"; it also requires a lot of responsibility.

Going beyond building materials to tourism

After 30 years of business success, the family ventured into tourism in 2021. They opened the Triangel Boutique Hotel in Gozd Martuljek near Kranjska Gora. The hotel was designed to blend nature with modern luxury. Polona and Matjaž got the idea years ago while skiing, but bringing the dream to life had to wait for the right moment. For Matjaž, a passionate skier who still holds his ski instructor's certificate to nourish his soul, the boutique hotel represents the fulfilment of a long-held dream.

"Building an attractive structure is a challenge, but the real work starts when you need to decorate and fit it out," Matjaž says. The project began

with the restoration of the old Hotel Špik, which the family bought in 2017 with plans to develop it sustainably. After securing a construction permit, they restored the building and expanded it into a modern hotel-and-suites resort, blending exceptional design and natural materials. The hotel has become a popular destination for guests from around the world and marks a successful step in diversifying the family business. "Our vision was to create a space that offers our guests comfort and a connection to nature while respecting the environment," Matjaž explains.

"We're always looking for new challenges," adds Polona. "We wanted to create a space that brings together comfort, nature, and sustainability in our local environment, the Gorenjska region." The Triangel Boutique Hotel is not just a business venture; it's also our contribution to revitalising the local tourism industry."

The family as the cornerstone of a successful business

DOM TRADE is a family business in the truest sense of the word. Son Jan, who is currently working in sales, initially attended a music secondary school. "We never pressured our kids to work in our company," the Tičars emphasise. The parents felt it was important for the children to graduate from their chosen schools, be hardworking, and find success in their own endeavours. "We weren't bothered that Jan attended music school first," says Matjaž, who is nevertheless happy that his children eventually found



The company's story began in 1989 at the Hafner family home in the village of Žabnica.



In 2011, they opened a sales center in Kranj. The goal is to remain the leading provider of building materials and ceramics in Upper Carniola region.

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They have been a part of the TOPDOM Group, initially called Mreža Trading, since 1994. They joined the network of companies to simplify bulk purchases and offer more competitive prices.



With over 90 employees across both sectors, they take most pride in their core team and those employees who have been with them for more than 20 years.



After 30 years of business success, the family ventured into tourism in 2021. They opened the Triangel Boutique Hotel in Gozd Martuljek near Kranjska Gora.

DOM TRADE in a nutshell:

tradition, responsibility, sustainability, family, quality

their way to the family business. Daughter Eva and son Nej are still students. Eva recalls that her first job in the company was to sweep the store. "I don't want to be part of the company just because it's a family business, and I don't want them to just 'find' a position for me. I want to contribute to the company," says Eva.

In addition to family members, some of their employees have been with the company for more than 20 years, and the entire team helps to create a positive environment and ensure financial success. "You need to have people you can trust by your side, but you also need a well-functioning wage policy," Matjaž explains. Polona adds that, like both companies, they have recently faced challenges finding staff for warehouse and logistics roles, though the situation is improving. "Gorenjska is a highly developed region. Kranj and Škofja Loka in particular are quickly developing in terms of industry and logistics, so it can sometimes be difficult to find enough warehouse workers," says Polona.

The family's harmony is also reflected in the company's decision-making style. They do not wish to compare themselves with other companies and families, but they take pride in their strong relationships and in the fact that their children have grown up to become satisfied and honest people. A culture of inclusion fosters mutual trust and helps the company to operate more effectively.

Sustainable projects

The company boasts long-term financial success, driven by its strategic leadership and ability to adapt to market demands. Polona explains that she and her husband are running a "long-term" business and have no regrets about their decisions as entrepreneurs. In 2024, the company employed 94 people, generated 25 million euros in revenue, and maintained stable growth. Sustainable projects like the Triangel Boutique Hotel are enhancing their social responsibility. A few years ago, they also completed a real estate development consisting of seven homes in the village of Šutna, just outside Kranj. The company also collaborates with educational institutions, offering young people opportunities for internships and training. Their goal is to remain a leading provider of construction material and ceramics in the Gorenjska region, and to provide a positive and comfortable shopping experience through its wide range of products, service skills, advice, and logistics. They also wish to ensure employee satisfaction, maintain

a positive work environment and corporate culture, and deliver the best possible customer experience.

Despite expansion, a personal touch comes first

The company's plans over the next five years primarily involve the modernisation and expansion of its retail stores. Polona explains: "Our builders' merchants are capital intensive, so renovating them is quite the financial burden. At the same time, we're facing competition from e-commerce, which pushes us to adapt." Despite this, they are driven by their desire to provide in-person advice and give customers the opportunity to see and feel the construction materials, which is often crucial.

They are currently planning the renovation of their retail store in Lesce, with plans to renovate the one in Žabnica afterward. They also want to develop new product ranges, strengthen their online presence, and further develop tourism as an additional sector. "It's vital that we continue to develop our core business while training our sales associates to ensure they are well-versed in our products, sales techniques, and established business practices," Polona adds. Their story is a testament to the fact that strong family bonds, innovation, and adaptability are key to achieving sustainable success in business.

Matjaž and Polonca Tičar

co-owners

Company name: **DOM TRADE d.o.o.**

Number of employees (2023): **94**

Net sales revenue (2023): **€25.6 million**

GABRIJEL ALUMINIUM d.o.o.

Stane Gabrijel, Founder

Andrej Gabrijel, Owner

Gabrijel Aluminium: 60 Years of Growth

Gabrijel Aluminium is a Slovenian family business founded by Stane Gabrijel in the 1960s. From its modest beginnings, the company developed into a global supplier of aluminium components for established international brands, including VW, Samsung, Philips, BSH, Bang & Olufsen, and others. The company manufactures complex decorative aluminium components by using both mechanical and surface treatment of aluminium. In 1999, the company opened an automatised aluminium anodising plant in Lavrica, enabling Gabrijel Aluminium to begin mass production. Their clients include manufacturers of TV sets, screens, computers, AV components, and loudspeakers. They work with manufacturers of household appliances, as well as the automobile, furniture, nautical, aviation, and railway industries, and many others. Due to its aesthetic appeal, lightweight nature, and ease of handling, aluminium is an attractive and highly sought-after material in these fields. Additionally, it is recyclable.

Founder Stane Gabrijel set up his first workshop together with his brother Miro in 1963. A year later, he officially established his own company. In 1991, he handed over the reins to his son Andrej Gabrijel, who remains the majority owner.

Through innovation and expertise, Gabrijel Aluminium delivers competitive solutions on a global scale. The fact that much of its output is exported serves as proof of this. The company employs almost 200 people, and its revenue continues to grow each year. In 2016, it generated revenue of 8.4 million euros; this grew to roughly 25.5 million in 2023. Andrej Gabrijel explains the team's enthusiasm: "The word 'no' is not in our vocabulary. We push forward until we find a solution."



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So far, we haven't shied away from any challenge or turned down any customer. We never stop until we find a solution.

Andrej Gabrijel,
owner

GABRIJEL





Gabrijel Aluminium is celebrating its 60th anniversary this year. From a small family workshop, the company has grown into a world-renowned manufacturer of aluminium components and is committed to quality and excellence.

From noodles to aluminium

The company began with Stane Gabrijel's wish to create something on his own. In the early '60s, he teamed up with his brother Miro, a trained toolmaker, to convert a pigsty into a modest workshop, where they began making cooking accessories. "Our first product was a potato peeler, which was a novelty on the Slovenian market," Stane recalls. He adds that, at the time, authorities were not particularly supportive of small businesses.

Soon after, they began to make noodle-making machines, which quickly became popular throughout the former Yugoslavia, particularly in Vojvodina and Croatia. "Our machines were transported throughout the former Yugoslavia in a Zastava 101 car. They were used by 'egg ladies' who sold eggs and noodles at farmers' markets," adds Andrej.

In the following years, the company explored new markets and expanded its product range, which contributed to its revenue growth. In 1981,

the company opened an aluminium anodising workshop in its (now defunct) facility in Škofljica near Ljubljana. This marked a pivotal shift in the company's focus, moving from kitchen accessories to anodising and decorative aluminium components. The first major orders came from BSH early this century, marking company's specialisation in the manufacture of quality decorative aluminium components. In 2005, they relocated to new facilities in Grosuplje and began processing aluminium using state-of-the-art production lines.

The son's ambition gave the company new wings

In 1972, Stane's wife, Janja Gabrijel, joined the company and assumed responsibility for accounting. Andrej, the second of three children, also helped his dad as a small boy. "When I was ten, I was sorting pieces in my father's workshop. I later moved on to working on the machines." I was

always determined to exceed the production norms. Later on, I enjoyed working in the anodising plant,” recalls Andrej, who became an employee in 1987.

Taking over the company in 1992, aged 25, was a big step for Andrej. He took his father’s business to a new level. “My father never imposed his views on me. He supported me when I wanted to expand the company into industrial design,” Andrej explains. His vision has propelled the company to international success, and Gabrijel Aluminium now collaborates with some of the world’s largest brands. “You were driven by your ambition,” Stane tells Andrej.

Andrej inherited his father’s belief that they can always improve as a company, and that mindset has paid dividends. “At first, things were a bit forced. Sometimes, I worked a day and a half without a break,” Andrej admits, and adds that he soon began to invest in equipment and set up an automatised production line. He did this primarily to ease the burden on workers and to hire leaders, not just workers. “I know how to build teams and create a vision for years, even a decade, in advance. I have a sixth sense for that,” Andrej jokes. This includes the hiring of new managers, such as Marko Arzenšek and Andrej Pezdirc, who each head their own departments in the company. “I left the operations to them. I deal with

strategic matters,” says Andrej. He takes pride in the team spirit and the sense of trust that permeates the company.

Not defined solely by aesthetics

During its six decades of existence, Gabrijel Aluminium has built an excellent reputation as a manufacturer of quality aluminium components. These determine the aesthetic value of a product, something the company values greatly. However, their sense of aesthetics is not their only quality. “Most of all, I’m proud that we are the only provider that has developed a solution in a joint project with Philips.” This was a product range that makes up the outer casing of Senseo coffeemakers. It’s a complex product with a polished surface that cannot be machined by robots. We developed a special 3D polishing machine especially for this purpose,” Andrej explains.

The company is committed to quality, meeting the demands and wishes of their customers, and ensuring their complete satisfaction. They meticulously plan, engineer, and monitor the quality of their products in line with ISO standards. They also track the quality of incoming and outgoing products and issue measurement reports for each product. They emphasise the high job satisfaction and training of their employees,



In the early '60s Stane Gabrijel teamed up with his brother Miro, a trained toolmaker, to convert a pigsty into a modest workshop, where they began making cooking accessories.



Andrej also helped his dad as a small boy. “When I was ten, I was sorting pieces in my father’s workshop. I later moved on to working on the machines.”



Gabrijel Aluminium operates two distinct production lines that work in tandem: mechanical and surface aluminium processing.

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Gabrijel Aluminium celebrated their 60th anniversary in 2024. From a small family workshop, the company has grown into a world-renowned manufacturer of aluminium components and is committed to quality and excellence.



They meticulously plan, engineer, and monitor the quality of their products in line with ISO standards. They also track the quality of incoming and outgoing products and issue measurement reports for each product.

