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CONTENTS

007	Time to be Bold – Chris Vassallo Cesareo, President, The Malta Chamber	024	Attractiveness of Malta to Third Country Nationals - The Malta Chamber HR & Talent Thematic Working Group	040	Pioneering A New Level Of Luxury - Denise Xuereb, Director of Construction & Development, AX Group
009	Seeking the Perfect Match for Future Growth – Dr Marthese Portelli, CEO, The Malta Chamber	026	Setting Sail For Success – Charlo Briffa, CEO, YachtHub Group	042	Strand Palace Agencies Ltd; A Family-Run Business Driving Innovation, Expansion, And Sustainability - Zoe, John and Julia Calleja, Strand Palace Agencies Ltd.
011	Malta at the Crossroads - Nick Xuereb, Deputy President, The Malta Chamber	029	GreenOwls Is Revolutionising Courier Services With Sustainability At Its Core - Kyle Sciberras, Founder & CEO, GreenOwls	047	Putting People First - Gabriele Vecchi, Chief Operations & Financial Officer, Debono Group
012	Testimonials - What Our Members Say About Us	030	Celebrating 50 years Of Visionary Excellence & Embracing The Future - Philip A. Tabone, Chairman Philip A. Tabone	051	Bridging The Gap – Mario Fava, President of the Local Councils' Association in Malta
017	6 Tips to Communicate Better - Rachel Attard, Head of Communications and Media Strategist, The Malta Chamber	037	Skills Rush; Have We Missed The Bus? - The Malta Chamber & HSBC Malta Foundation	054	Positioning Malta As A Global Edtech Destination - Patrick Hulsen, Managing Director for Malta, SuperCharger Ventures
018	GasanMamo Insurance Leading Change Through CSR and Environmental Preservation	038	Managing A Values-Driven Cannabis Reform - Leonid Mckay, Executive Chairperson, Authority for the Responsible Use of Cannabis	056	Sourdough Bread; History, Health Benefits And Flavour Rolled In One Loaf – Maypole
020	Empowering Communities – Alfred Grixti, CEO, The Foundation for Social Welfare Services			058	Climate Change & Risk Factors – Gabby Grech Larsson, Policy Executive – Sustainability, The Malta Chamber

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- 060 **The Future Of Transport**
- Jonathan Borg, CEO,
Transport Malta

- 064 **Malta Enterprise Spearheads Economic Development Initiatives** - Kurt Farrugia, CEO, Malta Enterprise

- 066 **New EU Funding Schemes: How Can You Benefit?** – The Malta Chamber

- 068 **Strategic Corporate Banking For A Sustainable Future**
- George Debono, Chief Commercial Officer, BNF Bank

- 073 **RSM Malta; Comprehensive Business Advisory Services For Sustainable Growth** – RSM Malta

- 075 **Igniting Change; The Need For Fire Safety Legislation In Malta** – The Malta Chamber

- 078 **Enhancing Industrial Estates** – INDIS Malta

- 080 **The Malta Superyacht Symposium; One Year On** – Dr Alison Vassallo, Chairperson, Yachting Business Section, The Malta Chamber

- 082 **A Willingness To Build Resilience** – Matthew Bartolo, Managing Partner, Willingness Team

- 084 **Visionaries & True Leaders, Where Are You?**
- Silvan Mifsud, The Malta Chamber Council Member and Chair of the Family Business Committee

- 086 **Leveraging Expertise To Drive Innovation & Excellence** - Gordon Bezzina, Chief Technology Officer, BMIT Technologies plc

- 088 **GO Business, Making Business Sense Unlocking The Strategic Potential Of Managed IT Services**
- Arthur Azzopardi, Chief Officer, GO Business

- 090 **From the Young Chamber Network** – The Malta Chamber

- 093 **Creating Attractive & Sustainable Building Exteriors**
- Halmann Vella Ltd

- 095 **AI In Law - Science Fiction, Real Threat, Or Same Old?** - André Zerafa



THE MALTA CHAMBER

Published by
The Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry
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CHRIS VASSALLO CESAREO,
PRESIDENT, THE MALTA CHAMBER

TIME TO BE BOLD

History is in motion. Over the past decade, we have witnessed extraordinary and foundational shifts. Businesses have changed a great deal with previous structures and conventions often discarded for new and better approaches.



Photos taken at Valletta Lucente Boutique Hotel

Today, as the pandemic hopefully transitions to a manageable endemic status, many business leaders are naturally preparing for the future of business post-COVID.

But we should also prepare for continued seismic change ahead, as business continues to navigate through an era of profound discontinuity. What will the future of business leadership hold?

There is no guaranteed manual to provide instructions on how to lead through the coming decade, nor any simple set of rules to follow.

Business leaders should not be passive observers of this whirlwind of change. Rather, we must be active participants, preparing our organisations for a new era of human-centered business to help shape a better world.

Because the economy is becoming ever more global in scope and information is exchanged progressively faster, businesses will need leaders who can rapidly adapt to change and assemble skilled and reliable teams suited for each situation.

The future of leadership will be about adaptability and creativity. In a world that is increasingly connected, businesses leaders need to be able to communicate affectively. They will need to be able to share their vision with others and inspire them to achieve great things.

The future of business leadership is full of opportunity. Those who are willing to embrace change and take on new challenges will find themselves in a position to succeed.

Digital focused entrepreneurs are one of the most important pillars shaping the future.

We, at The Malta Chamber, consider digitilisation as one of the five main pillars. We found that the most salient barrier that really stands in the way of our progress with digitalisation is the lack of sufficiently skilled human capital to make things happen.

Digitalisation offers noticeable productivity gains and may be perceived as the easiest to get decisionmakers to buy into, but technology does not just refer to digital technology.

“The future of leadership will be about adaptability and creativity. In a world that is increasingly connected, businesses leaders need to be able to communicate affectively. They will need to be able to share their vision with others and inspire them to achieve great things.”

The latter has overtaken our daily lives to the point where we frequently associate the term “technology” with it alone without the human element which complements it.

As businesses become more global and complex, the need for leaders who can navigate the digital world becomes more pressing.

Digital leaders are those who have the skills and knowledge to not only survive but thrive in the digital age. They can effectively use technology to drive business growth and take advantage of new opportunities.

Digital leaders are also comfortable with change and ambiguity, which are essential skills in a constantly changing landscape.

Changes need to also be ethical. A strong sense of ethical behavior will be required in future leaders. Companies live and die by their reputation, so a leader who damages the company’s reputation through questionable business practices is harming the long-term bottom line of the business.

Greater transparency is coming whether we like it or not. As a result, there is likely to be a greater emphasis in the future on the need for leaders to possess a fair measure of integrity.

In fact, The Malta Chamber has been on the forefront of public debates to emphasise the importance of good governance and ethical business. We, support ethical businesses, irrespective of their size or nature by providing an essential platform for entrepreneurs to meet, discuss and share ideas for a prospective future.

Now is the time to be bold! **M+S**

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DR MARTHESE PORTELLI, CEO, THE MALTA CHAMBER

SEEKING the PERFECT MATCH for future growth

The Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry strongly believes that Malta can only have a sustainable and resilient economy if it moves up the value chain and develop economic activities that generate real substance in the economy. Attractive regulation and the fiscal framework have served Malta well for many years, but maintaining and attracting new industries in the future will require the country to be increasingly innovative on other fronts as well, including in the development of technology.

THE INDUSTRY-ACADEMIA TANDEM

This requires a sound research infrastructure that is proportionate to the size of the country but that, nonetheless, is able to drive innovation in all the economic sectors which have been successfully developed over the past decades. Many of the local businesses are SMEs and they do not have in-house capabilities for extensive research. Research projects, by their very nature, are risky investments, where, typically, only one out of several is truly successful commercially.

This is why The Malta Chamber believes that the country needs to foster better industry-academic collaboration as this would allow academic researchers to focus more on developing solutions that can be applied in the local industry and subsequently scaled up for export. However, this requires a shift in mindset on all sides involved. Academics need to acknowledge that the local industry provides opportunities for commercialisation of research that will help develop the economy further, and industry needs to see the potential in local researchers and engage with them. This would enable them to enhance their products and services.

The Malta Chamber, together with the University of Malta, has been pushing for schemes to support industry-academia research for the past years. Earlier this year, we saw the Post-Doc Fellowship Scheme materialise. This scheme provides industry with the means to pursue a research project by providing it with a post-doctoral researcher that is funded by the University. The Malta Chamber is now hoping to see the scheme grow in budget in future years so that industry-academia collaboration can become an integral part of the development of the nation's industries. The country spends considerably on education, and, The Malta Chamber has often questioned whether Malta is reaping the best possible results. It is not about the amount of money being spent, but what it is being spent on, when it is being spent and how it is being spent.

INVESTING IN LONG-TERM REVENUE STREAMS

The Malta Chamber believes that money spent on supporting research and innovation is money well invested as it contributes directly to the creation of long-term revenue streams in our economy. The benefits of industry-academia collaboration go beyond the potential of having



Photos taken at Valletta Lucente Boutique Hotel

one or more of the projects being funded succeed commercially. Every academic that will be involved in these projects will have the opportunity to interact directly with the local industry and to exchange knowledge. While post-doctoral researchers will undoubtedly have extensive academic knowledge to share, industry players know the market, and are able to provide insight into what incremental innovations can make their products and services more competitive. Those insights can trickle down into university lecture halls where future graduates are being prepared for a world that is increasingly more complex and more value-driven. This is why in The Malta Chamber's pre-electoral document of policy recommendations "Time to Step Up", published a little over a year ago, it was stated that "a concerted effort is required to push up the spend on R&I to 3% of GDP through a robust framework of accessible investment incentive programmes and support mechanisms."

THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

There is also the phenomenon of digital transformation. Digital transformation helps to improve product and service quality. It helps to give a better customer experience. It helps to target clients better. It helps to improve on the time-to-market. It helps to drive growth. It helps to drive sustainability efforts. It helps to improve internal communication and collaboration. It helps in the automation of processes, streamlining of operations and to increase operational efficiency. It helps to convert sporadic and siloed information into more meaningful structures which give decision takers immediate and more comprehensive knowledge on which to base their decisions. It helps to address certain labour shortages. It arguably reduces human error. However, in order to ascertain a successful digital transformation project one needs to plan it out properly and to adopt a 4-pronged approach. This will involve process transformation, a business model transformation, a domain transformation and last but not least a cultural/organisational digital transformation. This is easier said than done, particularly when one takes into account the possible lack of in-house technology experts, organisational agility and change resistance of employees as well as customers who have not yet embraced the dynamic pace with which tech evolves.

Digital transformation is the present and the future, and those that do not embrace it, will lag behind. The bottom line is that investment in research and in digital transformation offer a unique opportunity to help accelerate economic growth. **M&S**



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6 TIPS TO COMMUNICATE BETTER

RACHEL ATTARD, HEAD OF COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA STRATEGIST, THE MALTA CHAMBER

A leader is someone who inspires positive, gradual change by empowering those around them to work toward common objectives. A leader's most powerful tool for doing so is communication.

WHY IS COMMUNICATION IMPORTANT IN LEADING A COMPANY?

The famous film composer John Powell said, "communication works for those who work at it." This means that effective communication is a critical skill for business leaders, regardless of the size and scope of their team.

In today's world, including the Maltese islands, we are seeing various foreign workers at the place of work and here communication becomes even more crucial. Different cultures and languages can create a communication gap, leading to misunderstandings and conflicts.

Entrepreneurs must develop strong communication skills to overcome these barriers and ensure that their team functions efficiently and effectively.

As Harvard Business Review put it: "In the age of knowledge, ideas are the foundation of success in almost every field. You can have the greatest idea in the world, but if you can't persuade anyone else to follow your vision, your influence and impact will be greatly diminished."

In view of all this, I try to follow six communication abilities that will make your role more effective.

1 HARNESSING THE ABILITY TO ADAPT YOUR COMMUNICATION STYLE

Different communication styles are the most frequently cited cause of poor communication and can lead to more significant issues, such as unclear priorities and increased stress.

It is essential to identify your leadership style so you can better understand how you are interacting and perceived by fellow employees across your organisation.

Every employee's motivations are different, so knowing how to tailor your communication is essential to influencing others and reaching organisational goals.

2 BEING AN ACTIVE LISTENER

Effective leaders know when they need to talk and, more importantly, when they need to listen. Show that you care by asking for employees' opinions, ideas, and feedback.

When they do share, actively engage in the conversation—pose questions, invite them to elaborate, and take notes. Keep your focus on the employee and what they're saying.

3 ENABLING A TRANSPARENT APPROACH

Transparency can go a long way in breaking down communication barriers. By speaking openly about the company's goals, opportunities, and challenges, leaders can build trust amongst their team and foster an environment where employees feel empowered to share their ideas and collaborate.

"By speaking openly about the company's goals, opportunities, and challenges, leaders can build trust amongst their team and foster an environment where employees feel empowered to share their ideas and collaborate."

Photos taken at Valletta Lucente Boutique Hotel

Just acknowledging mistakes can encourage experimentation and create a safe space for active problem-solving.

Every individual should understand the role they play in the company's success. The more transparent CEOs are, the easier it is for employees to make that connection.

4 BEING EMPATHETIC

In a recent article on The New Yorker empathy was ranked the top leadership skill needed for success.

The better you get at acknowledging and understanding employees' feelings and experiences, the more heard and valued they'll feel.

5 DO NOT UNDERESTIMATE THE IMPORTANCE OF OPEN BODY LANGUAGE

Communication is not just what you say; it is how you carry yourself. Eighty percent of communication's impact comes from body language.

To ensure you're conveying the right message, focus on your gestures and mannerisms.

Let me give you this example. If you are trying to inspire someone but at the same time, talking with clenched fists or pointing your index finger, this will not send the right message. Instead, make eye contact to establish interest and convey warmth and trust.

6 RECEIVING AND IMPLEMENTING FEEDBACK

Asking for feedback from your team can help your company to grow. It is critical though, that you don't just listen to the feedback. You also need to act on it.

It is completely understandable that there will be feedback which you cannot immediately act on—be transparent about that (see third skill above).

In this year's edition of the Movers & Shakers you will be able to see some of the six skills that I mentioned being applied by various companies and leaders in Malta and we as The Malta Chamber promise you to keep communicating with you and act when needed. **M&S**

TESTIMONIALS

WHAT OUR MEMBERS SAY ABOUT US

CENK KAHRAMAN
CEO Finance Incorporated Ltd.



The Malta Chamber has a strong influence and impact on Maltese businesses; it connects businesses together with the aim of creating a better future for the country through active collaboration. As one of Malta's largest financial institutions, Finance Incorporated Limited knows the responsibility we have towards the nation's commerce, and being members of The Malta Chamber will allow us to further contribute to the growth of the economy.

Thanks to the active dialogue with The Malta Chamber, we look forward to leaving lasting and tangible benefits to all members as a result of our collaboration. Of course, we also stand to gain from being an active member of such a vibrant community of business in Malta and extend an invitation to explore new possibilities to all The Malta Chamber's members.

“Thanks to the active dialogue with The Malta Chamber, we look forward to leaving lasting and tangible benefits to all members as a result of our collaboration.”

CHRISTINA GALEA
CEO Costa Coffee

The Malta Chamber extends valuable support for Malta's business community to keep abreast of emerging trends, legal updates, and national and international economic challenges. It has also been beneficial to connect us with relevant authorities when specific business support is required for our business sector, and for us to share our feedback on ongoing business developments. Also, the opportunity to network with fellow industry colleagues, whether in formal or social settings, is truly valuable. I believe that it is always beneficial to meet new and old members and discuss challenges, opportunities or potential collaborations with other businesses.

“The opportunity to network with fellow industry colleagues, whether in formal or social settings, is truly valuable.”





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RONALD ATTARD

EY Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe & Central Asia (CESA) Strategy and Transactions Leader EY Malta

The Malta Chamber brings together a network of diverse trades and industries, representing all of Malta's major economic sectors. Through its work, the Chamber fosters a collaborative mindset that consistently bolsters the island's economy.