GABRIJEL ALUMINIUM in a nutshell:

quality, aesthetics, innovation, a global mindset, sustainability.

while also maintaining a long-term commitment to sustainability. In 2020, they were awarded by the public agency SPIRIT Slovenia for successfully completing the Academy for a Sustainable Strategic Business Transformation for the period of 2019/2020.

Supporting the local environment

Gabrijel Aluminium invests considerable resources into environmental protection, and this is reflected in their manufacturing processes. As early as the 1980s, they set up their own wastewater treatment plant. Today, they operate in compliance with the highest environmental standards. Their commitment to the environment is an integral part of the company's management system and corporate culture. They aim to prevent all kinds of pollution, while their products are manufactured in a way that minimises their environmental impact.

The company actively supports the local community, primarily in the sports arena. Andrej is a fan and supporter of basketball, serving alternately as a sponsor of the KK Grosuplje, a team he once led. "Through sports, I learned the importance of giving back to society. It's the crucial extra step toward success," Andrej emphasises. He was instrumental in developing local basketball teams and is committed to the principle of fair play.

Greater output = more opportunities

Gabrijel Aluminium operates two distinct production lines that work in tandem: mechanical and surface aluminium processing. The anodising plant is a part of the latter. The company recently set up a new anodising line, a key investment valued at ten million euros. This investment boosted the company's production capacity, fostering growth and enabling the manufacture of higher-quality products. The company plans to expand its mechanical processing and focus on more complex technical and decorative products, while re-purposing old production lines for specific manufacturing processes, thereby ensuring stability and growth for the next five to ten years.

In the near future, the team plans to expand production facilities to more than 12,000 square metres, enabling them to venture into new areas, including e-mobility. "Our vision is to remain a leader in decorative aluminium components in Europe and continue to expand," says Andrej.

Andrej Gabrijel

owner, 80% owned by GABRIJEL HOLDING d.o.o.

Company name:	GABRIJEL ALUMINIUM d.o.o.
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Number of employees (2023):	180
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Net sales revenue (2023):	€25.5 million
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JASON, d.o.o

Uroš Gorjanc, (co-) owner and director of Jason d.o.o.,
Olma d.o.o., and MONTEROSSO d.o.o.

Barbara Gorjanc

Jan Gorjanc

Črt Gorjanc

Bor Gorjanc

Entrepreneurial spirit, courage and hard work are in the family DNA

The Old Post Office, a beautiful and important landmark in the old town centre of Kranj. Several residential and commercial units and land. The company Olma, which commands a large share of the lubricants market in Slovenia and South-East Europe. Monte Rosso, an idyllic Istrian estate with award-winning olive oil and wine. GALVANOTEHNIKA d.o.o., where the tradition of high-quality galvanising continues to this day. The Gorjanc family - whether independently or in partnership - is the force behind all of these ventures.

Uroš Gorjanc, along with his wife Barbara, is firmly following in the footsteps of his ancestors, especially his grandfather Franc, a visionary entrepreneur in the early twentieth century, and his father Alojz Jurij, a renowned ski-jumping coach whose work ethic significantly influenced the family's way of thinking. The fourth generation is gradually becoming involved in the family business, especially sons Črt and Jan, while Bor is still in secondary school. With a strong sense of mutual respect, a commitment to honouring agreements, honesty and sincerity, the Gorjanc family is moving forward in a way that reflects the meaning of their surname: UP! ("gor" in Slovenian means "up").



“

I inherited my grandfather's entrepreneurial spirit along with my father's work ethic, honesty and stubbornness. And I'm trying to pass all this on to my sons. I believe that with hard work, perseverance, honesty, and responsibility they will go on to create opportunities for the future generations of our family.

Uroš Gorjanc,
(co-) owner and director





Uroš and Barbara encouraged their sons from a young age to be independent and responsible, raising them with the understanding that nothing is handed to you on a silver platter.

The Old Post Office: a symbol of the family and the beginning of a real estate journey

"I must have inherited my entrepreneurial spirit from my grandfather," says Uroš Gorjanc. "I also have a knack for juggling multiple tasks and for managing a number of different companies and businesses." Franc Gorjanc was a timber merchant as well as the owner of a quarry, a sawmill, a power station and a warehouse. In 1929 he bought The Old Post Office in the city of Kranj, a historic stop for mail coaches. He transformed it into one of the largest and most modern hotels in Slovenia. After the war, The Old Post Office was nationalised, but in 1994 part of it was returned to the family heirs. Uroš Gorjanc gradually bought it all back, restoring it to family ownership. "The Old Post Office is a symbol of our family," he said, "because it stands as proof that through hard work, perseverance and honesty, anything is possible. This project brings together my grandfather's legacy and the lessons my father taught me: that good deeds are rewarded in kind, and that you can do anything if you put your mind to it."

Encouraged by the success of The Old Post Office, Uroš and Barbara started to grow their real estate portfolio. The Gorjanc family's umbrella

company is Jason d.o.o., which Uroš and his father Alojz Jurij founded in the nineties. What started as a consultancy firm soon became a company dealing in real estate and other assets. It also provided a platform for other family business ventures.

From commercial director to (co-) owner

Following his studies at the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, Uroš Gorjanc initially worked for the companies Iskra Telematika, Gorenjska Biro and Teol, and in 1993 joined Olma as sales manager for the lubricants division. Despite his ever-growing entrepreneurial spirit, he never imagined that Olma would one day evolve into a family business. But the gradual purchase of shares in the company did exactly that, and today Olma is 100% owned by the Gorjanc and Dubokovič families. "We have built on our vast experience in lubricant production with modern technology and robotisation," Uroš explains. "Today, with Olma, not only do we control a significant share of the lubricants market in Slovenia, we also produce lubricants for other brands and we perform laboratory measurements for external customers, too. We are also responsible for a large proportion of AdBlue production, the automotive fluid."

When the whole family pitches in

The Old Post Office has since become a multi-generational family project. Uroš's wife Barbara initially worked as a teacher of German and history at the local Škofja Loka secondary school. As the business began to take up a lot of Uroš's time and energy, Barbara took on a greater role in raising the children. After more than two decades in the teaching profession, she too joined the family business. She and her son Črt took over management of the Panorama Café in The Old Post Office. How does she remember her initial foray in the world of business? "It's hard to compare teaching in a school with entrepreneurship," she says. "If you're used to a steady routine, with pre-planned meetings and events, it's hard to get used to the chaos of running a business and adapting to unplanned situations. The public sector and the private sector each have their advantages and disadvantages, of course."

The fourth generation enters the business arena

The Panorama Café was therefore a baptism of fire for son Črt, a mechanical engineer and future Master of Economics, as he gained some hands-on experience through this small business project. Črt also reflects on that time: "I have no regrets that I entered the world of entrepreneurship so

early, while I was still a student. There were many times when, instead of enjoying my free time, I found myself in the office tackling issues related to the café. But I also learned how to work with people and how to run a company, even in times of crisis like during the Covid pandemic."

It was on Črt's initiative that in 2022 the family decided to buy a majority stake in GALVANOTEHNIKA d.o.o., a company specialising in galvanising. Now, within that company, Črt is gaining valuable experience in both business development and employee management, providing him with a solid foundation for managing more complex structures owned by the family. On his position in GALVANOTEHNIKA d.o.o. and his increasingly important role in the family businesses, he says: "We took over Galvanotehnika because it complements our main activities within the group. I have a free hand in the company, which I am very happy about because it boosts my confidence as an entrepreneur. Nonetheless, my father is always there to give me advice. I see the future centred around our family group."

Olive and wine paradise with a view of Piran

In addition to Olma, the Gorjanc and Dubokovič families have another successful entrepreneurial story to tell. The sixty-five-hectare Monte Rosso estate in the coastal village of Crveni vrh in the middle of Croatia's beautiful Istrian countryside is a veritable paradise, with its fifty thousand grapevines, fourteen thousand olive trees, two thousand cherry trees and six hundred



In 1929, Franc Gorjanc bought the old post office in Kranj, where postal carriages used to stop. He expanded it into one of the largest and most modern hotels in Slovenia.



After studying at the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, Uroš Gorjanc initially worked in various companies, and in 1993 he joined the team at Olma as the sales manager for lubricants.

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Their real estate business and land portfolio, the companies Olma d.o.o. and Jason d.o.o., GALVANOTEHNIKA d.o.o., the Monte Rosso estate... The Gorjanc family business is moving forward in a way that reflects the meaning of their surname: UP! (“gor” in Slovenian means “up”).



As the fourth generation becomes increasingly involved in the business, they have prepared a family constitution, which outlines the key ways of operating and the fundamental values that have always reflected the DNA of the Gorjanc family.



Monte Rosso wine and olive oil degustation.

JASON in a nutshell:

entrepreneurial spirit, courage, diversity, opportunities, responsibility

almond and fig trees. When the olive trees and vines are at peak harvest, the estate will produce over thirty thousand litres of olive oil and over fifty thousand bottles of wine. Both products are already winning recognition and awards at international competitions.

The oldest son, Jan, is a co-creator of this story, managing the estate's social media presence. Although his first passion is music - having completed his undergraduate studies in London and currently pursuing a double Master's degree at the Academy of Music in Trieste, where he works as a choirmaster - he is also intrigued by the workings of the family business.

Even in a family business, opportunities must be earned

Uroš and Barbara raised their sons to be independent and responsible, instilling in them the belief that nothing is simply handed to you on a plate. Even in the family business you have to earn the opportunity. All of them worked in the family business during their secondary school and university years. The couple have been gradually preparing them for a more serious step into the business world. "We want our sons to understand what responsible ownership means and to see it as an opportunity, not just for themselves but for future generations as well," says Uroš Gorjanc. With the fourth generation becoming increasingly involved in the business, the family has drawn up a family constitution, outlining key operating principles and core values that have long been the essence of the Gorjanc family's DNA: respect, stability, entrepreneurship, knowledge, and a healthy lifestyle.

But what does the future hold? Maybe it's worth asking the youngest member of the family, Bor, who is planning to pursue a technical degree. Does he also see himself in one of the family businesses? "My first goal is to do as well as I can in my final year of secondary school and get into the university of my choice," he says. "I also want to help out in the family business - but how exactly, we'll see."

Uroš, Barbara, Jan, Črt, and Bor Gorjanc

co-owners

Company name:	JASON, d.o.o.
Number of employees (2023):	2
Net sales revenue (2023):	€2.3 million

MALALAN d.o.o. Ljubljana

Peter Malalan, CEO

Karmen Malalan, Head of Purchasing

Jure Malalan, Manager of the Zagreb store

Tjaša Malalan, Chief Jewellery Designer and Creative Director

Ivana Malalan, Manager of the Ljubljana jewellery store and Head of Digitalisation

Timelessness forged into watches and jewellery

Malalan is a company driven by determination and fuelled by a passion for jewellery and timepieces, now carried on by the third generation of the family. The cornerstone of the company is timelessness, while their slogan – We forge your dreams into eternity – is a pledge that the family has been turning into reality for three quarters of a century.