As members of The Malta Chamber, we are privileged to access this expansive network, through various collaborative initiatives, including our prestigious EY Malta Future Realised event, held every October. This event critically evaluates Malta's FDI appeal, and underscores its economic standing within the European Union and the broader global arena.

Additionally, we engage extensively in the Industry Focus Series, within a more intimate and localised context. Through this series of events, we aim to share valuable insights about current trends and best practices with fellow Chamber members. We aspire to continue contributing to the Chamber's endeavours through these efforts.



DONNA CARDONA

Founder MyMama Ltd.



The Malta Chamber has been helping me direct my startup's strategy, based on the local and international business ecosystem and potential opportunities. The events are extremely well organised, provide excellent value and are always great for networking.

I've also been pleasantly surprised at how inclusive and welcoming the team at The Malta Chamber and fellow members have been. Despite being relatively new to the world of business, I'm being supported and encouraged to learn and grow, alongside seasoned entrepreneurs. It's truly an example of surrounding yourself with people who are going to take you higher.

"Despite being relatively new to the world of business, I'm being supported and encouraged to learn and grow."

DEAN MICALLEF

CEO A&Co Group of Companies

The Malta Chamber continues to evolve with the times, to ensure its relevance and commitment to the wider business community. On numerous occasions, The Malta Chamber has served us, by supporting our group's business development initiatives and our team's educational and training journeys. More importantly, it continues to provide us with the relevant information, support and feedback, keeping us also abreast with critical developments in the markets that we operate in.



"The Malta Chamber continues to evolve with the times, to ensure its relevance and commitment to the wider business community."

PAULINE MICALLEF

CEO Maritime MT

The Malta Chamber functions as a collective body of experts dedicated to support individuals and their enterprises in a wide range of ways. It serves as a platform for personal and professional development, offering access to numerous resources for all its members. There truly is no better institution to associate with, if one desires to have their opinions and achievements recognised. The role of a CEO can often be isolating, as it bears the weight of leadership, but through The Malta Chamber, these burdens become more manageable. Moreover, by participating in various events and networking activities, facilitated by The Malta Chamber, CEOs can establish connections with diverse industry counterparts, thus expanding their influence and opportunities for growth. By affiliating with The Malta Chamber, professionals and businesses gain access to a supportive community that enhances their visibility and facilitates fruitful connections.

"There truly is no better institution to associate with, if one desires to have their opinions and achievements recognised."





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Malta at the CROSSROADS

A bleak and sobering outlook but one in which Malta can certainly be a player. This is, in summation, the point of view held by the Deputy President of The Malta Chamber, Nick Xuereb in this keynote interview with Movers and Shakers 2023.



Nick Xuereb, Deputy President of The Malta Chamber opened the interview with a very sobering observation:

“We seem to be moving from one crisis to another. We are in a permacrisis state. As we came out of COVID, inflation started to creep up, demand in certain areas exceeded supply, possibly driven by savings reaching record levels during COVID”.

He further reflected that increased freight prices, together with the war on Ukraine triggered further inflation, especially in relation to energy costs. To complete the bleak prospects, the latest GDP numbers he said, show that the Eurozone did suffer a mild technical recession – which is defined as two consecutive quarters of negative growth. The expectation is that growth will be slow and forecasts are being pulled down.

A RESILIENT LABOUR MARKET

Mr Xuereb was however optimistic on one point: although growth continues to be weak, the labour market has remained resilient. Within Malta and the EU, there continues to be high job creation and low levels of unemployment. “The Maltese government is not helping the situation by competing with the private sector for employees and with so many people moving to government, the pool of employees has diminished significantly. This will continue to create a strain on the private sector when it comes to human capital,” observed Mr Xuereb. The impact of the resilient labour market, continued The Malta Chamber’s deputy president, is that it is creating rising wage growth and therefore higher labour costs. Together with stagnant productivity, this poses a challenge for businesses in general over the coming months.

IMPACT ON THE NATIONAL ECONOMY

Turning to inflation and interest rates, Mr Xuereb said that the European Central Bank, is currently maintaining these at 3.5%, but is expected to increase rates once again in July and September, reaching 4%. He added that in the US, with rates in the 5% region, indications are that the Federal Reserve Bank will once again increase rates following a short pause. “For companies dealing with the US, one can see that this economy is passing through a tough time, with several companies winding up,” observed Mr Xuereb.

So far, he added, interest rises are slowing down economic activity to combat inflation, but it is not sufficient. The outlook for the next 18 months continues to be a tough one as the inflation crisis continues to take its toll. Moving closer to home in Malta, The Malta Chamber believes that the country has some big challenges ahead.

A TAXING ISSUE

In Mr Xuereb’s opinion, the tax reform, which the Minister of Finance has mentioned several times, brought about by the OECD Pillar II

agreement, introducing a minimum 15% tax on companies of a certain size, is a critical challenge for Malta. Malta, he added, has relied on attracting business and Foreign Direct Investments using the tax toolbox to entice companies, particularly in the financial services and gaming sectors.

“The minimum 15% Pillar II regime, will be a challenge and the structure that will be introduced to meet this requirement, is critical for future investment into Malta. It is imperative that Malta gets this right,” said Mr Xuereb.

MANUFACTURING FOR THE FUTURE

“When the Finance Minister Clyde Caruana addressed The Malta Chamber AGM in March 2023 he said that manufacturing industry still had a future in Malta. We at The Malta Chamber agree with this as manufacturing is a critical pillar of our economy,” affirmed Mr Xuereb.

However, he added, some serious questions need to be asked: How can the government incentivise the factories? How can higher skilled jobs be attracted to Malta?

The Maltese government, observed Mr Xuereb, has been helping both businesses and individuals through energy subsidies. The government has indicated that it has pressure from the EU Commission in relation to the energy subsidies in Malta. “The Malta Chamber has always been vociferous that such subsidies have helped, but in reality are not sustainable for the longer term,” said Mr Xuereb, firmly.

THE COMPETITIVE EDGE

Investments in areas such as automation, sustainability and digitalisation are key for Malta, said the Deputy President of The Malta Chamber adding that “sustainability could be viewed as a double-edged sword. Malta has the opportunity to invest in those areas that will be the demand of the future”.

Malta, he insisted, cannot afford to stand back and believe nothing will happen. Proactive measures, he maintained, can be in various areas, for example looking at alternative energy and alternative materials. Malta is once again strategically placed to attract certain industries with a European presence, but is also close to North Africa.

Malta, concluded Mr Xuereb, is at a crossroads. “We need to define a clear economic vision for the next 10 years. This needs the involvement of all key stakeholders, from the government to The Malta Chamber. In recent years, we have been instrumental in preparing a number of economic vision documents,” said Mr Xuereb.

The Malta Chamber, he added, finally, will once again be working to create the next economic vision. **M+S**

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GasamMamo Insurance certainly requires no introduction on the local market. The insurance company enjoys an outstanding reputation amongst its loyal clientele, as over the years it has grown to represent excellence in its field. The company's standing is only further cemented by its steadfast commitment to the various corporate social responsibility projects it has embarked on over the years. In fact, GasamMamo dedicates substantial energy to assist Non-Governmental Organisations as well as private individuals, in their positive social initiatives in a number of fields.

"GasamMamo's commitment to CSR goes back many years, making it one of the first companies in Malta to seriously dedicate time and contribution to this space. Soon we understood that through CSR we could help communicate our values, ethical standards and the essence of how we do business," says the company's managing director, Julian Mamo. "Through our chosen partners in CSR, we make it a point to facilitate projects that make a difference in fields that are close to our hearts, doing our best to motivate and bolster leaders in their respective areas of expertise," he adds.

The organisation focuses its CSR efforts, around three pillars, namely the Environment, the preservation of Heritage and work with Youths. The company has always been synonymous with acts of philanthropy, that over the twenty-four years in operation, it has evolved into a sustainable structure with numerous beneficiaries, from the larger NGOs like Hospice Malta and Puttinu to smaller equally effective initiatives. Today the company's CSR program supports an ambitious programme, that reflects a company culture that supports and encourages diversity and inclusion.

GasamMamo is unwavering in its commitment to protecting the environment, promising to always be there when needed, taking the decision to go paperless, way before it became customary to do so. In fact, it has already been 10 years since the company lead the charge in the field, setting an example for all businesses, investing in digital-first procedures, include the country's first Mobile claims app. Another ongoing partnership in action is with Żibel, the NGO that works to raise awareness about sea litter and beyond. Over the past seven years GasamMamo supported Żibel with the purchase of the first sea bin, buying diving kits, equipment, and other necessary gear that the NGO needs for its clean-up initiatives.

With sobering global statistics such as an estimated 240,000 metric



tons of waste floating around on the sea surface and another 8.5 million metric tons of waste sinking to the sea floor annually, one can only imagine how crucial the work of this NGO is. This year alone, the GasanMamo Seabin has collected 195.65kg, and that's just one out of over twenty sea bins which can be found in our marinas and harbours. The devastating effects of carelessly disposed waste wreck untold havoc to marine life and the complex balances of bio sustainability. To date, Żibel has collected 3.9 tons of waste with their regular diving clean ups, which are supported by GasanMamo Insurance

“The organisation focuses its CSR efforts, around three pillars, namely the Environment, the preservation of Heritage and work with Youths.”

Similarly, the company collaborated with the Notarial Archives Foundation, an organisation which works to ensure the preservation of Malta's paper heritage. The conservation of an important sixteenth-century notarial volume pertaining to Notary Placido Abela took centre-stage as GasanMamo paid for its complete restoration and preservation process, ensuring its survival well into the future. The document in question is of extreme historical importance as it is the only extant manuscript containing the original deeds of the Notary. The sponsorship formed part of the 'Adopt a Notary' scheme set up by the Notarial Archives Foundation, which seeks to raise awareness about and preserve for future generations the collection of the Notarial Archives.

In its drive to support small businesses, GasanMamo chose to provide a platform to six local artisans to be featured in its 2021 annual calendar. At a time of extreme challenge for all self-employed and micro-enterprises, the insurance company chose to highlight the courage and grit of these outstanding individuals at a time of heightened need.

Furthermore, as one of the country's foremost employers, GasanMamo encourages its teams to take an active role in their communities. GasanMamo staff in fact organise regular CSR initiatives either in the form of clean ups, but also lending a helping hand with various institutions, supporting initiatives that positively impact youths amongst others.

Dress down days are also a popular way of how GasanMamo staff raise funds for determinate initiatives as well as individuals who would be participating in sporting events or extreme challenges. One such occasion was in support of ironman Fabio Spiteri who ran the impressive 1000km Sicilian coastline, and just last month completed seven decathlons out of ten in Brazil.


An unwavering commitment to environmental preservation and positive social impact, that began with the company, and demonstrates

a dedication to corporate social responsibility. From going paperless to supporting organizations like Żibel and the Notarial Archives Foundation, GasanMamo actively contributes to making a difference in the community. A strong CSR strategy, coupled with internal progressive practices, positions this the organisation as leader in driving positive change. GasanMamo serves as an inspiration for other businesses to embrace social and environmental responsibility, creating a better future for all. **M+S**

GasanMamo Insurance Ltd is Malta's leading insurance company, providing competitively priced insurance products for both personal and commercial clients throughout the Maltese Islands. Motor, Travel, Home, Medical, Boat and Business insurance plans are all available. We recognize the importance of customer value, ensuring that in all that we do we seek out options that maximize customer value keeping premiums as low as possible yet maintaining the correct balance to provide service that meets the standards that we have set ourselves.



EMPOWER



The Foundation for Social Welfare Services (FWSW) has emerged as a leading force in the social welfare sector, addressing the evolving needs of children, families, and communities in Malta. With a focus on prevention and treatment services, the Foundation has been instrumental in combating substance abuse and fostering inclusive environments. Over a conversation with Mr. Alfred Grixti, the CEO of the Foundation, Movers & Shakers gained some insight into the organisation's remarkable achievements, innovative services, and the leadership that has propelled it to new heights.

ERINING COMMUNITIES

TOWARDS POSITIVE SOCIAL CHANGE INNOVATIONS IN SOCIAL WELFARE

A DECADE OF PROGRESS

With a steadfast commitment to improving the lives of individuals and communities, the Foundation has witnessed unprecedented growth over the past ten years, with increased budgets, and a surge in the number of people seeking their services. As Mr. Grixti observes, “the bane of any affluent society is that the more affluent it grows, the more social issues grow,” adding that “economic growth comes at a cost.”

This is also evident in the figures presented. In 2012, funds amounted to €7.7 million, and by 2023, this figure had increased by an impressive €30 million. This substantial budgetary boost has enabled the Foundation to expand its reach and enhance its impact in the social sector. The foundation now employs almost 1000 people, nearly doubling the number of social workers in the past ten years too, with 80% of them being dedicated frontliners.

Backed by the Foundation's infrastructure, these frontliners have successfully implemented prevention and treatment programs, both in community and residential settings, for substance abuse issues. This proactive approach has garnered positive responses and enabled individuals to access the help they need to overcome addiction. Here Mr.

Grixti refers to one of the Foundation's notable accomplishments, which is its corporate partnership with the Malta Employers' Association, particularly through the SAFE (Substance Abuse-Free Environment) programme, which aims to introduce substance misuse policies in various workplaces. Mr. Grixti cites a recent successful collaboration with the Maltese Army in implementing these policies.

He also emphasises the Foundation's active involvement in Public Social Partnerships (PSPs), which exemplifies the Foundation's commitment to collaboration, and the dedication to addressing diverse social challenges through collective efforts. These three-year contractual agreements, between the Ministry for the Family, Children's Rights, and Social Solidarity and NGOs tackle a wide range of social issues, including substance abuse, mental health, homelessness, domestic violence, and support for vulnerable communities, with an emphasis on the importance of avoiding stigmatisation and treating every individual with dignity and respect. Referring to the organisation's history, Mr. Grixti acknowledges the groundwork laid back in 2002, with a mental health community clinic pilot project, in Qormi, to test out the feasibility and viability for widespread community service development. To date, over 500 people have received support in that locality, and since then, another nine clinics are now open, including one in Gozo.

“The bane of any affluent society is that the more affluent it grows, the more social issues grow. Economic growth comes at a cost.”



BIO

Alfred Grixti's educational journey began with a major in education from the University of Malta in 1986, followed by further studies in economics, politics, and industrial relations at Ruskin College, Oxford, where he obtained a post-graduate diploma in social studies, and an MSc in Management (Industrial Relations) from St Peter's College in 1992.

He served as the Executive Chair of the Employment and Training Corporation (ETC) from 2013 to 2014 before being entrusted with the leadership of Foundation for Social Welfare Services. During his tenure, the Foundation has witnessed remarkable growth. He previously held the position of Education Secretary of the Malta Labour Party from 1993 to 2001. Furthermore, he served as the Mayor of Haż-Żebbuġ, his place of residence, from 2009 to 2015. Alfred firmly believes in the power of collaboration and knowledge-sharing among professionals to enhance services. As a testament to this belief, he serves on the Governing Board of the International Social Services (ISS), actively participating in the advancement of social welfare practices globally.

On the importance of family preservation, recognising that investing in families yields significant long-term benefits, Mr. Grixti also highlights the Foundation's commitment to assisting multi-stressed families through home therapy programs. With a team of 30 family therapists on the ground, they strive to provide personalised support to families facing multiple challenges. Another positive initiative highlighted by Mr. Grixti, is how the Foundation has made significant advancements in its support for children, families, and communities.

The Directorate for Alternative Care, under the stewardship of the Foundation, has been instrumental in providing care and support to 500 children, notably, employing a full-time consultant paediatrician, who works closely with the foundation, building a comprehensive database of medical history for these children. This unique approach ensures that the children receive the necessary medical attention and care tailored to their specific needs.

Mr. Grixti also highlights the Foundation's dedication to leveraging technology to enhance its services. It was the first entity to adopt an updated case management system, to analyse data and improve decision-making processes. This information-driven approach utilises the wealth of data at its disposal to identify areas where resources are most needed. A case in point is the data gathered from the National Helpline 179, which allows the team to see where calls are coming from. Currently they are higher in Paola, where the Foundation has no presence, than in neighbouring Fgura, where the Foundation has a centre, offering immediate and unbiased support, information, and referrals to individuals in times of difficulty or crisis, as well as connecting them with relevant social service agencies.

Discussing challenges, Mr. Grixti acknowledges the shortage of human resources faced by all sectors. However, he has taken proactive steps to address this issue, and utilise resources efficiently, exploring

alternative approaches where social workers may not be necessary. As a result, frontliners possess relevant degrees and are equipped to provide support. Mr. Grixti also praises the exceptional senior management team, highlighting their competence and the trust he places in their abilities. He believes that a hands-off management approach, allows his team the freedom to excel without micromanagement. As he sees it his role is, "to advocate and lobby on behalf of the Foundation, and its extensive human workforce."

Reflecting on the Foundation's growth over the last decade, Mr. Grixti is justifiably proud, and quick to refer to the organisation's dedicated workforce, but his leadership has played a pivotal role. With a focus on inclusivity and collaboration, he has expanded its reach on an international scale, actively participating in advocacy and lobbying efforts, demonstrating the Foundation's commitment to addressing social challenges at a broader level. As the organisation continues to grow and adapt to evolving social challenges, he says, "my personal measure of success is that my transition out of here is seamless and that the structures introduced during my tenure provide a solid foundation." **M-S**

AGENZJA SEDQA HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTING THE S.A.F.E. PROGRAMME IN MALTESE WORKPLACES SINCE 1996.

This programme focuses on the introduction or review of the company's Substance Abuse and Gambling Policy and the training of managers/supervisors and employees on addictions and self-care. It also provides a functional referral system to Agenzija Sedqa's Care services for employees who might be experiencing problems related to substance misuse and/or gambling that may be having an impact on the place of work.



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ATTRACTIVENESS OF MALTA TO THIRD COUNTRY NATIONALS

The Malta Chamber has stated on several occasions that it is high time Malta carried out a full and comprehensive study on its optimal and sustainable carrying capacity addressing housing, schooling, social security, infrastructure, and the environment, among others.

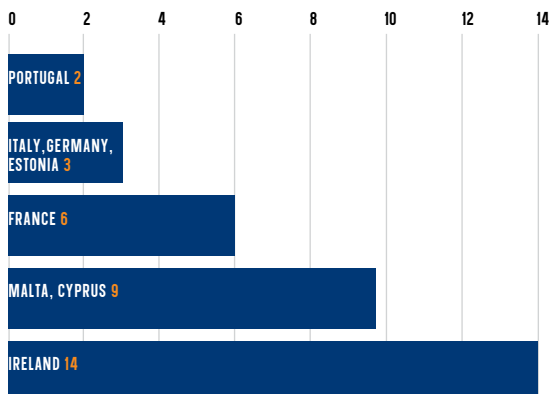
BY THE MALTA CHAMBER HR & TALENT THEMATIC WORKING GROUP

In parallel, The Malta Chamber emphasised that many local businesses depend on third-country nationals (TCN) to survive and called for measures to facilitate their employment in Malta.

But these measures should not serve to facilitate the abusive recruitment and employment of foreign workers. On the contrary, procedures should be revised to grant them access to a free labour market, without any derived ownership rights of the original employer.

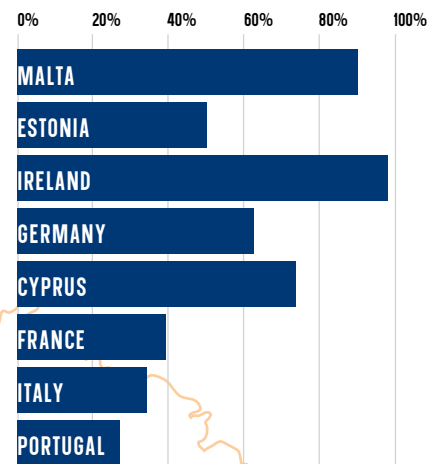
This report is therefore reproducing a **list of recommendations** which are directed towards the lacunas listed above:

LENGTH OF TIME REQUIRED FOR THE PROCESSING OF THE RESIDENCE PERMIT (MONTHS)



“Queries should be resolved in a transparent and consistent manner.”

PERCENTAGE OF NATIONALS SPEAKING ENGLISH



1 **Widen the scope of the Key Employment Initiative scheme** to attract individuals in possession of certain critical skills and qualifications that are running short in the labour market.

2 Government should **address the issue of visa delays with relevant service providers** to ensure that appointments are granted within a reasonable time frame. It is recommended that **application quotas** are introduced according to the number of registered employees.

3 **Time frames** for the provision of visa appointments as well as the subsequent issuing of the visa should be standardised and monitored.

4 Identity Malta should impose a **quota per company for TCN applications proportional to the number of employees registered with Jobsplus**. Exemptions to this quota, to allow for large-scale business expansion, should be granted on a case-by-case basis.

5 Identity Malta should check multiple applications for the same individual to **eliminate duplicates**.

6 Standard practice of **35 days review of applications** cannot restart again upon submission of all additional documentation requests. Reasoned proportionality needs to be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

7 **A three-month interim work permit should be granted under the same criteria as the approval in principle from Identity Malta**. This would mean that once the TCN has received an invitation letter declaring their approval in principle, they would have the right to work for three months effective from the date of their arrival in the country. In this three-month grace period, the employer would be obliged to ensure that the employee goes through the health screening process and submit a rental agreement.

8 **A single, transparent, and publicised policy should apply to student visas** exceeding 90 days, and the 150-day requirement should be removed.

9 Once a TCN is approved to work in Malta, they should **have access to a free labour market** without any derived ownership rights of the original employer when changing job.

10 Introduce a three-year **validity for work permits** following the first successful year working in Malta as a TCN.

11 Facilitation of the single-permit route for family members since it is in Malta's interest to have both TCN family members in employment rather than relying on a single breadwinner. **The average duration of family relocation administrative approvals should be reduced** from the current eight months to two months.

12 A feasible **legal mechanism should be introduced to allow TCNs to become Maltese citizens** after years of being a working resident in Malta.

13 Queries should be **resolved in a transparent and consistent manner**. The Malta Chamber fully supports the digitalisation of processes at Identity Malta and believes that this will also contribute positively to the resolution of administrative issues, while also recommending the introduction of specialised desk officers who are trained to answer and address all queries received.

14 **All operators providing recruitment services need to be rigorously regulated by DIER to ensure a level playing field and to curb abuses**. This would also ensure better coordinated operations between licensed recruitment service providers and the relevant authorities; DIER, Identity Malta and Jobsplus. All these authorities need to ensure that they are dealing with licensed operators carrying out legitimate activities. Government should ensure strict enforcement of licensing requirements so that this crucial sector is properly regulated.

15 **Platform economy operators whose workforce is exploited should be reprimanded and withheld from benefiting of any fiscal support packages**. Slavery practices, which are frequently undertaken jointly with unlicensed recruitment intermediaries should be abolished.

16 **A better enforcement and sanctioning regime, particularly in relation to foreign workers to curb blatant abuse**. A zero-tolerance policy towards abusive employment practices that put law-abiding and fair employers at a competitive disadvantage in terms of operating costs and damage Malta's reputation as a work-life destination for foreign workers, needs to be adopted.

17 **A full and comprehensive study should be carried out on Malta's optimal and sustainable carrying capacity**, highlighting the benefits of limiting population growth in terms of housing, schooling, social security, infrastructure and environmental concerns, whilst also taking into account the economic benefits of utilising skilled and unskilled TCNs in certain sectors of the economy to ensure the vitality and growth of different key areas. This study must take a comprehensive view of the labour market including current and predicted trends in the quantity and educational background of Maltese nationals entering the workforce, the migratory patterns of EU nationals relocating to Malta on a semi-permanent or permanent basis as well as the seasonal influxes of tourists who also exert their own strains on the island's resources. **M+S**

“Government should address the issue of visa delays with relevant service providers to ensure that appointments are granted within a reasonable time frame.”

INTERVIEW WITH YACHTHUB GROUP CEO -
MR. CHARLO BRIFFA

SETTING SAIL for SUCCESS

Yachthub Group's Rise to Prominence
in Malta's Yachting Sector



Yachthub Group, a prominent Maltese group of companies, has emerged as a key player in Malta's yachting industry. Founded in 2011, the group has rapidly solidified its position as the primary provider of comprehensive in-house services, which encompass an extensive range of offerings, including the sale of new and pre-owned yachts, specialized luxury toys, service and maintenance, charters, yacht management, marina management, and a nautical school. With a dedicated team comprising more than 50 highly skilled professionals, the group has fostered lasting partnerships with employees, clients, and suppliers, showcasing an unwavering commitment to delivering exceptional services. Movers & Shakers recently sat down with the Group's CEO Charlo Briffa, to gain insights into the Company's distinctive position within the industry, its innovative technological approach, and its vision for the future.

Charlo has been instrumental in driving the Company's growth and success. Since acquiring the marine division in 2017, he, together with Antonio BORG, chief technical officer focused on transforming the group into a self-sustaining organization that offers a wide range of skilled and professional in-house services. Through strategic investments, Yachthub Group has continually improved its activities and expanded its offerings to ensure a seamless and enjoyable experience for boaters. Under his leadership, and over the course of six years, Yachthub Group strategically invested in employment, training, equipment, IT, marketing, and strategic locations throughout Malta. Through partnerships with renowned brands and a strong vision, Yachthub Group has emerged as a leading player in Malta's yachting sector. Today, the group consists of eight Companies, employs over 50 individuals, and operates from six strategic locations. Notable brands represented by the group include among others, Sunseeker, Cranchi, Bavaria, Nautitech, Brabus Marine, Axopar, Sea-doo, Can-Am, Pirelli tenders, Humphree, Whisper Power, and Dockmarine.

Charlo outlines the core values that underpin Yachthub Group's operations, including integrity, good governance, accountability, employee well-being, transparency, high standards, and trust, which have been instrumental in fostering enduring relationships with employees, clients, and suppliers. He also explains the Company's

dedication to being at the forefront of viable corporate visions in the Maltese yachting sector. Yachthub Group offers extensive career advancement opportunities and promotes gender equality within a multicultural environment.

He also emphasizes the importance of having a trustworthy partner in the luxury yachting experience, akin to concierge services. "We believe that when owning a luxury yacht, you need a trustworthy partner who will guide you professionally, allowing you the space to enjoy your asset, hassle free."

Yachthub Group prides itself on assembling an exceptional team of individuals who provide maximum enjoyment of clients' assets and ensure a hassle-free experience. Attention to detail and personal relationships with customers are key factors in delivering the high level of service that distinguishes Yachthub Group.

The group's diversified team, coupled with the comprehensive in-house services provided by its Companies, offers a distinct competitive advantage in the market. And here Charlo points to the several significant milestones, including the establishment and management of Laguna Marina, a boutique marina that offers a club-like experience with meticulous attention to detail. The success of Laguna Marina has been further bolstered by the Laguna Maritime School, providing comprehensive training on legislation, rules, and obligations at sea using the latest boats distributed by Yachthub Group. Another notable milestone is the implementation of the Volvo Penta Service Centre at the Mediterranean Maritime Hub. This facility, staffed by a team of experts, has significantly enhanced business activity and customer satisfaction.

To further support and complement its expanding operations, Yachthub Group recently launched several positions, including Senior Accountant, Warranty Coordinator, Operations Manager, Client Relations Officer, Service Advisors, Parts Management, Mechanics, Sales Brokers, and Technical Business Developers. Additionally, plans are underway to establish an after-sales facility that will accommodate Yachthub Group's back-office services, logistics, and parts management.

The yachting industry is also making strides to lessen its ecological footprint through new, innovative technologies and launching green initiatives. Charlo's forward-thinking approach also extends to implementing eco-friendly practices, such as introducing electric-



“The yachting industry is also making strides to lessen its ecological footprint through new, innovative technologies and launching green initiatives.”

based products and supporting eco-friendly anchorage to protect the seabed. The Group aims to introduce various electric-based products, such as Can-Am motorcycles, electric outboards and inboard engines, and luxury toys, in 2024 and remains open to environmentally friendly initiatives, despite encountering challenges in implementing a green energy generation project at their marina in 2021.

Charlo is also keen to mention the Group's digital transformation journey, investing in advanced software systems to improve operational efficiency, resource management, and internal and external reporting. The Company is now focusing on enhancing transparency and

reporting capabilities within its yacht management division to better serve its clients.

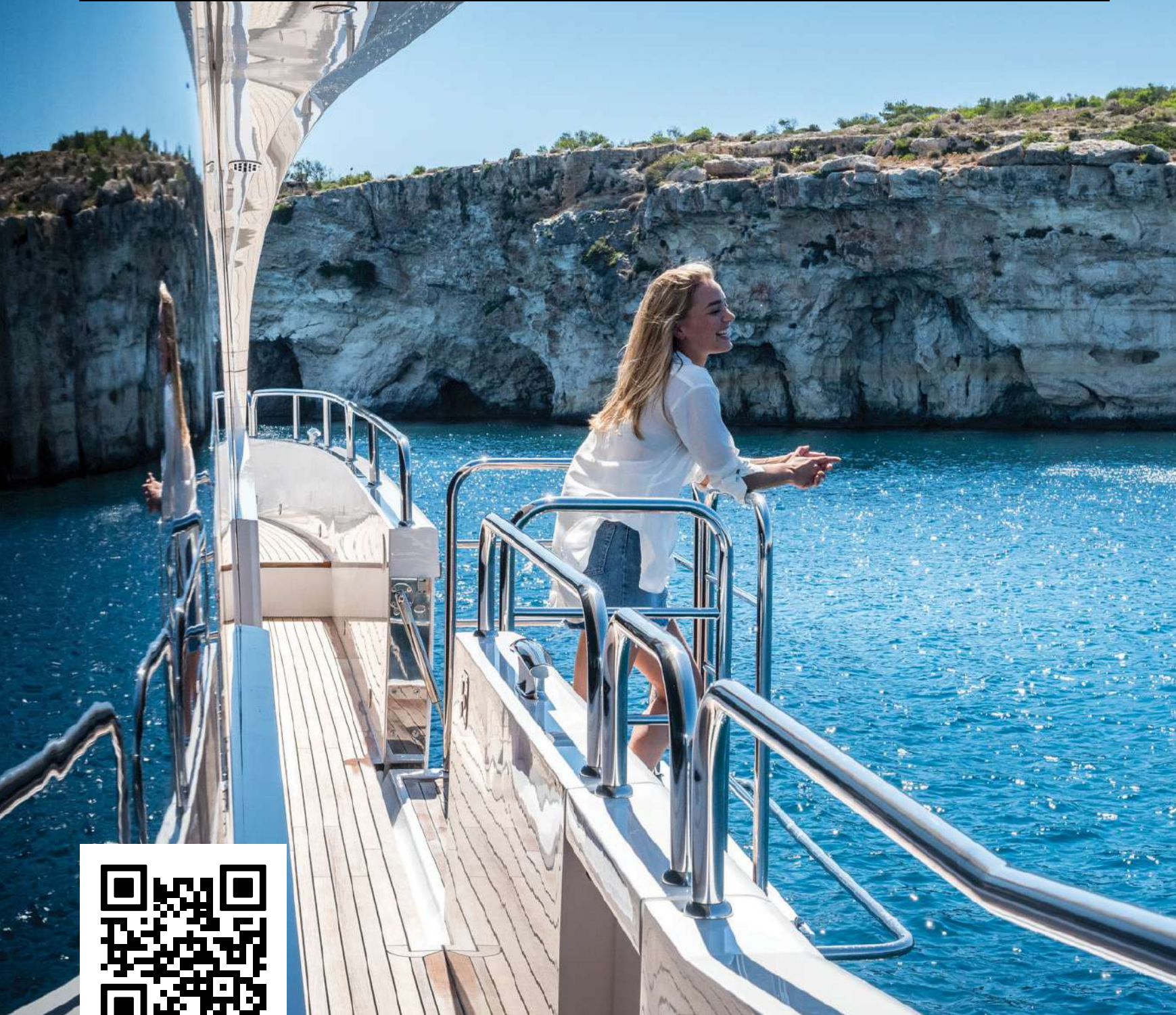
Charlo concludes by expressing optimism about the Company's future, highlighting the commitment to maintaining good practices, fostering strong foundations, and delivering exceptional services that have propelled Yachthub Group's success in the yachting industry. With his visionary leadership, strategic decision-making, and relentless pursuit of excellence, this CEO has positioned Yachthub Group as a leading player in the yachting industry, consistently surpassing expectations and setting new standards of quality and service. **M&S**

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GREENOWLS IS REVOLUTIONISING COURIER SERVICES WITH SUSTAINABILITY AT ITS CORE

GreenOwls is a courier service based in Malta that is revolutionising the way businesses handle deliveries by prioritising environmental responsibility and sustainability. With electric vehicles and a firm commitment to collaboration and personalised services, GreenOwls is positioning itself as the go-to B2B courier service on the Maltese islands.