Situated in the heart of Ljubljana, the Malalan Jewellery Store captivates at first sight, offering a collection that exemplifies watchmaking and jewellery craftsmanship. The store sells high-end watches and jewellery and is the certified service location for the most prestigious Swiss watch brands. The family store includes a goldsmith workshop, where they create their own lines of gold and silver jewellery. Their range of watchmaking and jewellery partnerships was built gradually, over the course of many years. These days, Malalan is partner of prestigious global watch brands such as Rolex, Cartier, IWC Schaffhausen, as well as leading names in jewellery, such as Pomellato, Pasquale Bruni, and Messika. Their range of products includes no fewer than 25 exceptional brands.

Above all, the Malalans prioritise family values that extend far beyond their business ambitions. Anton Malalan, the father, introduced his three sons to the business in his native Opicina. Peter, the youngest son, who heads Malalan's Ljubljana and Zagreb stores, moved to Ljubljana more than twenty years ago. He made the move with his wife Karmen, and it's in the capital where the two of them began to create their own success story. The company eventually expanded its business to Croatia, where they now operate a stylish jewellery store offering the same range of products in the heart of Zagreb. The third generation of the Malalan family – Peter's three children: Tjaša, Jure, and Ivana – are now involved in the family business.

The Malalan family members are dedicated to crafting and preserving valuable memories that their owners will cherish the rest of their lives. They employ more than 40 workers, who help to craft jewellery across three stores – two in Ljubljana and one in Zagreb, led by Peter's son Jure and his wife Natali. The company is seeking exceptional and committed new employees. They employ seven watchmakers and seven goldsmiths, while also training and financially supporting the next generation of watchmaking professionals.



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We're making valuable, emotionally meaningful family jewellery that is passed down as an heirloom and becomes priceless over the years.

Peter Malalan,
CEO





Every success of the Malalan company was the result of many years of work and a great deal of patience.

A commitment to hard work and precision

The Malalan family has a long and colourful history that dates back to the postwar period. In 1949, Anton Malalan, a skilled watchmaker, converted a barn in the town of Opicina, above Trieste, into a small watchmaking workshop. Back then, the business environment was challenging, but Anton believed in the value of hard work and precision. "My father repaired watches his own way. During the day, he dismantled mechanisms and cleaned them, and in the evening, he reassembled them while listening to the radio at home," Peter recalls.

The family company grew slowly but surely with the support of Anton's wife Angelca. In addition to repairing watches, they soon began to sell watches and jewellery because they wanted to expand their range of services. The Malalans proved their mettle in a challenging market, which allowed them to forge links with prestigious brands.

The Malalans were both visionary and pragmatic in equal measure. They involved their three sons in the family business and guided them toward promising fields. One trained as a watchmaker, one as an optician, and one as a jeweller.

In 1992, the youngest son, Peter, opened his first shop in Ljubljana along with his wife Karmen. Initially, it served purely as a display window, where people could view various collections before heading to Opicina to buy the products. In 1998, Peter made a pivotal decision that marked a significant turning point for both him and his family: he parted ways with his brothers and relocated to Ljubljana. His brothers still live in Opicina with their families. Darko successfully runs a jewellery store, while Milko manages an eyewear shop popular among Slovenians. Peter's wife Karmen, a veterinarian by profession, remembers that period as a turning point: "At first, I wasn't sure whether to pursue my profession or join the company. I soon figured out that everything in the company is done with great

passion. I found that wonderful, so I decided to join.” Karmen’s impressions proved to be spot on, and she has remained an invaluable member of the company. Managing this, while raising three teenagers, was no easy feat. Karmen and Peter excelled in this area as well. Each of their three children has discovered their passion and area of focus within the family business. Over the years, the company expanded, opening two additional locations and hiring a team of young watchmakers, jewellery designers, and sales representatives.

Wooing Rolex for eight years

Each successful milestone achieved by Malalan is the result of years of hard work and immense patience. One of the key breakthroughs that paved the way for other cooperation agreements was their years of effort to obtain Rolex’s certification. Peter recalls his numerous trips to Switzerland and the eight years he spent attending fairs, despite his early lack of success. But his persistence paid off. The company is now a certified sales and service partner of prestigious watch brands such as Rolex, Cartier, Breitling, and Tudor. After completing demanding training in Switzerland, Peter’s son Jure is now certified to repair prestigious Rolex watches.

The family’s commitment to quality is evident from their decision to set up a service centre for customers, fostering a long-lasting relationship that begins with the purchase of a watch. The family is committed to ensuring that their products stay in perfect condition for as long as possible, allowing

them to become cherished heirlooms. They see the purchase of a valuable watch or piece of jewellery as a special experience, an event linked to major milestones and people who are loved. “The magic is in the timelessness; everything we sell will still be current 50 or 60 years from now,” says Tjaša.

The hard work lives on through their children

The Malalan family’s personal and professional lives are closely intertwined. The family says that Karmen is not just the purchaser, but also the treasurer because she is in charge of purchasing jewellery, supplier relations, and acts as the backbone of the company.

Over the years, each of the children has joined the company in their own unique way. Tjaša, who studied industrial design, is now the company’s chief designer of jewellery collections and its Creative Director. At first, she resisted the call of the family tradition, but she soon realised that the world of jewellery and watches isn’t just skin-deep. “My father contributed to this by never forcing me to work. Instead, he encouraged my creativity and helped me find a way to love this business.” I value his perspective; I can always turn to him for advice when I want to design something fresh and different. He has a strong sense of aesthetics,” Tjaša explains.

Jure began to work in the company while studying economics. In Italy, he trained as a watchmaker. Since 2016, he has managed the Malalan store in Zagreb, where he now lives with his young family. If given the choice



The Malalans were both visionaries and practical. They involved their three sons in their business and helped them choose promising professional fields.



The Malalan company boasts numerous achievements. In addition to certificates for prestigious brands, they have also developed their own Malalan jewelry collection, which they sell in Slovenia and Croatia.

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This year, Malalan family members are celebrating the 75th anniversary of their business. From its beginnings in a small watchmaking workshop, the company has grown and now works with the most distinguished names in prestigious watchmaking and jewellery craftsmanship, including Rolex, Cartier, Breitling, and Tudor.



In 1949, Anton Malalan, who was a trained watchmaker, converted a stable and opened a small watchmaking workshop in his hometown of Opčine near Trieste.



In 1992, Peter Malalan, together with his wife Karmen, opened his first shop in Ljubljana.

MALALAN in a nutshell:

family, timelessness, tradition, quality, storytelling.

between jewellery and watches, he would choose watches: “By buying a watch, the customer gives himself a gift and a reward. It’s a piece of men’s jewellery that retains its value and becomes priceless over the years.”

Ivana, the youngest daughter, spent three years in France after high school and trained to become a pastry chef. In the company, however, she took over the management of the jewellery store in Ljubljana. In recent years, she has spent considerable time digitalising the company and its administrative support.

Peter and Karmen realise that they are approaching a crucial juncture: the succession of the company. They hope their children will work together in harmony and share the responsibility of the family legacy. “I can see that our story and our efforts continue through our children. This gives me a sense of optimism,” says Peter proudly. He adds that his children will be free to make their own decisions about the future of the company.

Selling only natural diamonds

The company boasts numerous achievements. In addition to certificates for prestigious brands, they have also developed their own collection of Malalan jewellery, which is sold in Slovenia and Croatia.

They have decided not to sell laboratory-made diamonds, focusing only on natural ones, because they believe in sustainability. Peter emphasises that their gemstones carry a story passed down through generations. “The choice of gemstones is our way of respecting the environment and the heritage of our profession,” explains the CEO. They also ensure the ethical sourcing of gemstones, making sure their origin is never problematic. Because of this, their diamond suppliers are certified and registered on diamond exchanges.

Solidity and sustainability for further growth

The future of the Malalan company is closely linked to its digitalisation and the integration of new technologies, which will further enhance business efficiency and improve quality. Jure, who manages the company’s store in Zagreb, says that digitalisation is the key to their further growth. They invest significant resources into the company’s corporate structure, internal procedures and organisation, a skilled workforce, and the optimisation of

work processes. “We aim to adapt to the demands of today’s market while preserving the value of our history,” says Jure.

Despite efforts to modernise, the company remains rooted in tradition. Peter emphasises that each product must be made to the highest standards of quality and precision. He explains his business philosophy this way: “When I picked up a teaspoon while eating dessert, I quickly found parallels with our business. Anyone can make a spoon, but to make an equally good spoon every day and then to improve on it – not everyone can do that.”

Peter Malalan

owner

Company name: **MALALAN d.o.o. Ljubljana**

Number of employees (2023): **40**

Net sales revenue (2023): **€13.5 million**

MAROVT GROUP d.o.o.

Tomaž Marovt, Owner and Founder of Marovt Group

Metka Marovt, Owner and Founder of Marovt Group

Five connected companies, three connected generations

More than 50 years of advanced manufacturing. This is the slogan of the Marovt Group, whose family of companies include Marovt, the Gazelle of the Savinja-Zasavje Region recipient, as well as MTEH, Inkolteh, Aklimat and Enset. These specialised companies cover various fields in synergy, ranging from high-quality forging, the automation and robotisation of production processes, and IT architecture to the manufacturing of designer aluminium radiators and complete solar energy system solutions. The story of these companies began in a modest workshop.

The leadership of Tomaž and Metka Marovt, the 2021 Entrepreneurs of the Year, company Marovt and the Marovt Group have grown into one of the fastest growing Slovenian companies and a solid umbrella group. Even though most entrepreneurs favour separating professional and private lives, their approach to success is the opposite. For more than two decades, they have spent almost 24 hours a day together. Their three children, Tijan, Mišel and Tim, grew up alongside the company and are now becoming actively involved in its operations.



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Our priority is to keep the company family-owned, but not at any price. It is important that the owners support growth and development. Time will tell us how best to proceed.

Tomaž Marovt,
CEO

MAROVIT[®]

SION F O R G I N G





Under the leadership of Tomaž and Metka Marovt company Marovt and the Marovt Group grew into one of the fastest growing Slovenian companies and a solid umbrella group.

Following in the footsteps of his parents

The origins of the company date back to 1971, when Oto Marovt, the father of Tomaž the current CEO and Owner, began his career as an entrepreneur, despite the challenging conditions for entrepreneurs at the time. When he founded it, he invested all his savings into the company, so there was no way back. Despite numerous problems and obstacles, he always looked ahead with determination. He began to manufacture forgings, set up his own tool shop, and within a few years had a manufacturing facility and long-term customers. Oto's wife Olga was involved with the company from the outset, initially alongside her full-time job. She was in charge of finances and accounting.

The entrepreneurial and private lives of the Marovt family were already intertwined during the previous generation's leadership. Even as a child, Tomaž had a role in the company and was familiar with its challenges: "It affected how I grew up, and I often had to adjust my personal plans to the needs of the business. But there were also advantages, such as travel abroad, which was a rare and interesting experience at the time."

A shift to the second generation

Nowadays, Tomaž feels that the decision to take over the company was "natural and logical because I had felt that this was the right path for me since I was a child." Therefore, his decision to study at the University of Ljubljana's Faculty of Mechanical Engineering was an easy one. He spent years working with his father Oto and mother Olga: "The transfer of ownership and the CEO position didn't happen overnight. It was a long-term process," he explains, adding that they managed to navigate a period of joint ownership of the small business and the company, with him taking the helm in 1999. "My parents gradually withdrew from the company," he recalls. "Unfortunately, our plans were upended by my mother's sudden illness. After her death, my father withdrew from day-to-day operations and took on the role of a mentor. My parents unambiguously supported my decisions and helped to shape both my career and my personal life," he adds.

At the turn of the millennium, Tomaž's wife Metka also joined the company. That is when, according to Tomaž, their home became an office and their office became their home: "We didn't separate our private lives from our

work, and we still live like that. That suits us perfectly and we have no intention of changing it.”

Family ownership, but not at any price

Metka's and Tomaž's children, sons Tijan and Tim, and daughter Mišel, have been connected with the family business and are now all involved in its operations. All three share a love for sports, which, according to Metka, led them “to develop a work ethic, persistence, discipline, and patience. These are all priceless values in the business world.”

Tijan, who is still a professional skier, and Tim are completing their university studies. Mišel is currently pursuing her graduate studies in the US, from where she handles the company's American customers. She had previously expanded the company's operations to new markets. After a serious sports injury, Tim devised a patented rehabilitation device, which led the company to consider entering the medical field in addition to automotive, furniture, defense, and nautical industries. “The project to develop a rehabilitation machine is based on his personal experience with post-injury rehab. That experience took him from being bound to a wheelchair to a competitor in the world's leading marathons,” Metka explains. Tijan focuses primarily on development and innovation projects, while Tijan's partner Aneja works as

the head of the marketing and industrial design team. This was a strategic decision, the Marovt Group expanded its range by introducing products bearing their own brand.

Even though family ownership has its advantages because the family can come together in a crisis, it has potential challenges as well, especially when multiple generations are involved. That is why Tomaž and Metka are fairly pragmatic when it comes to the company's ownership structure. “Our priority is to keep the company in the family, but not at any price. It is important that the owners support the growth and development of the company,” explains Tomaž.

Inevitable, invaluable changes

Tomaž considers the move from a “traditional small craftsman approach to a more industrial, digitalised, automated model” as one of the key changes in the company's operations. He adds that this allows the company to tackle both the positive and negative challenges of technological advancement and modernisation. Because of this, both his and his wife's roles have changed. They now focus primarily on the company's strategic orientation. In keeping with the spirit of the times, the company realises the importance of sustainable development and anticipates a transformation that requires



One of the main changes in the company and the parent group was the shift in mindset from traditional ‘craftsmanship’ to a more industrial, digitized, and robotized approach.

NA STRANICAH STROJNO KOVAŠTVO

Z ZNANJEM IN ODLOČNOSTJO NAPREJ

Oto in Olga Marovt poznata pravo pot

Ob robu gozda, ki skriva pred pogledi in sluhi hrup, je na Stranicaх zrasla delavnica Oto in Olga Marovt. V njej s sedmimi delavci ustvarjajo kovaške, orodjarske in ključavničarske izdelke. Res lahko rečemo, da jih ustvarjajo, saj se vse izoblikuje doma – od zama-

si, do izdelane tehnologije, sami naredijo orodje, s katerim potem izdelujejo odkovke, ki jih še obdelajo. V zaključnem krogu lahko uredimo celo naročila. Tako verjetno tudi želja, da bi posamezne izdelke finalizirali, ni daleč od uredništv. Pri tako odločnih obrtnikih, ki

znajo svoje znanje tako dobro uporabiti, je mogoče doseči skoraj vse. Tudi pretekla leta to dokazujejo.

Oto je vrsto let kot strojni tehnik preživel v Kovski industriji v Zrečah, kjer se je srečal s vsimi deli, vse do obratovnice. Kot so pravila vseh izdelkov, je bil tudi njegov samostojen začetek v kovaštvu skromen in tih. Toda majhna delavnica v Vitanju je imela pravega mojstra, ki je znal poudariti potrebni korak, zlasti pa avtoindustriji prave odkovke. Po tem, ko so se preselili na Stranice, je delo kmalu zahtevalo še več rok in Olgino izdelavo drobnih kovinskih predmetov so pridružili kovaštvu. Tako je lažje voditi knjigovodstvo.

Danes izdelujejo zlasti strojno izdelane odkovke, pri katerih obdelujejo kvalitetne materiale. Delo zahteva veliko točnost, vendar se to obrestuje. Odkovski iz njihove delavnice potujejo po vsej Jugoslaviji, največ v sodelovanju s nekaterimi delovnimi organizacijami. Z Rudarskim elektroenergetskim kombinatom Velenje so na primer osvojili komplet hidravlični sistem za rudniško opremo, z Železarno Štore sodelujejo pri izdelavi traktorjev in še bi lahko na-

ševali. Značilno je, da je pri njih vsako delo dolgočasno, vendar na večje serije. Vedo za koga in kaj bodo delali. Prilagodijo se skupaj tako v kvaliteto kot v rok. Pravzaprav je to recept za uspeh, za neko naraščanje naročil. Saj je bilo potrebnih skoraj deset let vestnega dela, da so si ustvarili pri velikih delovnih organizacijah polno zaupanje.

Kljub vsem dosežkom niso tujci problemi. Takrat, s kakršnimi se pač danes pri nas srečujemo. Material. Ne le, da je trdi-

še, z njimi slabo oskrbljeno in je zaradi tega le z velikimi večjimi napori mogoče doseči iste rezultate kot na primer tani, tudi kvaliteta ni prava. Materiali, ki jih pri nas ne izvozimo, so kar praviloma slabše kvalitete in iz njih je le težko narediti prvostopne odkovke za izvoz. Veliko energije in odločnosti je treba vložiti v premagovanje teh težav.

Cepav pri Marovtovi namenja toliko pozornosti tehnologiji in izdelkom, nikoli ne pozabljajo,

da jih delajo ljudje. Sedem delavcev je pri njih zaposlenih. Navdili so se svojega dela in vse kaže, da so se tudi dobro ujele. Vsi Upokojenci pravice drug drugega, pri čemer jim pomaga tudi kolektivna pogodba. Tako imajo vsi kolektivni dopust julija in kar je tudi pomembno vsek dan toplo malico, ki jo pripravljajo na straniški osnovni šoli. Dobri delavci, dobri delovni pogoji in dobra organizacija dela so in zagotovo tudi bodo pri Marovtovi le opolnomočilec.



Olga in Oto Marovt pred delavnico na Stranicaх.



Delavnica je še potrebna razširiti, tako da bo prostor tudi za izdelavo orodja za rivaše potrebna.

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One of the main changes in the company and the umbrella group was a shift in the mindset from traditional, craft-oriented work to more industrial, digitalised, and automated operations.

The beginning of the company Marovt dates back to 1971, when Oto Marovt, the father of the current director, embarked on his own entrepreneurial journey, later joined by his wife Olga.



The company has already made important steps in the area of energy efficiency, self-sufficiency and process optimisation.

Marovt in a nutshell:

automation, synergy, relationship-building, pragmatism, and a connection between family and professional lives.



The Marovt Group works in close synergy, enabling us to provide integrated solutions to achieve high operational efficiency and sustainable development.



Marovt products are also used in different medical applications, one of them being medical implants.

the involvement of all stakeholders. "Within the company, we have began to develop plans, which we will implement over the next five years to ensure a sustainable, bright future," Metka explains. They have already made important steps in the area of energy efficiency, self-sufficiency and process optimisation.

A structured glimpse of the future

On 31 December 2023, the Marovt Group had a revenue of €43.6 million, 68.8 percent of which came from foreign markets, and had 227 employees. Going forward, they will strive to make the best possible use of corporate synergies and reduce risk by spreading their operations across various markets and fields. Because coordinating the operation of five companies is demanding, they are slowly introducing independent management groups for the companies: "These groups will be led either by family members or by outside experts. The decision will be based exclusively on the competence and results of each individual," Metka explains. Tomaž adds: "I believe we're on the right track and that, with joint responsibility and an awareness of the importance of entrepreneurship, we will successfully overcome all challenges and continue to grow and develop."

Metka and Tomaž Marovt

co-owners

Company name: **MAROVT GROUP d.o.o.**

Number of employees (2023): **227**

Net sales revenue (2023): **€43.6 million**

METALIKA d.o.o.

Igor Arh, Owner and authorised representative

Katarina Uršič, employed in Administration and Accounting Department

Lovro Arh, Work Preparation Head

Vito Arh, Student responsible for Sales and, in part, Purchasing

Metalika: Furnishing Megayachts with Wood Products

Metalika, based in the Posavje region, combines tradition, innovation, and a commitment to family values. Today, the company specialises in interior furnishings for ships and yachts, a niche focus that has driven their success and growth. "Over the past six or seven years, we have shifted our focus more on furnishing megayachts and superyachts. In addition to making furniture, we also assemble it. We've also developed complete engineering solutions and proprietary project management," explains owner Igor Arh and adds that they can deliver a project from start to finish. They are embracing the concept of Industry 4.0 and showcasing their innovative spirit with Nautilus Sleeping Pods for ships.

They face virtually no competition on the domestic market, with only one other company in Slovenia producing similar products. Their primary markets are the Netherlands, Germany, Italy, and Finland, where they face significantly more competition. The company's growth is also reflected in their statistics. Over the past five years, they increased their sales by almost 70%, with the majority of their revenue coming from foreign markets, spanning from Spain to Russia. The value-added amount last year was 59,677 euros per employee, almost 40% above the industry average.

They attribute their success to a blend of tradition and a modern approach. After all, this is a family business with a joinery heritage now passed down to the fourth generation. Everyone in the family is committed to keeping the company involved in the local community while also building its international reputation.





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Entrepreneurship truly is a way of life. That's not an empty slogan. Whether you want it or not, the whole family is involved.

Igor Arh,
Owner



Igor's great-grandfather opened the first carpentry workshop in the family around the year 1902.

Choosing ships over kitchens and room furnishings

The story of Metalika officially began in 2002, when wood science and technology engineer Igor Arh laid the foundations for the company by focusing on interior furnishings for ships. From the outset, he was determined to go beyond traditional joinery and carved out his own niche in the market. "I didn't want to be tied to the construction industry, making kitchens and room furnishings like everyone else." After some thought, we decided on ships, an area where I had my own vision, even though I was starting from scratch," he recalls. They delivered their first projects without their own manufacturing line by coordinating the work across various workshops. They started their own manufacturing in 2003

in leased facilities and moved it to their own facility in Sevnica in 2005. Since then, they have gradually increased their workforce. Today, they employ 32.

Sons Lovro and Vito grew up alongside Metalika. "The company wasn't where we first encountered woodworking; that happened at home, where we had a few machines that Dad and Grandad operated." As children, we would carve toys or ship models from wood," says Lovro, who is currently completing his master's studies in wood science and technology and heads up the work preparation department. Just like Lovro, Vito also began working in the company's manufacturing department while he was still in high school. "After high school, I transitioned to purchasing. Now, I'm responsible for pricing strategy, sales, and a segment of purchasing," explains Vito, who is currently studying project management in Milan.

Igor's partner Katarina is also employed by the company. She takes care of administration and human resources. She mostly works from home, as the couple have three daughters in addition to their two sons. "Slovenians say that the wife holds up three corners of a home. Mine holds up three and a half. She allows me to focus on my work and pursue my vision, while also creating a supportive environment for everything," Igor explains.