In the bustling world of business, where time is money and efficiency is paramount, one entrepreneur stands out, determined to make a positive impact on both the environment and the business community. Meet Kyle Sciberras, a visionary leader and the Co-Founder & CEO of GreenOwls, an innovative courier service based in Malta. With a steadfast commitment to sustainability and a passion for delivering exceptional service, Kyle and his team have positioned GreenOwls as the go-to courier service on the Maltese islands.

A SUSTAINABLE JOURNEY

Kyle's entrepreneurial journey began with a deep-rooted desire to create a courier service that not only catered to the growing demand for efficient delivery, but also minimised the carbon footprint associated with transportation. Recognising the urgent need for sustainable solutions, GreenOwls' vehicles are strictly electric, ensuring that every delivery is executed with environmental stewardship in mind. By harnessing the power of renewable energy, GreenOwls not only reduces greenhouse gas emissions, but also serves as a beacon of hope for a greener future.

BEYOND CONVENIENCE: UNIQUE SERVICES

GreenOwls goes above and beyond the traditional courier service, offering an extensive range of delivery options tailored to the needs of businesses. From documents and clothing to cosmetic products, electronics, and various retail items, GreenOwls handles it all. With a firm focus on the business-to-business (B2B) market, the company has developed a comprehensive understanding of the specific requirements and time-sensitive nature of commercial deliveries.

COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIP

One of the cornerstones of GreenOwls' success lies in its unwavering commitment to fostering strong relationships with merchants and partners. "I firmly believe in the power of collaboration and therefore I also see a direct correlation between the success of our clients and the success of GreenOwls," Kyle said, adding that by working closely with businesses, GreenOwls ensures a seamless and personalized experience, delivering on its promise to be more than just a courier service. Whether it's providing real-time updates, flexible delivery schedules, or tailored solutions, GreenOwls is dedicated to going the extra mile.



"By choosing GreenOwls as your preferred courier service, you are aligning your company with a progressive movement that prioritises environmental responsibility and sustainable practices, while benefiting from unmatched convenience and professionalism."

THE GREENOWLS EXPERIENCE

Choosing GreenOwls as your preferred courier service guarantees more than just reliable deliveries. It represents a conscious choice to support sustainable practices while benefitting from unmatched convenience and professionalism. As a business owner or CEO, entrusting your deliveries to GreenOwls means aligning your company with a progressive movement that prioritizes environmental responsibility.

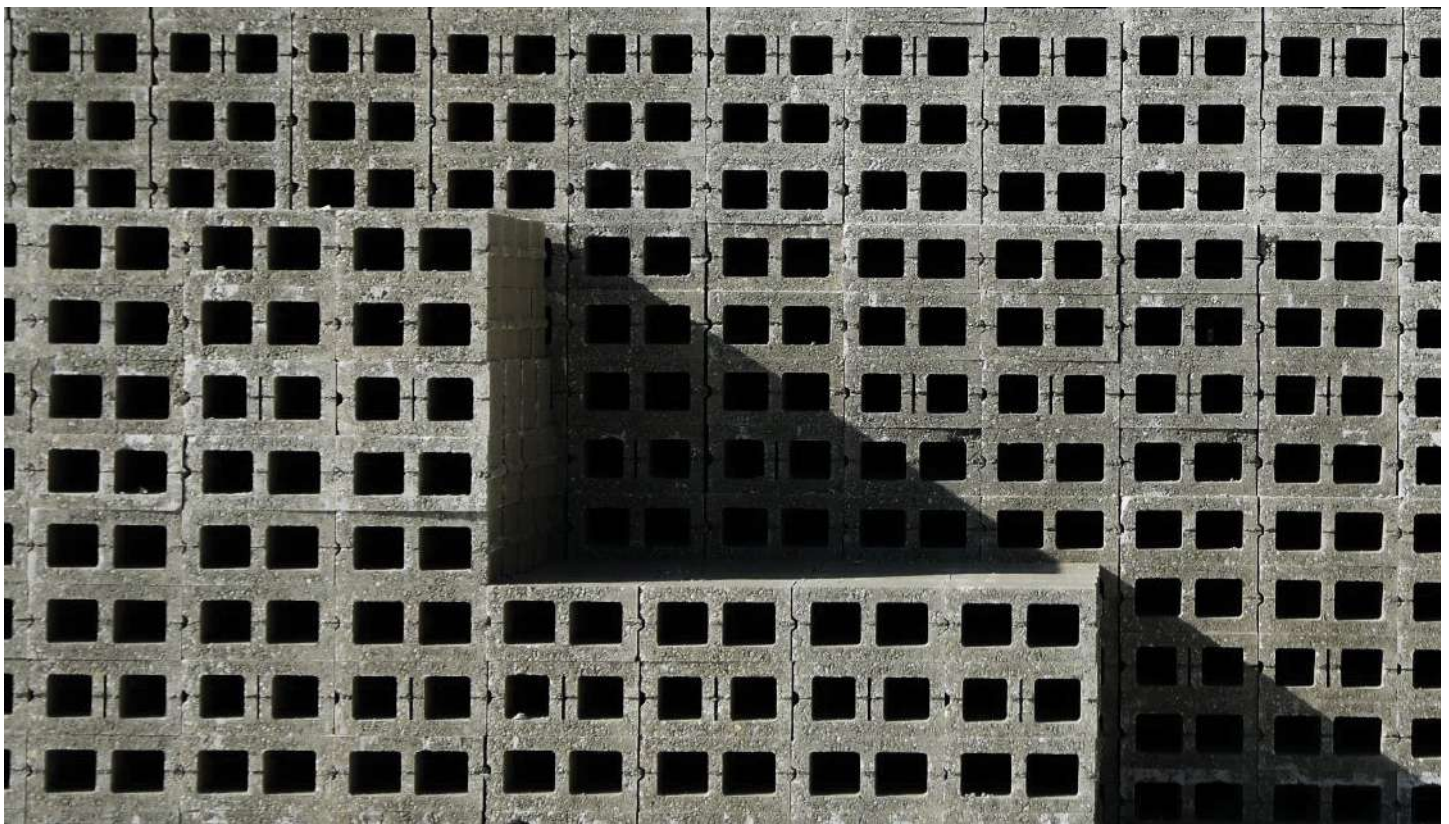
More information about GreenOwls and the wide range of services offered, can be found on their Facebook and Instagram pages, as well as on their website. In this way those searching can get to experience firsthand how GreenOwls is reshaping the courier industry in Malta, delivering excellence while safeguarding the planet for generations to come.

CONCLUSION

In a world where innovation and sustainability are becoming increasingly intertwined, GreenOwls stands tall as a beacon of progress. Under the visionary leadership of Kyle Sciberras, this groundbreaking courier service has revolutionised the way businesses handle deliveries in Malta.

"By combining environmental consciousness, personalized services, and a strong commitment to collaboration, GreenOwls is paving the way for a greener and more efficient future. Embrace the GreenOwls experience today and become a part of the movement toward sustainable success," Kyle concludes. **M+S**

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF VISIONARY EXCELLENCE & EMBRACING THE FUTURE



In the ever-evolving business landscape, there are companies that stand out for their achievements and unwavering commitment to excellence. One such entity is PHILIP A TABONE which celebrates fifty years in operation as a trusted partner for businesses across diverse sectors, delivering comprehensive solutions that drive growth and success. Led by the Chairman, Mr. Philip A. Tabone, whose unwavering commitment to integrity, quality and service, have ensured a legacy spanning five decades. This family business continuously demonstrates its ability to drive innovation and deliver unparalleled results.

COMPREHENSIVE SOLUTIONS FOR A WIDE RANGE OF INDUSTRIES

From its inception, Mr. Tabone established the pillars of integrity, quality, and service, with a mission to bring about positive change and ensure customer satisfaction. The company's comprehensive solutions cater to a wide range of industries, offering start-up consultancy for the setting up of complete production plants, cutting-edge software solutions both for efficient production facilities, and for optimisation, heavy plant and machinery, and engineering services. Additionally, the company supplies premium building materials, state-of-the-art machinery and provides specialized recruitment solutions for the concrete industry. Notably, the Group recognized the evolving market dynamics, and expanded its services in 2016, venturing into retail offerings, such as day to day building materials and industrial equipment.

PIONEERING THE CONCRETE INDUSTRY

The business also played a pivotal role in introducing Malta to the prestigious Master Builders Solutions brand, one of the leading suppliers of concrete admixtures and underground construction solutions worldwide. Leveraging its extensive experience, PHILIP A TABONE has successfully installed concrete supply points, including Batching Plants, Block Plants, Laboratory Eq. and Hollow Core Slab production equipment. Moreover, it continues to be at the forefront of introducing innovative technologies to empower and support the local market, fostering its continued growth. With its wealth of experience, the company has also successfully set up factories internationally, driving success in global markets.

STEADFAST COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE

Building on its pillars, the company prides itself on exceeding customer expectations by delivering customized service, alongside its excellent after sales engineering services. Through adaptability and a geographical presence in key locations, the company effectively serves clients on a global scale, while staying at the forefront of industry advancements. A robust after-sales support service has further sealed its reputation for reliability and quality.

EMBRACING SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES

The organization is committed to providing a wide range of intelligent and sustainable building materials which encompass high quality insulation solutions, and more.

PHILIP A TABONE is in process of also providing further solutions for the future, and are currently actively promoting sustainable practices and green building initiatives, emphasizing the importance of environmental stewardship. By embracing recycling and sustainable materials, the company is making impactful inroads, minimizing its ecological footprint while maintaining the highest standards of quality and performance.

FUTURE-FORWARD VISION AND GLOBAL EXPANSION

With International presence under the visionary leadership of Mr. Tabone, the organisation continues to maintain a forward-thinking vision for the future, seeking to expand its global footprint, forge strategic partnerships and explore new opportunities in international markets.

This 50-year celebration signifies a legacy of excellence, dedication and innovation. By adopting the future with a precedence on a customer centric approach, in addition to practising sustainability, the company remains well-positioned to redefine success and shape the ever-evolving landscape of the industry.

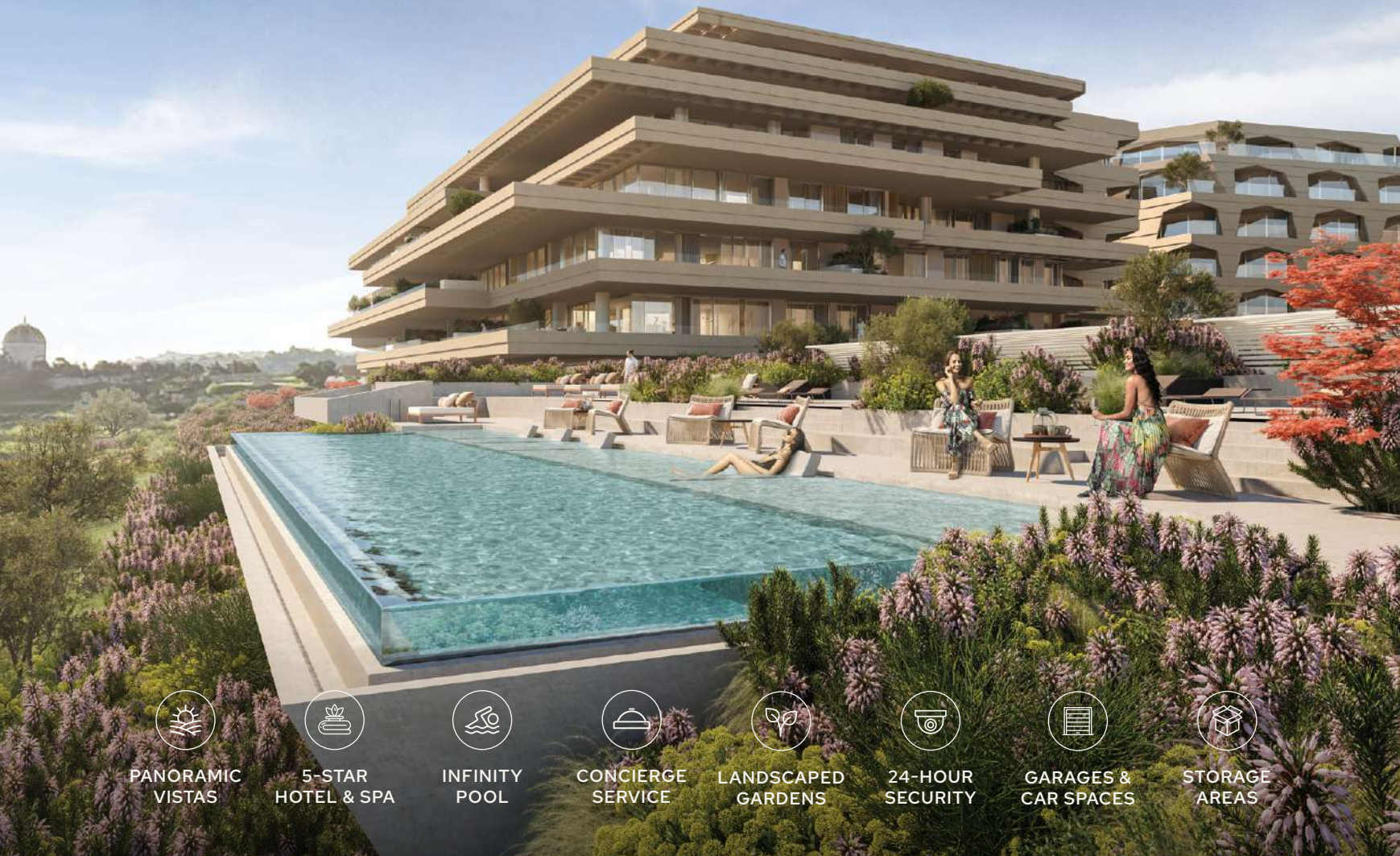
In line with its dedication to sustainability, PHILIP A TABONE will proudly serve as the principal sponsor of an International Concrete Conference, scheduled to take place in Malta on the 21st of November, 2023. This prestigious event will focus on advancing developments that enhances the sustainability of concrete.

The company's agility to react to market demands, both locally in Malta and internationally, is what propelled PHILIP A TABONE in the forefront of this industry. By embracing the future with a customer-centric approach and a focus on sustainability, the company remains poised to lead, redefine success and shape the industry's future trajectory. **M+S**

“Under the visionary leadership of Mr. Tabone, the organisation continues to maintain a forward-thinking vision for the future.”



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A YEAR IN REVIEW OPERATING THE NATIONAL LOTTERY OF MALTA

A year since taking over the operation of the National Lottery of Malta on July 5th, 2022, Johann Schembri, Founder and CEO of IZI Group plc provides interesting insights into the operations of the national lottery and the future aspirations of the Group.

Movers & Shakers sat down with Johann Schembri, to learn about the first year of operation of National Lottery plc, the new lottery operator in Malta that took over from Maltco Lotteries Limited who had been operating the national lottery since 2004.

The first year of operation is always a special year in the lifetime of a new company. Taking over the operation of the national lottery of Malta was by no stretch of the imagination a small feat. Izi Group had been working relentlessly for over two years before commencing operations, with two very clear goals; first to ensure a seamless transition from the previous operator, and secondly, to effectively rekindle the affinity of the Maltese society towards the national lottery games.

For the first time since the privatisation of the Lottery service in Malta, a Maltese-owned company is now in charge of operating the national lottery.

“We have worked tirelessly to ensure that we meet both goals in the shortest time possible. I am very thankful that through the close collaboration of all stakeholders we have managed to attain both goals in record time. In our launch last year, we promised to bring the national lottery closer to the local public, by acknowledging the need to deliver a compelling product offering, sold under a brand that is truly local”, highlighted Mr Schembri. “We also studied ways of adding value to the market by undertaking tangible changes to the most popular lottery products. Through these changes and our relentless effort to communicate these changes we have seen the distribution of record prizes over the past 12 months with over €107.14 million paid in prizes since 5th July 2022. Our Maltese roots enable us to better understand the traits of the market, and finding the right solutions to deliver a product that best suits the market demand.”

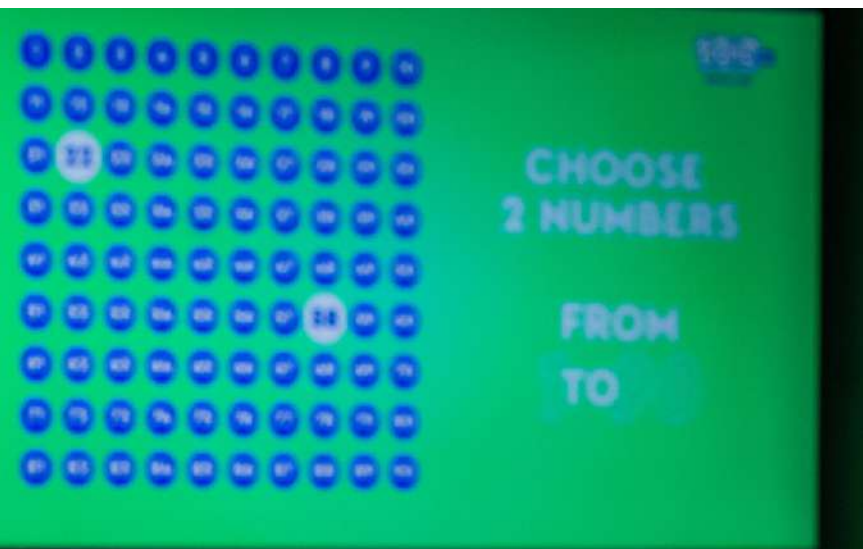
A YEAR OF CHANGES, AND MORE TO COME.

Some changes had to be undertaken to help fuel the demand for the national lottery products. The best possible showcase to this relates to the game of Lotto. Despite being a game that enjoyed strong demand



emanating from its 100-year tradition, the changes we implemented in the market have been the main reason for the robust growth in Lotto sales throughout this year. For the first time since the launch of Lotto in 1923, the Tuesday Draw had been introduced, and the capping on winnings had been eliminated. Such practice is believed to essentially skew the game and may have led to redirect players to the informal market. Allowing players to take home 100% of their winnings creates a new perception in the game and restored confidence in players.





“We promised to bring the national lottery closer to the local public, by acknowledging the need to deliver a compelling product offering, sold under a brand that is truly local. We also studied ways of adding value to the market by undertaking tangible changes to the most popular lottery products.”

Earlier in the year IZI Group also introduced ScratchiZ, an Instant Scratch Card Product Series offering top prizes of up to €150,000. Instant Scratch Cards are one of the most interesting product categories for a lottery provider. In the most advanced markets worldwide, Instant Scratch Cards make up even 50% of the total value generated by lottery operators. In Malta, these products have only contributed marginally to the industry.

Mr Schembri stated that “We are adamant to change this as we have embarked on a plan that will position this product at the very top of our product portfolio.” The Instant Scratch Card product branded under the ScratchiZ name, is set to take the market by storm, on the strength of the commercial policy towards this category. For starters a series of scratch cards have been designed, which do have a strong appeal, a prize structure with very high pay-out rates has been introduced, and very lucrative top prize jackpots have been included to allow players to dream big. These product elements, coupled with favourable terms offered to the agents to push these products would lead to more people scratching and winning. These products would also be available through extended distribution, which is another important source of success for this product category.

IZI Group’s approach had been set from the very beginning; to undertake those necessary changes to continue to fuel the interest of the market. To this end a series of planned changes are planned, central amongst these, is the launch of the first Friday Super5 draw that is earmarked to take place on Friday 21st July 2023. The Friday draw will also include the two other games that form an integral part of the Super5 family of games, namely Super5 Plus and Super5-4-3-2-1. It is clear from comprehensive research that IZI Group had undertaken, that the market yearns for the opportunity of winning a sizeable jackpot more than once every week.

Ever since the launch, IZI Group has been inundated by requests from all walks of life for online lottery. Finally, the wait for online lottery is over. The lottery e-commerce site has been launched. The product team has delivered an online ecommerce portal aimed at delivering clear benefits to all those that have a preference in availing of the lottery service through digital means. Introducing this new product marked a major change in the history of national lottery and Mr Schembri’s smile says it all; “We are very excited about the prospects of this channel and are looking forward to seeing how the market will react to the first omnichannel experience of its kind in the local lottery market.”

The national lottery operation provides IZI Group with unprecedented growth opportunities, yet also presents itself with several challenges, most of which are intrinsic to the realities of the local market.

Malta will always remain a relatively small market in absolute terms, so prioritizing the sizeable capital-intensive investment decisions over time remains a challenge. Operating a market like Malta however allows the Group to build a wealth of knowledge in an industry that may present internationalization opportunities. The natural progression for IZI Group is to eye investment opportunities abroad to leverage the knowhow across international markets.

A dynamic team managed by Mr Schembri as per the vision of IZI Group makes the future looks bright, while also stressing the daily mantra of combatting illegal practices; “We are also very keen to leverage the opportunities brought about by a wider and more efficient local distribution network. We would like to meet the benchmarks set by the European Lottery Industry in terms of points of sale in the market through a diversified distribution network. Our first step towards this strategy is our launch of online lottery earlier this month.

Finally, we would like to stress the importance of having all industry stakeholders come together to curb the illegal distribution of gaming products, especially those that offer fixed-odds pay-outs such as lotto and sports betting. Millions of Euros are exchanged in underground practices each year to the detriment of public coffers and our communities.” **M&S**

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SKILLS RUSH

HAVE WE MISSED THE BUS?

THE MALTA CHAMBER & HSBC MALTA FOUNDATION

“Education matters greatly for business. It matters for human capital; digitalisation; sustainability; good governance; and for the overarching goal of resilient economic growth. All this is key to maintaining Malta’s international competitiveness,” said The Malta Chamber President, Chris Vassallo Cesareo, in his opening speech at a conference recently organised, entitled ‘Skills Rush: Have we missed the bus?’.

Organised in collaboration with HSBC Malta Foundation, The Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry published the analysis and results of an exercise carried out by Prof. Alexiei Dingli and Prof. Rose Marie Azzopardi. This study looked at Human Capital and its transition from a local to a European and Global context. This study was carried out through the Human Capital Research Project funded by The HSBC Malta Foundation.

HUMAN RESOURCES TO ADDRESS FUTURE NEEDS

The Malta Chamber President said that “we will remain committed to put the Education sector at the forefront of our work. Human Capital has always been one of Malta’s greatest resources and we are supporting this project because we believe in having an optimum workforce that can address future needs.”

Geoffrey Fichte, CEO at HSBC Bank Malta, noted that “given HSBC’s commitment to Malta, we want to raise awareness on an important topic that affects our customers and the community: Future Skills. At HSBC Malta, we are constantly investing in the long-term success of our people and our community. We need to ensure that our people have the skills needed for the jobs of the future. Therefore, we are supporting this 3-year project, which is being endorsed by the Ministry for Education, because it anticipates the skills needed to succeed and ensure Malta’s ongoing competitiveness in the global economy. Together with The Malta Chamber we hope that this project will play a key role in the formation of national policy in this area.”

“It’s also important to connect school learning with real-world jobs. We want our students not only to learn but to use this knowledge in everyday life.”



THE NEED FOR CRITICAL THINKING

Minister for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation Clifton Grima in his address said that the country needs “to equip our students with the necessary skills such as critical thinking and problem solving. The education system should be able to give our children the right tools that the future needs.”

Prof. Alexiei Dingli who specialises in Artificial Intelligence (AI), together with Economist Prof. Rose Marie Azzopardi emphasised that in today’s fast-changing world, Malta needs to be ready to make a big difference in education. “We need to create learning plans that are personalised for every student’s unique needs and talents, instead of a one size fits all. Tools like chatGPT can greatly help our learning process. It’s no longer about having access to knowledge but more about knowing how to use it in our tech-driven world. It’s also important to connect school learning with real-world jobs. We want our students not only to learn but to use this knowledge in everyday life. This means getting them comfortable with digital tools and technology from a young age. Malta’s current economic model is unsustainable. We need to focus on quality not quantity, evaluate the high level of skills mismatch in the labour market, aim for a skills anticipation strategy, consider reskilling and upskilling as an ongoing process and work to ensure we implement the strategies, we as stakeholders decide upon together. We need to act before it is too late,” said the leading experts in AI and Economics.

EDUCATION IS INTRINSICALLY LINKED TO ECONOMY

In her closing remarks, Dr Marthese Portelli, The Malta Chamber CEO, said that “our economy depends, directly and intrinsically, on a high standard of education in order to enable us to broaden our intellectual capital through successful human resource growth. For this reason, education must be continuous, relevant and attractive. The bottom line in education is not how much money we spend, but on what we spend it and how we spend it.”

The conference proved to be a very fruitful exercise and comments among the attendees indicated that the sharing of ideas on this level prove to be a significant platform for development in the right direction. **M&S**

MANAGING A VALUES-DRIVEN CANNABIS REFORM

The executive chairperson of the Authority for the Responsible Use of Cannabis outlines the main features brought about by the enactment of Chapter 628 into the laws of Malta, explaining what Malta hopes to achieve, as a country, with the partial decriminalisation of cannabis.

LEONID MCKAY - EXECUTIVE CHAIRPERSON

On the 18th December 2021, Chapter 628 was enacted into law. In essence this Act established the Authority on the Responsible Use of Cannabis (ARUC) and amended various laws relating to certain cannabis activities. However Chapter 628 has not legalised the use of cannabis in Malta.

The partial Decriminalisation of Cannabis, and therefore, the removal of criminal status for a certain behaviour or action, was introduced to address the 'unintended negative consequences' caused by the criminalisation of cannabis and incarceration of innocent people who use cannabis. This does not mean that the use of cannabis is liberalised, or that the Maltese Government is promoting the use of cannabis. In fact, non-criminal penalties may still be applied. These changes build on the previous legislative changes introduced in 2015 under the Drug Dependence (Treatment not Imprisonment) Act whereby the possession of small quantities of drugs were depenalised. Depenalisation refers to the policy of closing a criminal case without proceeding towards punishment, and instead be diverted to appear in front of the Commissioner for Justice and sanctioned with a fine.

As part of its raison d'être, the Authority is tasked with establishing, and regulating an effective and efficient system, that ensures the responsible use of cannabis for the purposes other than medical or scientific purposes, and to carry out work targeted at implementing harm reduction principles, across the operational and technical framework, establishing Not-for-Profit Organisations as Cannabis Harm Reduction Associations.

Acting both as a regulator and as an educational hub, the Authority is tasked with developing a robust regulatory framework to establish a safe and regulated space, where cannabis is produced and distributed amongst adult members registered in a centralised anonymised database. This safe and regulated space is created through the ARUC licensing process which establishes Cannabis Harm Reduction Associations.

These associations will be operating on a not-for-profit basis and prioritise a harm and risk reduction approach amongst their members. Cannabis Harm Reduction Associations will not be allowed to market their activities and registered members will join a closed space not accessible for non-registered members or tourists. As the Executive Chairperson, I remain committed to the basic values of harm reduction, to the protection of at-risk groups, and to public health and



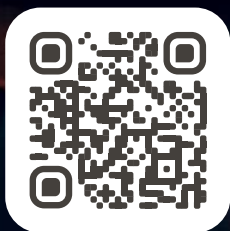
"The Authority is tasked with establishing, and regulating an effective and efficient system, that ensures the responsible use of cannabis for the purposes other than medical or scientific purposes, and to carry out work targeted at implementing harm reduction principles, across the operational and technical framework, establishing Not-for-Profit Organisations as Cannabis Harm Reduction Associations."

social justice. Without encouraging new cannabis users, we aim to facilitate the shift for people who use cannabis, from the dangers and perils of the illicit market, to a safe regulated source of quality tested non-medical cannabis, without moving on to an equally-perilous profit-driven commercialised cannabis market. **M·S**

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PIONEERING A NEW LEVEL OF LUXURY

The Verdala Terraces, spearheaded by the AX Group, promises to transform luxury and contemporary living while preserving the rich heritage of Rabat and Mdina. With a stellar reputation in quality developments, AX Group has embarked on yet another exceptional venture that sets a new benchmark in high-quality residential developments across Malta. Movers & Shakers sat down with Denise Xuereb, Director of Construction & Development who heads this ambitious project to find out more. Christian Camilleri from C&K Architects, the architectural firm commissioned for the development was also present to provide some unique insights into the inspiration, the concept and design process.

With a diverse portfolio that includes award-winning hotels, luxury residences, and landmark projects, AX Group has long established itself as a trusted name in the construction and development industry. Noteworthy contributions to national projects, such as the Parliament building's frame structure and the rehabilitation of the Valletta Waterfront, further demonstrate their commitment to high-quality execution. The Verdala Terraces promises to be another unique addition in the Group's portfolio.

Denise is deeply passionate about The Verdala project and has clearly inherited the visionary gene. She kicks off the interview by outlining the journey to this point. The project obtained a full development permit, with plans to transform the former Grand Hotel Verdala into a five-star boutique hotel and residential complex. She is also proud of the absence of objections throughout the application process, explaining how she and her team actively listened to the concerns of all stakeholders, allowing for constructive dialogue and

feedback. The architects, in turn, adjusted the masterplan wherever possible to accommodate these concerns, displaying a collaborative approach and commitment to creating a development that aligns with the community's interests.

She describes The Verdala Terraces, situated along the picturesque ridge edge of Tal-Virtu, as a rare blend of exclusivity and natural beauty, designed for individuals who appreciate the finer things in life, as well as a keen sense of community and belonging within a vibrant neighbourhood boasting restaurants, cafés, boutique shops, and iconic cultural landmarks. On the final design, Denise emphasizes the importance of understanding the desires and needs of the end users. "Everything starts with understanding our clients; their needs and desires drove the design process." One of the most crucial aspects is that residents seek is privacy. To accommodate this, a lot of time was spent on what she describes as privacy modules, and tough decisions, including halving the number of units the development could potentially house and eliminating light shafts. This meticulous attention to the residents' preferences ensures that each unit at The Verdala Terraces provides the desired level of privacy.