First to develop sleeping pods

Metalika has built a reputation for niche solutions in the nautical industry. It combines exceptional joinery skills with advanced composite materials and engineering-driven approaches. They were the first in the world to develop pods for cruise ships, and those pods have found their way aboard many ships. The Nautilus Sleeping Pods, as they named them, are both practical and aesthetic. "We recognised that the trend of pods could expand from hostels and hotels to ships," Igor explains. He adds that when they showcased them at trade fairs, boat owners often wondered: "What are these boxes for?" Interest in the sleeping pods

eventually grew, and they were purchased for use on four ships this year; three are already at sea, while one is being completed. "We have a product that may well be ahead of its time. It's up to us to determine how best to market it," says Igor.

Another of Metalika's strengths is its use of high-quality materials and modern technologies. The team adapts its products to meet customer demands, making each project unique. "In the end, what the customers want from us is always the most important thing. This guides our direction for development as a company," Lovro explains.

The sons gradually embraced working for the business

Working in a family business has both advantages and drawbacks. Although they strive to keep work separate from their family life, they often find themselves discussing business even during lunch. "We try to keep business separate from our private lives, although, to be honest, our lives are too intertwined with business," says Igor.



The company offers apprenticeships and scholarships, employs carpenters, and actively works with young people.

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Over the past five years, they increased their sales by almost 70%, with the majority of their revenue coming from foreign markets, spanning from Spain to Russia.



Another of Metalika's strengths is its use of high-quality materials and modern technologies. The team adapts its products to meet customer demands, making each project unique.

Metalika in a nutshell:

tradition, innovation, quality, cooperation, niche focus.

The transfer of the business to the next generation is a process that Metalika is handling prudently and gradually. Lovro and Vito remain highly-active in their respective roles, continuing to be the pillars of the company and its future. "Our sons are working as hard as they can. Their new ideas even give me a boost," says their proud father. He emphasises that he never pressured them to work in the company. "I never felt any pressure; both my brother and I gradually developed our enthusiasm for this line of work." Everything came naturally to us," says Vito.

Igor is well aware of the importance of keeping work separate, which is why he stepped down from the CEO role in 2019. As the Owner and Procurator, Igor is still involved in the company, but he has passed on some of the responsibilities to Matjaž Kitek, who continues to serve as CEO.

And the 2024 Gazelle Award for the Dolenjska-Posavje region goes to...

Metalika is this year's recipient of the prestigious Gazelle Award for entrepreneurs in the Dolenjska-Posavje region. The award is presented by the Dnevnik media company to Slovenia's fastest-growing companies. Igor Arh was nominated for the Entrepreneur of the Year title last year and ended up receiving the 2023 Entrepreneurial Role Model Award. "I'm glad that we were nominated and that we ranked among Slovenia's top five entrepreneurs. That's a nice achievement. It means we're above average."

In addition to excellent business results, the company has been actively involved with local educational institutions and, more recently, has offered scholarships. They invest considerable resources in young people. They aim to introduce young people to modern woodworking technology and show them that it's not just about hard work. "We're striving to attract an educated workforce, which we then develop further. We're gradually succeeding, but we've invested at least ten years of work into this," the CEO explains.

Investing in employees as a key priority

In the future, the company wants to focus on further digitalisation and process optimisation. "Our main goal is to optimise and upgrade our

skills and then pass them on to the younger generation as effectively as possible," says Vito. Another goal is to increase the range of turnkey projects, while ensuring high flexibility and quality. Like many other companies, they face problems finding staff. They would like to expand their collaboration with educational institutions, continue to offer scholarships, and promote their profession through apprenticeships, which they are organising with the Krško-Sevnica and Novo Mesto School Centres. They plan to invest more into their employees and align their mindset and work approach with that of the people.

Since they do not have a truly generic product, they must closely monitor the market and adjust to its needs. "The sleeping pod may be our standard product, but it's designed in a way that allows us to customise it for each customer," Igor explains. They recognise their adaptability as a key advantage for growth and returning customers.

Metalika is a role model that demonstrates how boldness, commitment, and family ties can lead to a company's success.

Igor Arh

owner

Company name:

METALIKA d.o.o.

Number of employees (2023):

32

Net sales revenue (2023):

€5.8 million

RLS d.o.o.

Janez Novak, Founder and CEO

Matija Novak, Director

A Leader in Measurement Systems

Size is not an indicator of importance. According to its CEO and founder Janez Novak, RLS Measurement Technology “makes little things that end up as part of big things.” RLS is a Slovenian business with 290 employees. Its sensors can be found in many different industries, including robotics, medicine, and even space technology.

The sensors deliver precise measurements of positions and movements, playing a key role in monitoring speed, angularity, and other parameters in various high-tech devices. The company generates 95 percent of its revenue abroad, primarily in the EU, the US, Japan, China, and South Korea.

The Komenda-based business has been synonymous with innovation in measurement technology and advanced sensors for more than three decades. It makes motion and rotary sensors, which are found primarily in manufacturing robots and cobots, but are also used in e-mobility and space technology, where they are built into satellites. The company ended the most recent fiscal year with nine-percent growth and a per-employee added value of 101,210 euros. The company embodies family values, international cooperation, and a corporate culture that blends responsibility, creativity, and a deep sense of belonging to the local community.

Matija Novak, the founder’s son, is now taking over the reins of the company, named after its motion sensors (Rotary and Linear motion Sensors). Janez remains involved in the company as a consultant and supervisor.



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Growth comes organically. I also grew up with this company, in Slovenia.

Janez Novak,
CEO





Initially, RLS manufactured devices for the industry, but soon shifted to the development of measuring instruments for detecting movements and magnetic sensors.

An entrepreneurial breakthrough in challenging times

In 1989, amid high inflation and economic uncertainty in Yugoslavia, Janez made the bold decision to quit his job at Iskra, despite being newly married and expecting a child. Just a few months later, he set up his own company. During a time when Yugoslav dinars were being exchanged for German marks, he began to pave his own entrepreneurial journey. Although he co-founded the company together with a former colleague from Iskra, both agreed that Janez would continue the business by himself. At first, RLS manufactured devices for industry, but soon moved into the development of motion-measuring instruments and magnetic sensors. "I thought about improving some things. I set up a connection with the Faculty of Electrical Engineering and we entered the arena with advanced sensors and integrated circuits for processing those signals," explains the founder.

One of the first breakthroughs came when RLS developed a system for detecting magnet movement, an innovation now found in many industrial applications.

To gazelle-like leaps with trusted partners

At the turn of the millennium, Janez met David McMurtry at a trade fair. One idea led to another, and soon RLS formed a partnership with Renishaw, a British company that now co-owns RLS alongside Janez. This is a mutually beneficial relationship that offers advantages to both parties, explains Janez. "We have synergy in the market. Our customers are very much alike, and we share a sales network." Both Janez and Matija feel that the companies are similar, with Renishaw serving as a role model and reference point for the Komenda-based company. However, RLS continues to optimise its process in its own way. Despite its international connections, RLS is firmly rooted in Slovenia. It has

extended its cooperation network with other entities, forging links with universities, which accelerates its development even further. And that development has been intense, even gazelle-like. After all, the company was awarded the 2015 Golden Gazelle for the fastest-growing company in Slovenia, one of many prizes and accolades the company has received.

By investing in development and innovation, the company is building a solid foundation for the future, which, according to statistics, looks promising. Last year, it generated 44 million euros in revenue, while its profit was 7.95 million euros.

We need to worry when we run out of challenges

Janez always ensured that his children – he has three daughters in addition to Matija – did not feel any moral obligation to work in the company. They were always free to choose their careers. But the children always remained in touch with the company. “We were always involved. We designed logos, shovelled sand in front of the headquarters, and helped pave the courtyard – but that was just for fun,” Matija remembers. As a student, he worked in the company’s manufacturing division, but was more interested in management. Both technology and business intrigued him. Because the family company combines both, Matija decided to join RLS

after completing his studies of economics, as he was beginning his studies at the Faculty of Electrical Engineering. Today, he heads RLS’s operations.

The leadership succession took place in stages, with strong support from his father. Janez, who describes starting his entrepreneurial journey modestly by doing “the dirtiest jobs,” always knew he would eventually have to step away from the company. That said, he never considered selling it. Matija saw the company as a blend of advanced technology and business potential, and saw succeeding his father as both an honour and a responsibility for the company’s future. “A business is a living organism. It changes all the time. There are always challenges. Thirty years ago, they looked different from what they look like today. Back then, the company was smaller, with around 20 employees. Today we have almost 300,” says Matija and adds that we need to be worried when we run out of challenges. Overcoming challenges is something Janez could always manage, Matija explains. After all, he “always knew what the company needed for successful development and sustained growth.”

Committed to progress, growth, and colleagues

RLS views itself as an inclusive company committed to progress. “Our guiding principle is a constant desire to do more,” says Matija. A sense of responsibility is encouraged among the employees. The company boasts a



One of the first breakthroughs came when RLS developed a system for detecting magnet movement, an innovation now found in many industrial applications.



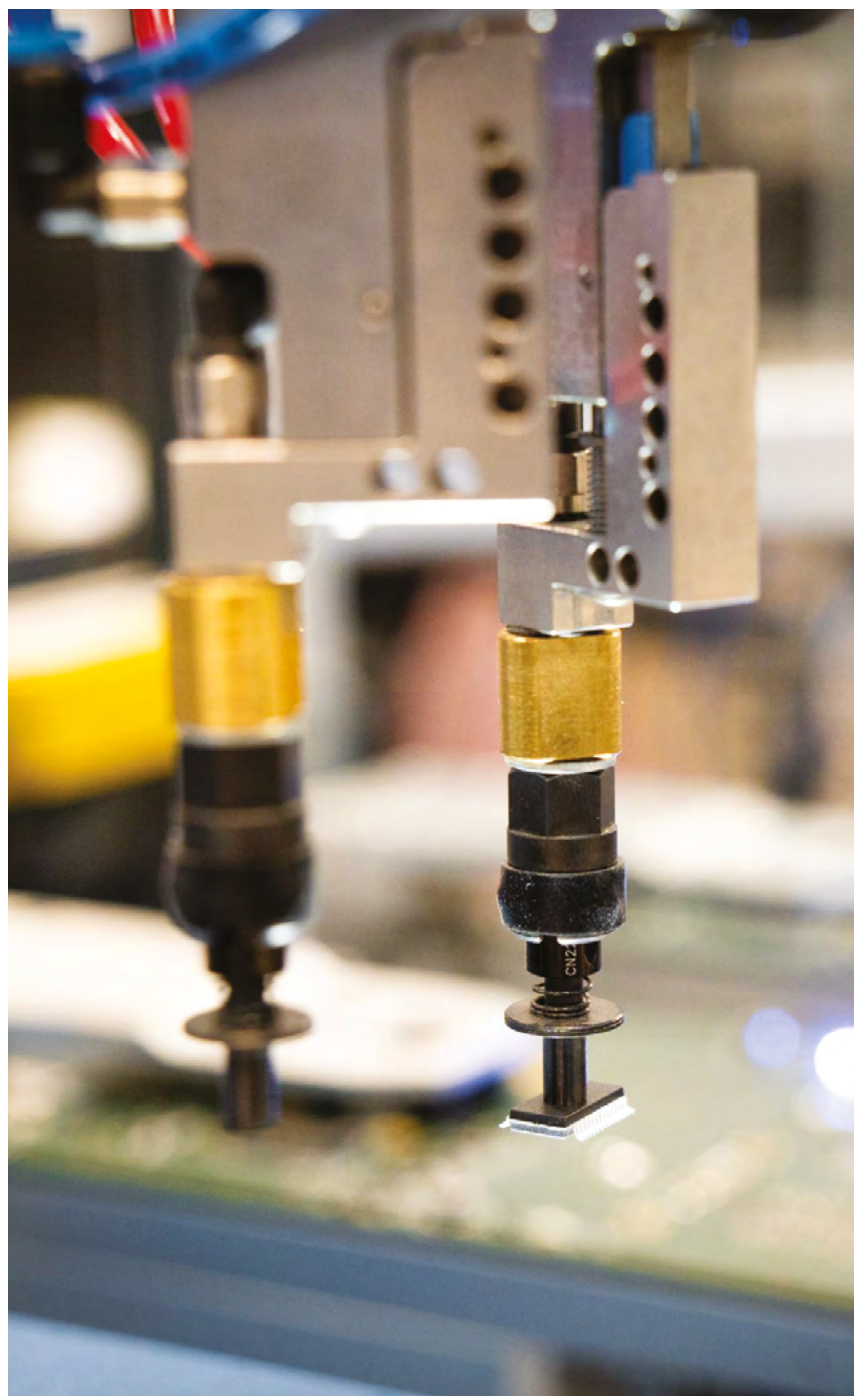
They encourage a sense of ownership among their employees. In this way, everyone understands their responsibilities and feels accountable for completing the job well.

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RLS generates 95 percent of its revenue abroad, primarily in the EU, US, Japan, China, and South Korea. They entered these markets with the help of their long-term partner, UK-based Remishaw.



They collaborate with universities, such as the Faculty of Electrical Engineering, where they equipped a laboratory that challenges students professionally. This partnership helps the company grow even faster.



A glimpse from the production plant.

RLS in a nutshell:

innovation, development, partnerships, trust, local pride

well-developed management team that is professional, experienced, and committed to prioritising employees.

As a result, the team is working to create an environment where everyone feels valued and motivated to contribute to the company's success. Janez explains that they built their company “on the principle that everyone with a skill could join us and contribute.” He emphasises that they always encouraged creativity among their employees and shared profits with them.

Local pride with a commitment to quality, innovation, and excellence

RLS plans to sustain its growth and expand into both existing and new markets. Matija, Janez, and their team recognise that we live in a rapidly changing world and understand the need to stay innovative in order to maintain financial stability. The company is now being passed down to the younger generations, but Janez is staying on board as a mentor and consultant. This ensures the company stays true to its values and the family business tradition. “The company is financially stable, we have a sound foundation, advanced technology, and good customers,” explains Matija.

One of their numerous exciting projects is the development of technology for use in satellites, demonstrating that their sensors are not limited solely to “earthly” applications. They are also focusing on expanding their sales into new markets experiencing growth in robotics.

Despite their global success, they remain firmly grounded. “Slovenia gave a lot to us, so we would like to pay some of that back. We have ‘local pride’ and are proud to employ people from this area,” says Matija, who believes they can continue to grow as a Slovenian company and contribute to the development of the local community.

RLS Measurement Technology therefore remains a business committed to innovation, family values, the local community, and sustainable

development. They are true to their vision of creating innovative, high-tech solutions in the sensor technology arena and remaining a global player in measurement technology, while continuing to develop innovations that will contribute to the growth of automation and digitalisation in industrial processes.

Theirs is a story of a company that became a leading international innovator in measurement systems through organic growth.

Janez Novak

50% owner

Company name:	RLS d.o.o.
Number of employees (2023):	290
Net sales revenue (2023):	€44 million

ROBOTEHNIKA d.o.o.

Andrej Orovič, Founder, co-owner and CEO

Marija Orovič, Authorised representative

Jernej Orovič, Co-owner responsible for Sales

Janja Orovič, Responsible for Quality Control and Strategic Management

A tech wonder on the outskirts of Markovci

Founded in 2007, Robotehnika, located in northeastern Slovenia, is a company offering CNC metal processing solutions, as well as automation and robotisation of manufacturing processes. It is based in Nova Vas pri Markovcih, where a new manufacturing facility is being built. The company employs 47 people and generated nearly four million euros in revenue in 2023. More than two thirds of its output is exported, mostly to German-speaking countries and the US, where customers value them for their high quality and versatility.

Andrej Orovič, CEO and founder of the company, manages it with the help of his family, with each member playing a role in its success. His wife Marija and children Jernej and Janja also work at the company.

At first, the family worked exclusively in mechanical engineering. However, they quickly recognised the need for CNC processing of intermediate goods and soon purchased their first milling machine, followed by three more. 2017 marked a turning point for the family company. It was the year they moved into a new production facility, expanded their capacity, and grew their workforce. That year, they launched mechanical processing for various industries, including wood processing, transport technology, and hydraulics industries. As a result, Robotehnika became synonymous with innovative solutions and custom-tailored projects, driving the company's steady growth in global markets. They share a vision of preserving family values while building a company that can grow in terms of both technology and sustainability. Their goal is to become one of the top three automation providers in Slovenia by 2028.



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Despite robotisation, the company still needs good workers. Robots can't function without them.

Andrej Orovič,
direktor





Robotehnika is a company offering CNC metal processing solutions, as well as automation and robotisation of manufacturing processes.

No fear of failure

Andrej began his career by coming up with various machines to make his work on the farm easier. He also repaired farm machinery. This led him to found his own company in 2007 as an extra source of income. He maintained that pace until 2016. His wife, Marija, noticed his long hours, sometimes working 16-hour days. "He started having health problems, and I told him that things had to change," she recalls. This sparked Andrej to quit his full-time job. He said that the decision to strike out on his own was not difficult: "I had my group of clients, so there was enough work. I never had any fear of failure."

They bought a piece of land and began to build the facility. In 2018, Marija officially joined Andrej at the company. Initially, they took on smaller projects, but as the demand for CNC processing of intermediate goods grew, they gradually expanded their range of machinery.

Robotehnika shifted its focus to machining for end customers and formed a partnership with a company in Germany, which proved to be a good move. Over the years, they grew and acquired new clients. "I began with

baby steps; I didn't spend much on promotion," says Andrej, adding that interested customers reached out to him on their own. Today, the company works with 20 different companies, which include global corporations. Forty-five percent of clients come from Slovenia, while 55 percent come from abroad. They emphasise their own growth and development. Their annual profits are reinvested to purchase machines and equipment, as well as to automate the production process.

Every project is a story of its own

The company emphasises its unique customer service approach and its optimisation of corporate solutions. Every project is tailored to meet the clients' needs, allowing the company to deliver solutions that are perfectly suited to their specific requirements. CEO Andrej emphasises: "If the quality is not up to scratch, clients won't return." The lion's share of the company's activities revolve around CNC processing, although the automation of manufacturing is also a key focus due to its immense potential. After all, automation cuts manufacturing times and the need for routine tasks, enabling workers to focus on higher-value tasks, thus boosting efficiency.

The company prioritises quality, ensuring it through the continuous education of employees, investment in state-of-the-art measuring devices, and adherence to ISO quality standards, a responsibility managed by daughter Janja. In doing so, they can meet the demands of their clients, suppliers, employees, and local residents.

In December 2023, they defined a new vision and mission for the company. Robotehnika is built on values directly derived from the Orovič family: professionalism, sustainability, a focus on growth, versatility, dedication, and loyalty. These values do not just help them navigate the business world; they form the very essence of their family. "We wish to remain true to them both as a company and as a family," says Janja, adding that nothing in the company would have been possible without her father's ideas and vision.

Successfully combining business and personal relations

Daughter Janja and son Jernej have been active in the family company since they were little. "We always helped out in some way. If nothing else, the workers needed some tea or a snack," remembers Janja, who wanted to study history, but later opted for economics and management. This year, she independently led the project for maintaining the company's ISO certification, which serves as proof of its high quality standards. Janja and

Jernej's career paths both led them to the family company, where they each found their place. "I'm about to earn my master's degree in project and strategic management, which is useful for us," says Janja.

Jernej is set to complete his studies in computer science, a field that has interested him since primary school. During high school and his university studies, he helped out at Robotehnika before deciding to stay with the family business: "My knowledge of computers comes in very handy in the company. It was especially helpful when we were introducing a new ERP system," says Jernej.

Preparation for an intergenerational transfer is already underway. Jernej has a 25-percent share in the company. He received it when he turned 25. The family has the same plan for Janja. Was joining the company his parents' idea? "When they grow up with the company, their familiarity with the work process is an advantage. But, of course, you can't force this," Marija emphasises.

Robotehnika is a family business in the true sense of the word. Jernej's wife Maja and Janja's partner Tomaž are also employed here. Robotehnika is a prime example of family cooperation. "Everyone has his or her assigned role and tasks. This prevents us from meddling in each other's business," Marija explains. The family manages to both blend and separate work and personal life. Jernej summarises the situation: "Sometimes it's hard not to talk about



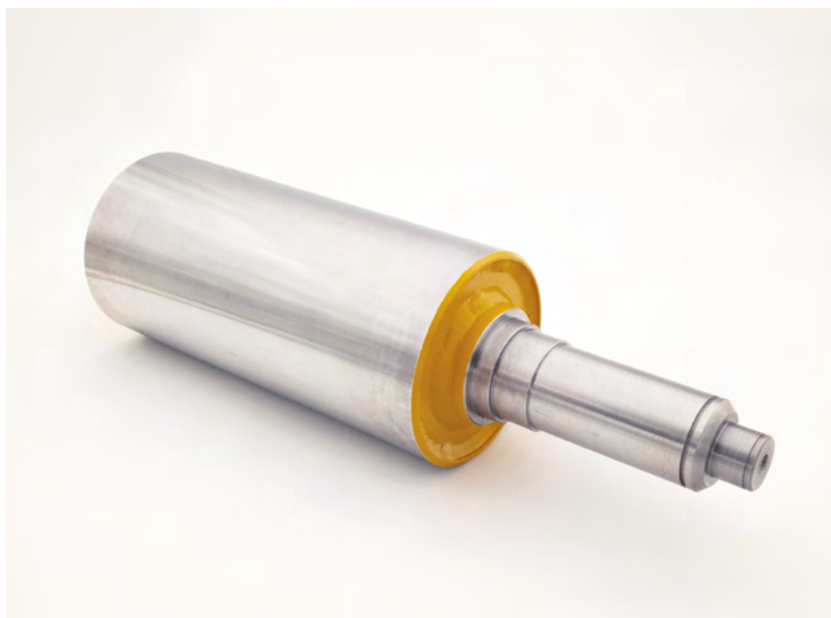
In 2022 the company was nominated for the Star of Entrepreneurship awarded by the Slovenian central newspaper Delo and the Gazelle award for fast-growing businesses of the Podravje-Pomurje Region.



A turning point came in 2017, when the company moved into a new manufacturing facility with three employees. Now, seven years later, they employ 45 people.

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One of the company's advantages is its niche-segment orientation. They adapt to the needs of the clients in a unique way and provide optimum, high-quality solutions.