Perit Chris Camilleri is equally passionate when discussing the concept and design, as he highlights the pivotal role played by a client who was resolute in their commitment to harmonizing with the surroundings. And in fact, the development seamlessly blends with its natural surroundings, using terraces and voids that mimic the promontory and rock strata, ensuring a harmonious integration with the landscape. The heart of The Verdala hotel will feature a multi-level pyramidal atrium, housing state-of-the-art communal facilities and serving as a physical and visual corridor from Triq ir-Rghajja to the Tal-Virtu ridge overlooking Malta. Residents will also have access to a world of upscale amenities, coupled with front-row seats to breathtaking scenery within Malta's open countryside. The project also places a strong emphasis on sustainability, incorporating the latest and most sustainable building practices and it is this fusion, and vision of timeless design and innovative construction techniques making it an enduring architectural masterpiece.

The structures of both the Royal and Grand Mansions, are now both completed, offering prospective buyers the opportunity to acquire homes with a selection of high end finishes. Reflecting unique preferences, these finishes contribute to a truly lavish living experience that integrates aesthetics with functionality. Both the Royal and Grand Mansions share overlapping specifications that enhance the residents' comfort and elevate their lifestyle. Denise takes considerable pride in the meticulous design measures implemented in both blocks to ensure an exceptional living experience.

The unique staggered terrace design of the Grand Mansions is a true testament to architectural innovation, setting it apart as exclusive to Malta. Due to the integrated louver design, the terraces provide the necessary privacy from neighbours, whilst offering unparalleled panoramic vistas over the surrounding landscape. Over at the Royal Mansions, residents can also enjoy the serenity of outdoor spaces, thanks to the enclosed verandas that allow more privacy. High-quality glazed aperture doors and windows feature prominently in both blocks, creating open and light-filled living spaces. The integration of these elements not only enhances the overall aesthetics but also ensures a comfortable living experience within the residences. Customization

services for finishes allows residents to infuse their personal style into their living spaces, making each residence a unique reflection of their preferences and personality.

Measures to mitigate sound transmission, have also been incorporated. With insulated walls, floors, and ceilings installed between residences, the transfer of noise is effectively minimized creating a serene and peaceful environment where residents can fully enjoy their personal spaces. Convenience is another key aspect carefully considered in both the Grand Mansions and Royal Mansions. Aside from well-planned spatial layouts for common spaces, the Grand Mansions and Royal Mansions are equipped with spacious cabins, capable of accommodating up to 12 passengers, where residents can effortlessly access their residences.

EXPERIENCE EXCELLENCE

With the launch of The Verdala Terraces, AX Group is poised to redefine luxury living in Malta. This exceptional mixed-use development combines exclusivity, natural beauty, and sustainable design, offering a range of contemporary residences for those seeking a truly refined lifestyle. With AX Group's commitment to excellence and meticulous attention to detail, The Verdala Terraces is well on its way to becoming a landmark destination in Malta.

Offering an exclusive collection of 87 luxurious residences, each providing a serene and elevated living environment, the residential complex enjoys Special Designated Areas (SPA) status, making it available to both EU and non-EU residents, and includes a range of contemporary living arrangements. These range from 1 to 4-bedroom residences, panoramic mansions, duplexes (some with private pools), to penthouses. With a variety of sizes, layouts, and orientations, prospective residents can easily find the perfect fit for their lifestyle and preferences. Interested buyers can contact The Verdala Sales Teams at +356 7974 7428/9 or via email at verdalateraces@axgroup.mt. Detailed information, including specification sheets and floor plans, can be easily downloaded from the interactive website, providing a comprehensive understanding of the available residences for purchase. **M&S**

“Everything starts with understanding our clients; their needs and desires drove the design process.”





Strand Palace Agencies Ltd

A FAMILY-RUN BUSINESS

DRIVING INNOVATION,
EXPANSION, AND
SUSTAINABILITY

THE HOME OF MALTA'S ICONIC SNACK TWISTEES BROADENING ITS HORIZONS!



Sitting down for a formal chat with the three siblings who are currently holding the reins of the Calleja family from their father Steve; Zoe, John and Julia share their experiences and their vision for Strand Palace Agencies Ltd.

Zoe, the eldest of the three heads operations and logistics, while her brother John is responsible for the purchasing department, and Julia, the youngest, leading the marketing endeavours of the company.

They proudly emphasise that their role is very much of executives, as they apply a hands-on approach in their day-to-day business.

The three make the 5th generation of the Calleja family, and explain that the company, and their brands, at this stage are stronger more than ever.

Headed by their father Steve, who has joined the family business in the late seventies, Strand Palace Agencies Ltd., currently exports Twistees to various corners of the globe, ranging from Europe, the Middle East, to Asia, with exciting plans lying ahead.

Zoe remarks that "Twistees is not just a snack. There are similar snacks available worldwide, but are based on corn, or potatoes. However, ours is unique because it is made of 100% rice and with real cheddar cheese".

Strand Palace Agencies Ltd, formed in 1900s, is the latest segment in a reinvention journey for this family-run business, which knows its beginnings by their great, great grandfather Lawrence, 5 generations ago, when the business was then called Colonial Stores. The business was mainly a retail operation, located in Valletta, Cospicua and Sliema. The late Ray Calleja, the grandfather of the siblings, had commenced the production of Twistees himself and it remains here to stay, and grow beyond.

Strand Palace Agencies Ltd is the company behind some of the island's favourite snacks, which somehow or another form part of everyone's childhood memories, such as Jungle Sticks, Pompoms, and Space Balls, while they also import other brands within the FMCG industry. However, their flagship product remains Twistees.

"Available in various flavours, Twistees has been a staple in local households since 1968. It is made solely from natural ingredients, and flavours, and there is no frying involved and no artificial colourings added."



“We know how to work together as siblings, leaving our family and personal matters on the side, and focusing on the business elements, because we were specifically taught on how to work hand in hand, with no personal issues affecting our day-to-day work.”

Available in various flavours, Twisteets has been a staple in local households since 1968. It is made solely from natural ingredients, and flavours, and there is no frying involved and no artificial colourings added. John explained that "the various upgrading of the equipment along the years has improved the taste and the shelf life of the product, while also providing the capacity the factory needs to satisfy international demand, whereby the snack is exported under the name Tasteets, as well as the client's "Own Brand" in certain countries."

The siblings take pride in remarking that the company still sources ingredients from the original suppliers as the recipe never changed, and these suppliers still source out their natural ingredients.

The first months of 2023 have already matched the export levels of 2022 which sends a strong signal to the Callejas' on this mission. They are currently refurbishing and modernising the Marsa factory, adjusting accordingly, following a similar investment in 2019, to accommodate the various lines as they plan on introducing new flavours of their current products, adding new snacks as well as reaching new markets.

This expansion is being carried out in phases with a total investment of more than €2.5 million. This expansion is expected to be finalised by the end of 2023.

"Being the 5th generation of such a successful business operation makes us stronger", stated Zoe, who remarked that not many business operations make it to this stage, given that family businesses may run into complex relationships, and diversification along the line.

"We know how to work together as siblings, leaving our family and personal matters on the side, and focusing on the business elements, because we were specifically taught on how to work hand in hand, with no personal issues affecting our day-to-day work," stated John very clearly.

Julia continued, "there is something that sticks out among us at Strand Palace Agencies Ltd., mainly because we treat employees like family - we do not have an Us and Them culture, but our employees are part of our family too. We invested a lot in having a flexible working environment and comfortable practices, for our employees and their needs, and in fact we are very proud to see very low turnover within our business operation, which is made up of a majority of Maltese employees, 93%, across all levels."

The expansion will be taking exports to a different level, with different products reaching diversified markets, as well as the creation of new products, brought about by the Calleja's rich experience, meeting clients in fairs around the world, attending various trade delegations, as well as, consolidating a good network of contacts.

The new expansion also seeks to address sustainability very seriously, having the Marsa factory as a carbon neutral plant, which also hosts solar panels on 90% of the roof. The company is committed to continue focusing on sustainability in a holistic manner, with various other elements within the production and operation processes adapting to sustainable practices. **M&S**



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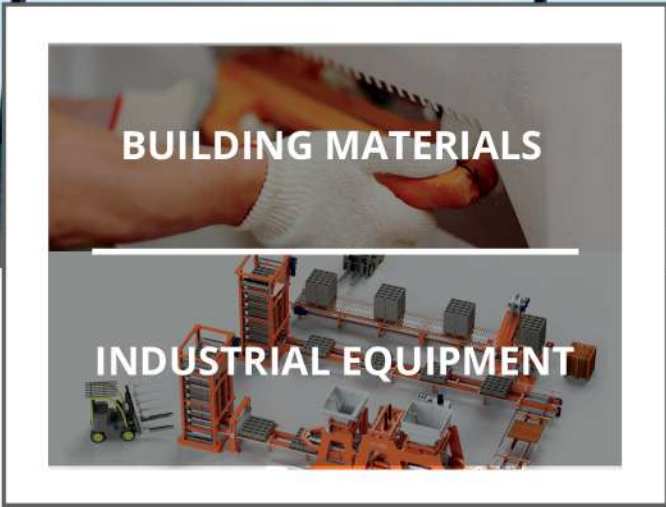
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Debono Group has a longstanding presence in the local mobility sector. As the sole representative of Toyota in Malta, Debono experienced growth and transformation under the leadership of three generations of the Debono family.

Over the years, the Group branched out into different sectors - from the sale and maintenance of commercial vehicles to motorcycles, mobility and ride-sharing solutions, storage and racking systems, a technology company providing customer experience solutions, and a diverse and extensive property portfolio.

In the dynamic and ever-evolving business landscape, success often hinges on the expertise and insights of individuals who possess a wealth of experience.

Within Debono Group, Chief Operations & Financial Officer Gabriele Vecchi brings an experienced, transformational, global perspective to the table, forged by years of turning around the complexities of different industries across different continents.



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“The first priority for me is the people. People are the key asset of a company. This is the reason why the restructuring started from the analysis of the team and why we are now able to deliver better results.”

Italian-born Gabriele has travelled the world, working in many European countries and the Americas for major multinational companies in the manufacturing, logistics distribution, and services sectors. With an extensive track record in restructuring, reorganisation, turnover, mergers, and acquisitions, Gabriele joined Debono in January 2022.

Gabriele's unwavering passion for exploring the world profoundly shaped his decision to join Debono: “This was an opportunity for me to get to know different cultures and people. This is what I like most in my personal and professional life.”

Motivated by the prospects of acquainting himself with the diverse cultures that different countries have to offer, and of fostering global connections, he finds genuine fulfilment in his chosen career path.

Was Malta a quaint choice? Not at all. Having never set foot on the island, not even as a tourist, when the opportunity to join Debono presented itself, Gabriele keenly observed an undeniable emotion emanating from the Group.

It was palpable – a resolute determination to thrive and grow, and a shared aspiration to overcome limitations and go for bigger things: “One of the reasons why I was very excited about this opportunity is that during my early exchanges with the Group owners, I felt real emotion. They wanted to explore all the possible opportunities that the mobility, technology, and the Group's other areas have to offer; and they wanted to grow and push boundaries. The other most interesting part was the turnaround prospect of the company. I like challenges. When later on it was proposed to me to take on the additional duties of COO, a role in which I have extensive experience in, I took on the challenge enthusiastically.”

Inspired by this shared vision of a thriving future, Gabriele eagerly embraced the chance to be part of this dynamic environment, ready to contribute his experience, skills, and enthusiasm to the collective pursuit of success within Debono.

Setting out with the objective to align the Group's organisational framework with its overarching goals and vision, Gabriele embarked on a meticulous analysis and strategic decision-making plan, as he implemented a series of measures within the finance department to streamline operations, enhance efficiency, maximise resources, and most importantly, to ensure that the Group CEO was always in a position to take the right decisions based on actual facts and numbers.

While possessing a deep understanding of corporate structures and operations, he approaches his work with a distinctive outlook that places people at the centre.

Recognising that the success of any organisation is intrinsically linked to the individuals within it, Gabriele makes them the focal point of his attention. He firmly believes that by valuing and supporting the people within the organisation, he could unlock their collective potential and drive excellent results.

With this human-centric approach, he seeks to cultivate a culture of collaboration, innovation, and growth, ultimately paving the way for both individual and organisational success.

“I had been advised beforehand that one of my major tasks would have been the restructuring of the finance department. I embarked on an assessment of the team, examining their strengths, areas for improvement, and potential for growth. These individuals have been assigned clear roles and responsibilities in line with the goals we are seeking to achieve, and they are now effectively running the department on a day-to-day basis. This is the set up I would like to implement in other departments and across the whole Group: to teach key players how to keep their focus on strategy and efficiency by finding the right people within the organisation to whom to delegate responsibilities, in line with their talent, skillset, and potential.

“The first priority for me is the people. People are the key asset of a company. This is the reason why the restructuring started from the analysis of the team and why we are now able to deliver better results. In all my previous experiences, my focus has always been on people because I am absolutely convinced that if you find the right people you will succeed, and I am a firm believer in giving people the opportunity to demonstrate their value. Skills and competencies are very important, but people who want to grow remain the major asset.”

By proactively nurturing and developing internal talent, the organisation aims to foster a pipeline of capable leaders who would be well-equipped to guide the company towards its long-term goals and to pave the way for a robust management succession plan.

A key challenge in Malta lies in the retention of talent, and Gabriele firmly believes that inadequate feedback mechanisms, albeit not the main cause, contribute significantly to this issue.

Aligned with his fundamental beliefs, Gabriele approaches this matter with a profound sense of mission and dedication: “One of the things that I am most proud of is that people from all areas of the Group approach me for even a small word of advice and support. And I am trying to support everyone because I believe this is my role in Debono.”

Gabriele's role is also very much intertwined with Debono Group's future, as it seeks to achieve international growth and broaden its global footprint, which he believes to be of the utmost strategic importance: “One of the areas of our growth focus is to grow internationally. Malta is the greatest island in the world, but it is small, and growth is limited. It is therefore very important to explore opportunities abroad. As a foreigner with experience in several countries, I am trying to convey an understanding of the international culture. I see a very bright future and huge potential for Debono. The two owners are young visionaries who are eager to push the boundaries and drive transformative change. It brings me great satisfaction to contribute my experience to achieve our common goals.”

Beyond his immediate work environment, Gabriele also has a profound affection for the island, its rich history, and vibrant culture. He eagerly anticipates deepening his understanding of Malta, becoming more engaged in the local community, and utilising his experience and expertise to mentor emerging and potential future leaders in the business industry. **M&S**

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BRIDGING THE GAP

PRESIDENT OF LOCAL COUNCILS' ASSOCIATION
ON HIS VISION TO IMPROVE LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN MALTA.

The President of the Local Councils' Association in Malta discusses the need to bridge the gap between residents' expectations and what local councils can realistically deliver. With a vision focused on placing the resident at the centre of their activities, the proposal aims to prioritize sustainable development and provide quality governance while promoting active involvement and participation from every individual contributing legally towards the country.

Local and Regional authorities have a major impact and bear a high degree of influence on the daily lives of the residents they represent. This is a fact which needs to be better understood across the board.

It is not a secret that most of the residents are not aware of what the local councils do. Twenty-nine years down the line, since their inception some residents still think that the Local Councils are responsible for the educational and social services aspect of their locality, while others regard them as an important arm in the local public service. There are then others who believe that Mayors are employed full-time and that councillors are being paid as they are elected. All this is not correct and is not the case.

Malta is a small country, and our ongoing joke is that everyone knows everyone, however, very few people actually meet their local councillors and they don't know much about them either. This even highlights the difference of how well residents feel they are being kept updated about their Local Council's performance versus what is actually going on in Local Councils.

Residents who are kept in the loop of what their Local Councils do are more likely to look up to the Local Councils and the service they provide. Improving the reputation of Local Councils is an uphill struggle, especially because residents are usually influenced by various factors when making up their mind about the performance of their Local Council – factor which oftentimes are not within the remit of the elected members. There still exists lack of awareness of what services are run by the Local Councils and those by the central government.