Robotehnika is known as a company that cares about social responsibility and sustainable growth.



The company prioritises quality, ensuring it through the continuous education of employees, investment in state-of-the-art measuring devices, and adherence to ISO quality standards.

Robotehnika in a nutshell:

innovation, quality, loyalty, automation, niche-segment orientation.

the company, but we've found a good balance. We have no rules about when to talk about work and when not to."

Own power plant and beehives

Robotehnika is known as a company that cares about social responsibility and sustainable growth. In recent years, the company has worked hard on energy self-sufficiency. They have set up their own solar power plant; they use electric forklifts, produce limited waste emulsion, and reuse the boxes used for packaging. The company strives to reduce its environmental footprint, and their compliance with the ISO 14001 environmental standard is proof of that. To ensure that the company's future is even more sustainable, they are considering the purchase of energy storage systems and electric delivery vehicles. In addition, they have set up beehives in front of the corporate headquarters. Last year, they yielded 150 litres of honey, which was distributed within the company and given to clients as a gift.

The company has received numerous nominations and awards. In 2022, it was nominated for the Star of Entrepreneurship awarded by the Slovenian central newspaper Delo and the Gazelle award for fast-growing businesses of the Podravje-Pomurje Region, which is further proof of its quality standards and success.

A focus on automation and robotisation

The company's vision is focused on further automation of manufacturing processes. The team is tackling this with the automation and digitalisation of manufacturing, where they introduced a manufacturing cell with three CNC machines and a service robot. They also purchased additional robots, which are used to boost productivity and reduce the burden on employees. Another aspect of digitalisation was the roll-out of a complete IT system, which improved the company's

internal processes, along with the introduction of automatic planning and procurement.

The wide range of projects also requires more employees.

"Unfortunately, we have to turn clients away on occasion. On one hand, we want to expand, but on the other, we're not able to do that because we lack employees of a specific job profile," Janja explains. Some of their employees come from neighbouring Croatia. What kind of employees do they have and wish for? According to Jernej, they must be versatile and show initiative: "In small companies, you don't spend eight hours working on one thing. You do a little bit of this and a little bit of that."

Andrej and Jernej Orovič

co-owners

Company name:	ROBOTEHNIKA d.o.o.
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Number of employees (2023):	47
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Net sales revenue (2023):	€3.8 million
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TULI d.o.o., Ljubljana

Danica Pleško, Founder of Tuli d.o.o.

Jože Pleško, co-owner

Erika Pleško, CEO

Jure Pleško, Technical Director

Urška Rubin, Accounting and administration

From the family garage to more than 70 countries with the help of the second generation

With its optimised website and a superb user experience, the company now distributes mechanical components to virtually the entire world and is considered a leader in its field. In more than 72 countries, they are helping to find solutions when it comes to bearings, as well as linear and power transmission technology. Their knowledge and experience help them provide their customers with consulting and technical support. These goals, which Danica Pleško, the founder of Tuli, never considered when she was setting up the company in the family garage, are now coming to life under the leadership of her children, Urška, Jure, and CEO Erika.





“

When I saw that we were only covering Slovenia, I said to myself that things couldn't go on like that. We needed to go abroad.” Selling our goods globally has to be our goal. Nowadays, we're selling in 72 countries and growing.

Erika Pleško,
CEO



Erika, Urška, and Jure, members of the second generation, who are now carrying on the success story of the family business, have always enjoyed working at Tuli. Danica is very proud of her children and their work.

Her cooking sometimes suffered

Danica Pleško founded Tuli with a coworker Marko Hostnik from Metalka, where she was employed in the Yugoslav era. The administration expert and the sales expert joined forces and began to create a success story that is now becoming global. "Our first product range included only bearings because the Slovenian and Yugoslav markets were big enough at the time," the founder explains.

Right from the start, Danica prioritised a balance between her family and professional commitments: "This was an intertwining of the family and the company. I tried to cook something while I was at work. Sometimes, I burnt the food I was making," she laughs. "When my kids were still at school, I felt I had to be available to them." She found comfort in the fact that she received support from her coworker.

After his retirement, Danica was joined by her husband Jože Pleško who, until then, had his own transport business. "At the beginning, the partner relationship suffered a bit. But we made it and got the company to where it is today," she explains.

A young generation that grew up with bearings

With not one but two companies in the household, Danica's children quickly developed their work ethic: "We soon got them involved because there was always paperwork to manage, facilities to clean, and so on. They grew up with that," Danica explains. Laughing, she recalls how her customers responded to the self-confidence of daughter Erika, who is now the CEO: "When I left home, I told her that a customer was on the way, but we hadn't yet figured out what bearing she wanted to buy." When my daughter asked the customer what product she wanted, the customer was astounded to see a ten-year-old ask her about bearings."

Erika, Urška, and Jure, members of the second generation, who are now carrying on the success story of the family business, have always enjoyed working at Tuli. As Urška explains, "In the summer, we sometimes had to help out on the family farm and work in the garden. We quickly learned it was better to work in the shade with paperwork." Erika adds: "When you're a kid, you think that's the way things are. You don't think about how other families function." You have to work. It's a part of your everyday life."

Tuli was never a burden; now it's a great opportunity

Despite their early links to the company, the children did not see their future in it right away. This wasn't even expected from them: "My mom kept saying that she didn't want Tuli to be a burden for me, that it was her project and that we should live our own lives," explains Erika, who joined the company after seven years of exploring the world. Jure, a mechanical engineer, agrees: "As a more technical type, I was the most likely to stay at home, but I never felt the burden of expectations or pressure." He remembers the day he joined the team after graduating: "I decided to start my career in the family business, and if we didn't make any progress in two years, I would continue my career elsewhere." We made it and I'm still here."

Urška, the eldest daughter, worked for another big corporation in administration for ten years: "I wasn't happy because I couldn't coordinate the work with my family. When the company grew, my brother and sister invited me to join the team because they needed someone familiar with paperwork. I was happy to join them."

Times and business practices are changing

One of the foremost values that Danica passed on to her children was putting the customer first: "We often had people call on Saturdays and Sundays. I always taught my children to be accommodating because you're rewarded for it," she remembers. Erika adds: "Mom always said that we can't drive a paying customer to someone else."

But times have changed – now they need to say "no" occasionally, which they had never dared to do before: "If you fall into the trap of always saying 'yes', there's no way out. Then there are complaints and bad feelings. The entire system collapses," explains Erika.

Before launching any project today, team members first check if it aligns with their values. The company prioritises interpersonal relationships, innovation, success, adaptability, and responsibility. To bring their values to life, the team received help from Tanja Skaza of Plastika Skaza and Skaza IP and the founder of the Skaza Institute, who became their mentor. "Before, we felt that we had to do everything right away." Tanja explained to us that an e-mail can wait for three hours, that invoices can



By leveraging digitalisation and automation, the company aims to create the best possible customer service experience.

“

The parents' trust in the knowledge and competence of their children was the key to the successful transfer of the company.



Danica Pleško founded Tuli with a coworker from Metalka, where she was employed in the Yugoslav era.



Right from the start, Danica prioritised a balance between her family and professional commitments.

TULI in a nutshell:

mechanical components, online store, interpersonal relations, customer-centred approach, trust.

be paid just once a week, and that you need to have a quiet hour at work. She shared important knowhow, which we used to make changes that we had been afraid to introduce,” recalls Urška.

The second generation set up many things differently, but everyone agrees that the transfer of power between generations was smooth: “My husband and I handed over the company gladly. We never got involved in my children’s decisions because we know they had plenty of acumen and were responsible.” Erika agrees and adds: “We’re grateful to Mom and Dad for making this decision. For letting go of the company.”

Turning a weakness into a strength

Danica is very proud of her children and their work: “At first, we didn’t have big plans with Tuli. Our salary was the goal. We weren’t driven to build our business. Our children are now doing that.” Today, the company is distributing its products to 72 countries. The international expansion is, in part, the result of Erika’s wandering spirit. She felt it was wrong for the company to limit itself to Slovenia: “At first, we sought foreign contacts using sheer determination, adaptability, and lots of Googling.” Then we set up our online store. Jure brought it to life. It’s his project.” When he joined the company, the company began to take big strides toward digitalisation. “Our global and online presences are the driving forces of our growth. We’re building an online store selling mechanical components, and we want to provide the best user experience,” Jure explains.

Their biggest breakthrough came when they established links with the biggest warehouses abroad. They are the ones that send the order to the customer with our paperwork, which means there is no intermediate station in Slovenia. In doing so, we managed to cut delivery times and costs. Shorter supply lines are also good for the environment,” says Erika proudly. She adds: “We transformed our biggest weakness – not having our own stock – into our biggest advantage.”

The company also demonstrates its care for the environment by working with Treecelet, an organisation that plants trees in their name around the world.

The future is in digitalisation and artificial intelligence

And what does their future look like? As they keep pace with the latest developments, they will make use of the advantages and opportunities provided by AI: “Our main project is localising our online store for various countries and automating the processes. If things turn out ideally, we will one day simply watch orders being sent out all by themselves,” jokes Jure. More proof that they are on the right track came in the form of their win in the first competition of B2B e-commerce projects organised in October 2024 by Finance Newspaper.

Despite his ambition, Jure keeps his outlook firmly grounded: “Almost every country has its regulations in terms of documentation, shipping, and so on. Our partners realise that we’re trying to prepare for all sorts of scenarios first, so things can be complicated – but we’re taking things step by step.”

Erika, Jure, Danica, Jože Pleško and Urška Rubin

co-owners

Company name:	TULI d.o.o., Ljubljana
Number of employees (2023):	7
Net sales revenue (2023):	€2 million

EY Slovenia and Family Entrepreneurship

At EY Slovenia, we recognize the importance of family entrepreneurship, which is why we are always happy to share our knowledge and experiences at different events in Slovenia and abroad, where we can also establish new collaborations.

Family Businesses as the Driving Force of the Economy



01 In April 2024, EY Slovenia shared its knowledge and experience at the conference "Family Businesses as the Driving Force of the Economy," organized by Glas Poduzetnika in Zagreb, Croatia. Mojca Emeršič, head of family business consulting at EY Slovenia, talked about family entrepreneurship in Slovenia and addressed some of the challenges family businesses face everywhere, such as ownership transfer and training the next generation.

EY EMEIA Family Office summit



02 In May 2024, we attended the sixth EY EMEIA Family Office summit in Vienna, where the main theme was "What constitutes a future-proof board?" This program is always well-attended, as it attracts some of the most important entrepreneurial families from all across Europe. The combined annual revenue of all the companies from 15 countries present at the 2024 summit amounted to 60 billion dollars.

EY Slovenia was represented by Mojca Emeršič, head of family business consulting, who brought along co-owners of the G4 group, Gašper Gregorčič and Franci Gregorčič Jr., as well as co-owner of the Jagros group, Gašper Gregorčič, and his daughter Urša Jagros, who is responsible for accounting.

Family Entrepreneurship

Fifth edition of EY Bulgaria Family Business Book



03 In September 2024, we attended the event marking the release of the fifth edition of EY Bulgaria Family Business Book. Mojca Emeršič, head of family business consulting at EY Slovenia, attended the event as a guest. She shared her experiences in advising family businesses on succession planning and the preparation of so-called family constitutions.