Being a councillor and President of the Local Councils' Association, I know pretty well that when faced by their residents, local councils feel helpless as most of the time they are not informed what is happening in their own locality. Development plans, initiatives and programmes that are designed and put forward from above, cannot address the complexity of sustainable development all on their own. The public, the



The vision focuses on promoting active involvement and participation from all individuals contributing legally towards the country, with an emphasis on creating sustainable mobility, open spaces, green environments, and smart cities. With improved communication and understanding between public entities, the business community, and residents, the vision aims to provide equitable, sustainable development in Malta.

non-governmental organisations and the business community play an important and essential role, especially at a local level.

For the past 30 years, the Central Government assigned various responsibilities to the local Government as part of a development process intended to expand knowledge, improve communication, and facilitate the coordination and implementation of the same said plans and programmes.

In effect, this political understanding was not always accompanied with an adequate level of autonomy, investment in the development of professional capabilities and financial resources, ending in disappointment both for the public and also for the governments themselves. The financing of projects that fall under the responsibilities of the Local Councils is marginal when compared to public and central financing. Such situations were sometimes used as a pretext for the Government to regain certain responsibilities which were originally assigned to the councils. This frustrated the locally-elected members and it hinders and made it difficult for them to reaching the level of satisfaction which their residents expected.

My vision, as President of the Local Councils' Association, designed for the immediate future for the local councils includes the ten most important areas that need the most attention, if we really want to bridge the gap between the expectations of the residents and what the local councils can really and factually deliver. If there is a commitment in strengthening the largest form of democracy in our country, we can have hope that things may change and literally bridge this gap.

Residents' awareness of their local council is very important. This should be at par or relative to other institutions.

Over the past years, on several occasions, much debate has been generated on the task of improving local governments' reputation. Efforts were made, to holistically engage with residents in an attempt to try and overcome the poor ratings obtained by councils in customer service. Admittedly, it is a struggle to try and turn this reputation around.

I believe that councils work on an 'A-Z guide' of the services they offer, clearly outlining what they do, and what they are responsible for. This can also be further enhanced with a quarterly newsletter or magazine. Holistic branding is another possible solution to make it easier for the residents to recognise what their local council is doing.

Local Councils should understand the residents' needs if they really want to transform service delivery. By identifying which services the residents find most problematic and measuring the extent of that dissatisfaction is one way Local Councils can prioritise areas for improvement.

THE LOCAL VISION: RESIDENTS FIRST

In October 2019, the Local Councils' Association launched its vision proposal (Vision for 2019-2024) to its members, in the run up to the next local elections. The vision was eventually confirmed and approved by the Local Councils, leading the way for the creation of policies and action plans to turn it into a new reality.

The Vision places the resident at the heart of the Local Councils' activities and seeks to include every individual that exists contributes legally towards our country, by also promoting active involvement and participation.

The Vision places integration and social inclusion as the point



of departure from where one starts designing sustainable plans and policies, while at the same time setting the same obligations that everyone living in our localities should have towards the same community.

THE ROLE OF THE LOCAL COUNCILS

Over time, the role of Local Councils in Malta has changed together with their duties and responsibilities. Nowadays, Local Councils are also responsible for the wellbeing of the community at large, with a focus on improving way of life. This led to the four pillars upon which the vision is based, namely: Sustainable mobility, Open spaces, Green environment and Smart cities.

The vision also helped to bring together a holistic effort whereby Ministries, Public Agencies, commissions and governmental groups came together to work on a widespread action plan, turning the local councils into an ideal platform where ideas, initiatives, changes, and proposals for regeneration, can sprout and be delivered in a systematic, coordinated, and transparent manner reaching the highest level of the political system, to eventually become intrinsically linked to the Government's action plan.

Such an open political system can become an essential tool for any political party interested in continuously regenerating itself and, therefore, always open to new ideas and close to the people.

Quality local Governance is required to ensure equitable, sustainable development, where wealth is distributed amongst everybody. It ensures an effective and inclusive development process.

The quality of good Governance results primarily from the Central Government's political will through which an environment is created on a local level through legislation and a regulatory framework. This enables Local Councils to enjoy a satisfactory level of autonomy in exercising their duties and responsibilities, through more significant and better professional resources.

Quality in Local Governance is also expressed in the relationships and communication with other public entities, the business community, and the residents that are often dependent on the resources available to the Local Councils. **M.S**



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POSITIONING MALTA

AS A GLOBAL
EDTECH
DESTINATION

BE STRONGER

SuperCharger Ventures, a dynamic accelerator and ecosystem in the EdTech space, is at the forefront of driving technological innovation and reshaping the future of education and work. With its tech-driven approach, SuperCharger Ventures stands out as a pioneering force and leading ecosystem for EdTech startups, both early-stage and growth-stage companies, education institutions, and corporations. Here, Patrick Hulsen, Managing Director for Malta delves into the unique approach of SuperCharger Ventures and the influential contributions it is making in EdTech.



Patrick meets us at the new Malta office, at The Brevhouse, an iconic location which recently underwent meticulous preservation, retaining its unique aesthetic qualities and architectural brilliance. Brimming with enthusiasm and energy, he is an entrepreneur at heart, with a proven track record as a co-founder and in MedTech, making him perfectly poised to lead the Malta office. He is clearly passionate about EdTech, stating straight away that “EdTech is for everyone, and it’s changing the way we teach kids.”

THE RISE OF EDTECH WITH ROOTS IN FINTECH

He dives in straight away explaining how the co-founders of SuperCharger Ventures, having gained invaluable experience with a very successful FinTech accelerator in Hong Kong, quickly recognised the vast untapped potential within the EdTech sector. Then in 2020, the K-12 education and corporate learning sectors within the EU, secured a substantial portion of VC investments, highlighting their significance in shaping the future of European EdTech. Recognising this pivotal moment and the need for increased support, they launched their first “Edtech only” accelerator to focus on building the global EdTech ecosystem, with strong presence in Singapore and London, and more recently expanding operations to Malta.

DRIVING IMPACT IN THE EDTECH SPHERE

The company boasts a remarkable track record of supporting over 89 EdTech startups globally through its accelerator program. By leveraging its extensive network of investors, experts, and education institutions, the global venture empowers startups to expand their reach and make a tangible difference in the education sector. Priority is given to any idea that not only introduces groundbreaking innovations but also generates significant positive outcomes for learners. As Patrick explains it, it is through strategic nurturing and growth-focused initiatives that this leading EdTech accelerator plays a vital role in propelling the advancement of education and the future of work.

IMMERSION IN THE MALTESE LANDSCAPE

He is excited about the Malta Cohort 1:0 which will kick off this September, with 15 participants having unparalleled access to funding, state-of-the-art workspace, and a robust network of visionary investors and mentors. With a focused vision, the Malta accelerator program sets its sights on three key objectives. Firstly, it aims to establish a stronger presence within the European Union, tapping into a broader network of opportunities and collaborations. Secondly, the program emphasises access to cutting-edge research, enabling the publication of high-quality data and insights that drive skill development. Lastly, it offers financial incentives to fuel innovation within organisations, encouraging the exploration of novel approaches to address challenges in the education and corporate ecosystems. By gathering evidence-based data on learning outcomes, setting benchmarks, and optimising cost-effectiveness, the program plays a pivotal role in enhancing access to quality education on a larger scale.

COMMUNITY DRIVEN

Patrick is unequivocal that SuperCharger Ventures’ community-driven approach and focus on Edtech solutions is what sets it apart from other accelerators. Central to this approach is the extensive network of mentors who provide startups, growth-stage companies and founders within the future of education and learning, with invaluable guidance and support throughout the program. These mentors are experienced professionals from diverse backgrounds such as education, technology, and business, leveraging their extensive knowledge, to assist participants in overcoming obstacles, refining their business models, and propelling their growth trajectory.



“There’s a seismic shift right now with EdTech, and the speed of innovation today is faster than ever before, which is why no one can afford to miss the boat.”

Among the many community based initiatives which actively contributed to the development of the EdTech ecosystem, the co-founders of SuperCharger Ventures edited an EdTech Book. Apart from showcasing their commitment to nurturing a strong foundation for the industry, this informative book also stands out for being the first to take the crowd-sourcing approach, gathering knowledge from the best experts on EdTech.

FUELLING COLLABORATION AND INNOVATION

Collaboration and technological advancement lie at the core of SuperCharger Ventures’ ethos, and align perfectly with Patrick’s own energetic and agile leadership style. “There’s a seismic shift right now with EdTech, and the speed of innovation today is faster than ever before, which is why no one can afford to miss the boat,” he adds.

Although he has only been here a few months, Patrick’s determination to absorb everything Malta has to offer is evident, driven by his belief in fostering robust relationships with investors, experts, and institutions in the Maltese Ecosystem. And beyond the groundbreaking accelerator program, SuperCharger Ventures actively collaborates with higher education institutions to identify and harness the most promising EdTech solutions, and how these institutions can apply EdTech, as well as, the core technologies driving EdTech including Artificial Intelligence, Data and Augmented/Virtual Reality. This synergy drives unprecedented innovation within the education landscape and the future of work, and propels the development of cutting-edge solutions. Patrick believes in the transformative power which technology has in revolutionising education, and by harnessing the potential of AI tools and alleviating the administrative burdens faced by educators, the education system is being reshaped, while eliminating barriers to learning, or as he succinctly put it, “*moving towards a freer and fairer world.*”

SuperCharger Ventures is leading the way in supercharging the future of learning and work, with a focus on impactful solutions for the transformation of education on a global scale, and under Patrick’s leadership, SuperCharger Ventures Malta Cohort 1: 0 looks set to be the first of a number of successful programmes, creating opportunities to empower educators, enable seamless remote learning experiences, and ensuring that education solutions are truly accessible to everyone. **M+S**

SOUR DOUGH BREAD

History, health benefits and flavour rolled in one loaf.

One of the newest additions to Maypole's impressive line-up of types of bread is, in reality, anything but new. Since its launch last November, the range of sourdough creations has become quite the rage among young and old alike.

Why has this bread become such an instant celebrity? First of all, we need to look at its history. The use of sourdough, known in Maltese as *tinsila*, to produce bread dates back to more than 5,000 years ago.

This natural leavening consists of a dough, leavened with a mixed culture of ambient yeasts and lactobacilli, used to "seed" or inoculate the doughs for each day's production. This leavening agent was used in bread production until it was replaced by industrially-produced baker's yeast in the 19th century.

The health benefits of sourdough bread stem from both its natural biological make-up as well as the way it works.

In contrast to fast-rising commercial yeast, sourdough takes much longer, up to 36 hours, to raise the dough, prior to baking, giving it time to act properly in its pre-digesting role.

This long fermentation process converts cereal flour into attractive, tastier, more natural and more digestible end-products, increasing their nutritional quality and positive impact on health.

Sourdough is an effective tool for starch degradation and carbohydrate metabolism, and also has anti-fungal and anti-bacterial properties.

Many studies have shown that the microbial metabolism of lactobacilli present in sourdough produces new nutritionally-active compounds which help to maintain health in cases of diseases such as high cholesterol, cardiopathies, autoimmune diseases, irritable



"The health benefits of sourdough bread stem from both its natural biological make-up as well as the way it works."



bowel syndrome (IBS), colitis, cancer, and diabetes, not to mention the significant reduction of gluten in the sourdough bread.

Consumption of sourdough bread has the spin-off benefit of helping weightloss. With sourdough bread, satiety is achieved faster, due to slower starch digestion, thus satisfying hunger feelings with less bread.

All in all, using the English-language idiom that describes something that's unusually interesting or great, sourdough bread is definitely "The best thing since sliced bread." **M&S**

Maypole's range of sourdough bread is presented in six traditional flavours – Grano D'uro, Black Olive, Turmeric & Seeds, Chorizo & Chilli Flakes, Sun-dried Tomato and Hazelnut & Walnut.

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CLIMATE CHANGE & RISK FACTORS

WHAT WILL THE FUTURE LOOK LIKE FOR OUR BUSINESSES?

The science is overwhelmingly clear. As we weather extreme climate events around the globe, the consequences of our unrelenting production and consumption patterns are becoming increasingly palpable.

**GABBY GRECH LARSSON - POLICY EXECUTIVE
- SUSTAINABILITY, THE MALTA CHAMBER**

Obscured by dramatic headlines, less visible shifts are also occurring in the ecological processes that sustain the Earth's biome, threatening its continued supply of resources and services. A growing concern is that critical thresholds will be reached beyond which self-perpetuating impacts will escalate the level of climate-related risks in the global economy.

The urgency of the crisis is reiterated by the IPCC in its 6th Assessment Report, where it requests governments, policy makers, public institutions, businesses, and individuals to commit to a common goal: to limit global warming to 1.5°C, or well below 2°C, compared to pre-industrial levels. With climate change posing the single greatest risk to the global economy, companies that do not heed the warning place themselves in a position of increased vulnerability to its transitional and physical impacts.

We live in a decisive decade where our ambitions, choices and actions will steer the planet's trajectory and businesses' sustainability until the end of the 21st Century and beyond. Solutions have already surfaced and are having a positive impact, with renewable power at the heart of the trend, followed by energy efficiency and electric vehicles, and emerging technologies pushing towards a cleaner energy supply. However, what the transition really asks of us goes beyond climate



measures and requires us to re-design our value proposition into one that protects and strengthens the fabric that holds our business together based on environmental, social, and economic sustainability. This is not merely a green movement or a box-ticking exercise. It is a future-facing and strategic imperative, where embedded sustainable business practices are tightly interwoven with our commercial success and the overall well-being of the planet and its inhabitants - the very resources that sustain our businesses. Mapping out and navigating a sustainability journey amid unpredicted and long-lasting shocks may not seem like an imminent priority, yet blending purpose with profit presents the best investment for your company.

Through The Malta Chamber's participation in the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) and the CUBE-MT consortium, we are entrusted with assisting our members to overcome the initial barriers and complexities of a sustainability journey. By identifying challenges, risks and opportunities, as well as providing guidance on regulations, funding, technologies and local expertise, you will be able to develop a transition that aligns with your business goals and which not only future-proofs your business, but allows you to reap the benefits of doing business right.

To become fully immersed in the complexity of the systems of which we form part, both as players in the global economy, and as dependants on limited natural resources, requires systems thinking.



“We live in a decisive decade where our ambitions, choices and actions will steer the planet’s trajectory until the end of the 21st Century and beyond.”

This approach towards sustainability allows business decisions and actions to transcend the entrenched temporal and spatial boundaries that may unintentionally constrain our awareness of impacts, risks, and opportunities, and sheds light on the elusive feedback processes that string us together in one system, today and in centuries to come. It challenges us to look beyond short-term financial gains and to model scenarios of what the future could look like when the building blocks of our businesses are nudged, or even toppled, as a result of processes beyond our control or jurisdiction.

One clear manifestation of this requirement is the regulatory environment, where the imminent phasing in of the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) will allow public access to sustainability data, bringing it on par with financial reporting. Investors increasingly look at Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) disclosures to guide decisions, while discerning consumers, customers and employees place a company’s sustainability performance at a premium when choosing products, services, or a workplace. Championing sustainable practices by responding to stakeholder demand is one of the most effective paths towards increasing value and competitiveness. The trickle-down effects are already being felt locally, both directly by those required to report, and indirectly as businesses request ESG credentials from their partners and suppliers. Similarly, as banks focus on improving the impact of their own operations, their

engagement with customers is increasingly driven by ESG aligned policies that steer access, and in some cases incentivise, finance towards sustainable investments.

Scrutinising your company’s direct and indirect footprint, will often reveal inefficiencies and hotspots that can be addressed to improve performance and result in financial savings. Conducting an energy audit could identify and prioritise low-hanging fruit and investments that improve energy performance, reduce energy waste, and achieve related carbon reductions with reported ROIs often within the 2 to 5-year range. However, by analysing the systems within which you operate, beyond direct and short-term considerations, conclusive evidence reports that the value chain often holds an elusive, yet dominant, portion of your overall impact and potential risks. The COVID-19 pandemic and the shockwaves that still perturb the economic landscape as a result of the war against Ukraine, are a testament of our vulnerability to the uncertainties that the future holds.