We believe it is important for family businesses to share their stories and experiences, so we are very happy that the Family Business Book project has taken off so well in Bulgaria. EY Bulgaria's Family Business Book project features 42 companies, while in Slovenia, we have shared stories of 100 businesses.

Strong Foundations for a Global Future



04 In January 2025, we attended the annual meeting of business successors and inheritors, organized by SPIRIT Slovenia under the title "Strong Foundations for a Global Future." Mojca Emeršič from EY Slovenia attended the event, sharing her experiences in advising family businesses. Together with Črt Gorjanc from Jason d.o.o., they also shared the experience of preparing a family constitution.

Family Business Services

Helping you succeed for generations

Why choose EY?

- We serve **75%** of **500** of the world's largest family businesses (familybusinessindex.com).
- We have advised generations of the world's most entrepreneurial, innovation-oriented companies and understand the complex issues that they face.
- We understand the difficulties of balancing the concerns of the family and the intricacies of the business.
- We know what it takes to address the dual challenge of securing the long-term success of the company and managing the risks of growth.
- EY's tailored services offer a wide range of professional business services aimed specifically at the unique requirements of family businesses.

Our approach

More than 80% of the world's businesses are family owned – they are the driving force of the world economy. This is consistent with the findings of our research, which EY Slovenia has prepared in cooperation with the Faculty of Economics, University of Ljubljana. The research confirmed that 83% of companies in Slovenia have family control over their strategic direction. Family businesses, in general, are better placed to ride the turbulence of today's volatile financial markets. Yet we know that just 30% of family businesses make it through the second generation and only 13% survive the third. Each family business is unique, but with over 90 years of experience and a professional network spanning 140 countries, we know that many share similar advantages and face common challenges.

Our Growth DNA Model for family business

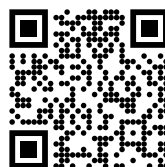
Our unique "Growth DNA of a family business" model addresses every facet of your personal and business agenda. It aligns our personalized range of business services to address your specific needs from capital management, sustaining growth, effective tax management and balancing risk, to culture and CSR. And it forms the foundation for the planning of ownership and management succession.

The EY Global Family Business Center of Excellence

The EY Global Family Business Center of Excellence is a powerful, online resource. It gives you access to our insights, experience and people, allowing you to connect and learn from fellow family business leaders around the world.

EY Slovenia and family businesses

EY Slovenia cooperates closely with the EY Global Center of Excellence. Through our local program we connect and present Slovenian family businesses. With the support of the Center we also link them to the global stage through dedicated events and the EY Award of Excellence for Family Businesses. In addition, we have also begun to actively support businesses in succession planning from organizational, tax, legal and other perspectives, as well as various dimensions of development and international growth.



Visit our website
ey.com/en_si/family-enterprise.



EY's Growth DNA model of Family Businesses highlights the interlinked nature of the eight characteristics of successful family businesses

EY Growth Navigator™

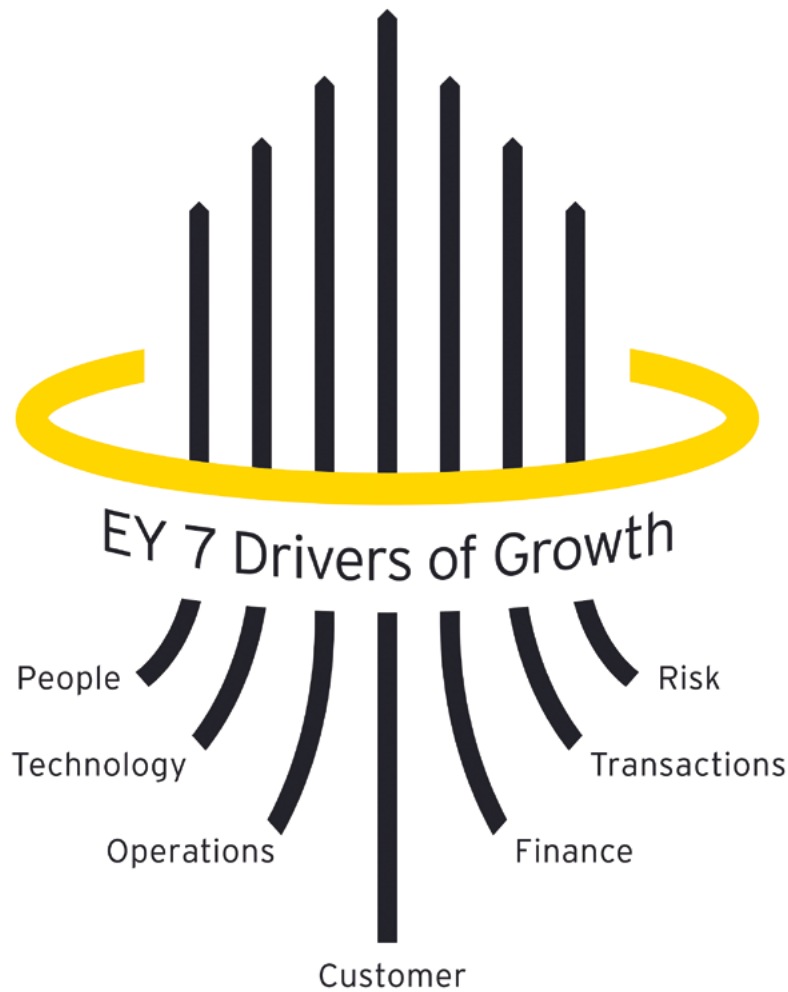
Accelerate your journey to market leadership

When most businesses think about strategy, they think about how to focus people, systems and processes on delivering customer value and ultimately growth. However talking to, and working with, clients through their business cycle coupled with our own research has shown us that, while this strategy is successful for some, focusing upon a broader set of activities can help deliver accelerated growth. That's why we've developed EY Growth Navigator™.

EY Growth Navigator™ is a unique way for you to think beyond the typical approaches to growth and consider seven critical drivers for business success and accelerated growth. It is an interactive experience that allows you and your leadership team to assess your company, gain valuable insights from leading practices and identify strategic priorities for growth.

Connecting your knowledge of your business with our knowledge and experience in the market can help deliver accelerated growth. EY Growth Navigator™ uses our research and 30 years' experience of working with hundreds of the most dynamic companies and growth leaders.

At the end of your EY Growth Navigator™ session with your EY advisor, you will have a set of actions, prioritized according to your strategic needs, to help you take the necessary steps to achieve the next level of success.



SPIRIT Slovenia

Timely preparation of companies for ownership transfer lays good foundations for a global future

SPIRIT Slovenia encourages Slovenian companies to prepare for ownership transfer in a timely manner, with a focus on strengthening the competencies of successors in family businesses.

Family businesses are the driving force of the Slovenian economy, significantly contributing to its stability and growth. Their success is based on innovation, strong family relationships, growth, care for the local environment and employees, and operations in regional and global markets.

At SPIRIT Slovenia, we carry out numerous activities to support family businesses, with an emphasis on recognizing future challenges. Special attention is given to the issue of succession, as ownership transfer is one of the key and often challenging steps in the life cycle of a company.

Ownership transfer is a complex process that involves financial, legal, organizational, and psychological aspects. Therefore, careful and planned preparation is essential. At the end of 2019, we established the National Point for Ownership Transfer at SPIRIT Slovenia, which brings together support institutions to raise awareness and provide professional assistance to companies in this area.

The purpose of the National Point for Ownership Transfer is to encourage entrepreneurs to prepare for succession in a timely manner. Through various activities, we raise awareness, inform, train, and advise companies. The Point offers lectures, workshops, and the exchange of best practices, as well as diagnostic consultations and access to

non-refundable funds for the implementation of ownership transfer. Since its establishment, we have conducted more than 500 diagnostic interviews, 170 companies have received a voucher for ownership transfer, and we have organized more than 100 lectures and workshops, attracting over 4,000 entrepreneurs.

The comprehensive activities of the National Point have encouraged more and more companies to start the transfer process in a timely manner, proving that we are achieving our set goals.

To support activities co-financed by the ownership transfer voucher, we have established a database of experts and a training catalog for successors. The program includes financial assistance for various forms of ownership transfer and focuses on the specific challenges of generational transfer in family businesses.

We are proud to collaborate with EY Slovenia in promoting family entrepreneurship, which enhances the international recognition of Slovenian family businesses by including them in international programs and projects. With the support of SPIRIT Slovenia, these companies are also featured in the book Family Entrepreneurship Slovenia, which strengthens their reputation both at home and abroad.



REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA
MINISTRY OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
AND TECHNOLOGY



www.podjetniski-portal.si/programi/druzinsko-podjetnistvo

Last edition's highlights



01 Official presentation of the book Family Business Slovenia 2022. **02** Mojca Emeršič opened the event celebrating the publication of the Family Business Slovenia 2022 book. **03** VARIS Lendava is a family company that has become a leading European specialist for development and manufacturing of prefabricated bathrooms. **04** VARIS Lendava was the winner of EY Award of Excellence for Family Bussinesses 2022. **05** Family businesses and their stories, presented in the book Family Business Slovenia 2022. **06** Celebrating outstanding achievements in family business.

Family Business Slovenia 2024

Contact information and authors

EY Slovenia

Janez Uranič

Country Managing Partner
janez.uranic@si.ey.com

Sanja Košir Nikašinić

Head of Assurance department
sanja.kosir.nikasinovic@si.ey.com

Matej Kovačič

Head of Tax department
matej.kovacic@si.ey.com

Domen Zdravec

EY Slovenia EY-P, SaT and
Consulting Leader
domen.zdravec@parthenon.ey.com

Mojca Emeršič

Family Business Leader
mojca.emersic@si.ey.com

Publication

Mojca Emeršič

Supervising Editor

Taja Gorjan

Editor

Prevajalska agencija GORR

Translations

Taja Gorjan

Editing of Slovenian text

Tsvetomil Ivanov

Graphic Design

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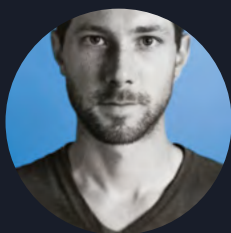
Jani Ugrin

Jani Ugrin is a freelance photographer currently based in Ljubljana, Slovenia. His work is focused on various areas of photography; however, people are the common denominators. He works in the fields of commercial, corporate, music and portrait photography, cooperating with various agencies and companies, both in Slovenia and abroad.



Urška Lukovnjak

Born in 1993 in Maribor, Urška Lukovnjak started taking photos in high school. Her first photographs were portraits of musicians, and she later began to engage in concert photography, which she enjoys the most. She also creates portrait and wedding photography.



Andraž Jenkole

A professional photographer specialized in product, food, and portrait photography. He is characterized by a passion for overcoming complex creative challenges and continuously improving technical and creative approaches. In addition to photography, he is also focusing on video production, enabling him to create versatile visual content for digital media. He draws his creativity from various sports activities such as kitesurfing, kayaking, cycling, diving, snowboarding, and paragliding.

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Last edition's highlights

All images by Luka Svetič



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The better the world works.

EY exists to build a better working world, helping to create long-term value for clients, people and society and build trust in the capital markets.

Enabled by data and technology, diverse EY teams in over 150 countries provide trust through assurance and help clients grow, transform and operate.

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