Nevertheless, these tensions also underscore the importance of building resilience and reveal untapped opportunities to innovate, differentiate, increase efficiency and agility, and to expand or explore new models and markets. The circular economy, for instance, holds significant financial potential, where intentional design and closed-loop systems play a critical part in generating new revenue streams and meeting regulatory requirements aimed at preventing waste and the depletion of critical natural resources. Digitalisation and switches towards lower-emission forms of transport and inputs, present opportunities to reduce logistics costs and vulnerability to legislation aimed at pricing carbon-intensive production processes and scarce products.

While common challenges, such as human and financial resources, may obscure many of the opportunities of embedding sustainability in your vision, it is widely demonstrated that companies that embrace a truthful and transparent transition will gain reputational benefits, financial savings, operational efficiencies, and reduced risk exposure. The first step in this journey is recognising that we are part of one interconnected system where our collective contribution towards an inclusive and green economy reduces environmental risks and scarcities, improves social equity and well-being, and benefits our businesses’ overall financial performance. **M+S**





THE FUTURE OF
TRANSPORT

Earlier this year, there was a change at the helm of Transport Malta. Jonathan Borg was appointed CEO of this public entity which is frequently in the news. Movers and Shakers 2023 caught up with the newly appointed CEO who spoke of what he sees as the priorities for Transport Malta.

Jonathan Borg is certainly charged up for the challenge. Without mincing words, his reply to the question as to what is his vision for Transport Malta, Mr Borg replied succinctly “To be a more agile organisation with long term mission and commercial viability.” And he certainly has the credentials to carry out his vision. With thirty-two years’ experience in leading operations for the drilling and maritime service companies in public and private sectors, Mr Borg has a history of steering complex project plans, obtaining required resources, identifying, and mitigating risks. In his long career, Mr Borg has become adept at steering research and analysis to introduce process improvement strategies. In a society that is rapidly becoming cosmopolitan and multicultural, Mr Borg has built a considerable network with multicultural clients and stakeholders during extensive international travels.

And yet, when speaking to Mr Borg, all this is very understated. “I feel immensely privileged and honored to be at the helm of such an important entity in Malta. Leading one of the largest organizations in the country with a crucial portfolio is both exhilarating and challenging,” said Mr Borg.

A PIVOTAL ROLE

Mr Borg sees Transport Malta as playing a pivotal role in ensuring the smooth functioning and development of the transport sector, which is vital for the overall progress of the nation. The responsibility of overseeing diverse sectors such as maritime, aviation, and land transport brings with it a sense of immense responsibility and the opportunity to make a tangible impact on the lives of Maltese citizens, said Mr Borg. He had nothing but praise for the staff of the transport entity. “Since taking on this role a few weeks ago, I have been deeply impressed by the dedication and expertise of the Transport Malta employees. Their commitment to upholding safety standards, promoting efficiency, and fostering sustainable practices is truly commendable,” he added.

With the staff being considered as a viable cornerstone, Mr Borg turned to the priorities he considered as paramount for Transport Malta. “Image and reputation have to be built from scratch,” he ticked off on his fingers, adding “and engagement with public and stakeholders have to intensify and be more proactive.” No novice to the weight of public opinion, Mr Borg said that he recognized the importance of collaboration with various stakeholders, including government bodies, industry partners, and the general public. The challenges and opportunities can be addressed and seized in a group effort, a

collaboration that arises in the dynamic field of transportation.

“While it is early days in my tenure, I am excited about the possibilities that lie ahead. I am committed to steering Transport Malta towards continued growth and development, ensuring that we meet the evolving needs of our society while upholding the highest standards of service delivery, safety, and environmental sustainability,” added Mr Borg. Transport Malta, he added, is dedicated to continue fostering strong partnerships with key stakeholders, both domestically and internationally. He plans to actively engage with government agencies, industry players, academia, and the public to gather insights, collaborate on projects, and ensure that our policies and initiatives align with the evolving needs of our community.

A VAST REMIT

The remit of Transport Malta is vast. Perhaps in the collective consciousness, it is primarily, almost solely, perhaps, associated with land transportation, nothing could be further from the truth. Land, air and sea all fall under its aegis and this is where the agility, which Mr Borg alluded to earlier has to come into play with a synchronicity with other authorities. “Our utmost priority is ensuring the safety and security of all modes of transportation, including maritime, aviation, and land transport,” said Mr Borg.

In maritime transport, Mr Borg said that Transport Malta is dedicated to implementing stringent safety measures to safeguard the lives of those traveling at sea. This includes enforcing international maritime regulations, conducting thorough inspections of vessels, and ensuring compliance with safety standards. In aviation, the authority is committed to maintaining the highest safety standards. Transport Malta works closely with airlines and other aviation stakeholders to ensure strict adherence to safety protocols. Regarding land transport, Transport Malta is actively engaged in promoting road safety initiatives. This, he said, involves implementing traffic management strategies, enhancing road infrastructure, and conducting regular vehicle inspections to ensure compliance with safety regulations. It also focuses on raising awareness among drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists about the importance of safe practices on the road. “Furthermore, we are determined to increase enforcement on illegalities across all modes of transportation. This includes cracking down on illegal activities such as smuggling, piracy, illegal charter operations, and other violations. We collaborate with law enforcement agencies, conduct investigations, and take strict action against offenders to maintain the integrity and safety of our transport systems,” said Mr Borg firmly.

ENHANCING THE TRANSPORTATION EXPERIENCE

A tall order indeed. So, how does the new CEO plan to go about this? “First and foremost, we aim to enhance the overall transportation experience for our citizens and visitors. We will strive to develop a seamless and integrated transport network that caters to the diverse needs of individuals, while prioritizing safety and convenience. This includes improving public transportation systems, expanding cycling and pedestrian infrastructure, and integrating emerging technologies to optimize mobility,” listed Mr Borg, with a clarity of vision that augurs well.

In line with global efforts to combat climate change, he said that Transport Malta is committed to promoting sustainable transportation solutions. “Our vision includes transitioning to cleaner energy sources, encouraging the adoption of electric and hybrid vehicles, and supporting initiatives that reduce carbon emissions in the transport sector. We will work closely with stakeholders to develop policies and incentives that promote sustainable practices and contribute to a greener future,” said Mr Borg.

The importance of digitalization and technological advancements in transforming the transport industry were also high on Mr Borg’s list of priorities. “We will embrace emerging technologies such as autonomous vehicles, smart traffic management systems, and digital platforms to enhance efficiency, reduce congestion, and improve overall connectivity. By fostering innovation and collaboration, we aim to position Malta as a hub for cutting-edge transportation technologies and solutions,” said Mr Borg, with eyes firmly fixed on the future.

A VISION AND A STRATEGY

The CEO’s role is a visionary and strategic one, and in these respects, Mr Borg is very clear: “Transport Malta has always been committed to serving our stakeholders and improving the transport sector in our country. Our strategy moving forward will continue to build on the solid foundation we have established, ensuring the best outcomes for all involved”. In all sectors under his purview, Mr Borg sees things to keep and things to change. In all sectors, however, definition seems to be key. “There will have to be legal changes and distinction between the regulatory and non-regulatory functions. These are tough nuts to crack. Add to these the need to introduce new business models and the challenges are considerable. But, as I said before, the staff is impressive, so I am very confident,” said Mr Borg.

Starting with the maritime sector, Mr Borg said that Transport Malta will strive to maintain what he described as an excellent track record of promoting safety, efficiency, and environmental sustainability. “We will continue to enhance our regulatory framework, foster collaboration with industry stakeholders, and encourage innovation in maritime operations,” he added.

On the land transport sector, Transport Malta is set to remain dedicated to optimizing the road infrastructure and improving road safety. Mr Borg said that the aim here is to provide efficient and sustainable mobility solutions that cater to the needs of users and businesses. “We will work closely with relevant authorities and stakeholders to implement measures that reduce congestion, enhance connectivity, and prioritize alternative modes of transportation,” promised Mr Borg.

In the aviation sector, Mr Borg sees the focus as being on the maintenance of high safety standards and promoting the growth of our aviation industry. Transport Malta, he said, will continue to collaborate with airlines, airport operators, and aviation organizations to enhance



“We will embrace emerging technologies such as autonomous vehicles, smart traffic management systems, and digital platforms to enhance efficiency, reduce congestion, and improve overall connectivity.”

our regulatory framework, facilitate air transport services, and foster innovation in the sector. “While I cannot delve into extensive details at this moment, I assure you that Transport Malta remains committed to the continuous improvement of our services across all sectors. We will strive to adapt to the changing dynamics and emerging challenges in the transportation landscape, always keeping the best interests of our stakeholders in mind,” said Mr Borg.

Mr Borg concluded that he looks forward to working closely with the talented team at Transport Malta and all relevant stakeholders to shape the future of transportation in Malta positively. **M&S**

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MALTA ENTERPRISE SPEARHEADING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES



Malta Enterprise continues to make significant strides in promoting economic growth and fostering innovation. The agency recently celebrated the approval of IPCEI projects by the European Commission that shall provide substantial funding for EU advancement in the semiconductor industry via investments by industry giant ST Microelectronics locally. Moreover, while bringing together startups from Malta and the region for the 3rd edition of Startup Festival Malta it is also about to launch an interactive Business Portal, streamlining interactions between businesses and government entities.

Over the last months Malta's national economic development agency Malta Enterprise has been busy in ascertaining strategic landmark projects whilst also fostering novel streams of growth and making life for businesses easier.

EU'S SEMICONDUCTOR INNOVATION THROUGH MALTA

In June the entity announced that it will be supporting STMicroelectronics Malta in its goal to reach the "pinnacle" of Smart Factory and Industry 4.0 standards.

This comes after the European Commission approved a landmark €8 billion state-aid package through the second call for Important Projects of Common European Interests (IPCEI) in the semiconductor sector. Malta has been confirmed as one of the 14 participating member states, with a total of 56 companies from those countries benefitting from the funding for 68 projects.

Through this approval, Malta Enterprise will support STMicroelectronics' project to incorporate advanced automation concepts, designed to elevate the quality of devices manufactured in Europe.

The project will encompass both research, development and innovation and first industrial deployment activities for advanced back-end manufacturing. The project has a keen focus on collaboration, and promises "significant spillover effects", which includes partnerships with University of Malta and various industrial players.

STMicroelectronics' test and assembly plant in Malta has over 1,800 employees from 50 nationalities. This manufacturing plant, part of the company's global manufacturing network, is currently undergoing a strategic transformation to both increase capacity and implement processes to support customers across the automotive, industrial, and personal electronics markets.

The Ministry for the Environment, Energy and Enterprise stated that Malta's involvement in the IPCEI is a "testament to the nation's commitment to spearheading industry transformation and embracing cutting-edge technology". By fostering technological innovation, Malta and the EU are paving the way for sustainable growth, competitiveness, and technological leadership on the global stage.

Malta Enterprise CEO Kurt Farrugia congratulated the STMicroelectronics Malta team for the work done on the IPCEI application, before saying that Malta Enterprise is working within the industry to "further build on the experience" Malta has attained through this process.

"We believe that the IPCEI process is an important instrument through which Malta can further develop its industrial base with a focus for the future in the area of clean technologies," he said.

STARTUP FESTIVAL 2023 - START-UPS IN MALTA ARE HERE TO STAY

Malta Enterprise is also focused on nurturing entrepreneurship and supporting startups in Malta. The third edition of the Startup Festival will be held between the 5th and 6th October 2023, at the Malta Fairs and Conventions Centre (MFCC) and the adjacent park in Ta' Qali.

This event has become a platform for entrepreneurial minds, attracting new local and international businesses from various sectors such as FinTech, Digital Gaming, VR/AR, Metaverse, Medicinal Cannabis, BioTech, MedTech, and the Blue Economy.

The Startup Festival offers a range of activities, including keynote talks, thought-provoking panels, practical workshops, and a 'matchmaking' opportunity for startups and scaleups seeking funding from local and international business angels and venture capitalists.

This year, the festival introduces a new pitch competition named 'Pitch Black,' where founders can present their accomplishments and vision to a professional panel of judges.

The festival will also mark the launch of Malta Enterprise's



"By leveraging shared data and adhering to the once-only principle, businesses will no longer need to redundantly provide information that Government already possesses, reducing the administrative burden."

podcast 'Business Matters,' providing a platform for business-related discussions and insights.

Furthermore, Malta Enterprise is actively promoting the MedTech sector in Malta, recognising its potential as a vibrant and emerging industry.

The agency recently participated in the MedTech World roadshow event in Istanbul, aiming to showcase Malta's thriving MedTech sector and support companies in entering the European market and scaling up, while at the same time, positioning the country as an ideal gateway for companies looking to establish a presence in Europe.

A NEW ERA FOR ONLINE GOVERNMENT SERVICE TO BUSINESS

Additionally, recognising the importance of technology in reducing bureaucracy, the agency has been developing an interactive Business Portal in collaboration with all the main government stakeholders.

The Business Portal is set to revolutionise the way businesses interact with Government by consolidating multiple services into a single platform. This paradigm shift will enable entrepreneurs and their representatives to seamlessly submit service requests to various government departments/entities, streamlining processes and increasing efficiency.

By leveraging shared data and adhering to the once-only principle, businesses will no longer need to redundantly provide information that Government already possesses, reducing the administrative burden.

The Portal will serve as a comprehensive resource, providing guidance on government services, incentives, rules, and regulations. It will facilitate business compliance, timely license renewals, and tax payments while keeping businesses informed about industry-specific updates.

With its user-friendly interface and unified approach, the Business Portal will significantly enhance both the efficiency of government operations and the quality of services provided to businesses. **M&S**

NEW EU FUNDING SCHEMES: How can you benefit?

The Malta Chamber, in collaboration with EMCS, Fondi.eu and MBB organised an event which saw the launch of new EU schemes and included a number of speakers that highlighted how business can access such funds successfully.

President Chris Vassallo Cesareo emphasised that The Malta Chamber has always been very supportive of the use of such funds helping the business to grow, innovate and compete. He also highlighted three main points:

- The use of public funds requires greater responsibility and transparency, it also believes that a balance needs to be found between the requirements of public procurement and the spirit of sound financial management that is expected from the private sector.
- The Malta Chamber also welcomes the use of EU funding to support the Energy and Green Transition.
- Schemes need to be aligned with market prices so that they will be as effective as possible.

CEO Dr Marthese Portelli explained The Malta Chamber's input on ensuring better access to funds for business and simplification of the application process.

She also highlighted the pitfall to avoid and gave tips on how to submit a successful application. **M+S**



**NEW
EU FUNDING
SCHEMES:**
How can you benefit?



STRATEGIC Corporate Banking for a Sustainable Future

BNF Bank's strategic approach to corporate banking encompasses robust relationship management, technological advancements, and sustainable practices. Guided by a commitment to sustainable growth, the team at BNF work to offer long-term solutions that propel their clients towards their ultimate business goals.



NURTURING STRONG RELATIONSHIPS

"Corporate banking is a relationship business, and like any relationship it needs to be kept alive and ready for the future," states George Debono, Chief Commercial Officer at BNF Bank.

The dedicated team of BNF Relationship Managers lies at the heart of BNF's corporate banking success, fostering strong connections with their corporate clients, with an emphasis on open communication, trust, and genuine interest in the business of the customer.

By attracting, retaining, and nurturing top talent, the Bank empowers its employees to deliver exceptional customer service, and cultivate strong relationships.

Listening to customers allows the team to understand clients' unique goals and challenges, working collaboratively to provide tailored solutions that drive growth and success.

"It is through long-term partnerships that we build enduring relationships founded on mutual trust and shared achievements," Mr Debono states. "By investing in the professional development and well-being of our staff, we ensure our team members are equipped with the knowledge and skills required to address the unique needs of our corporate clients."

EMBRACING TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENTS

Mr Debono asserts that the Bank recognises the transformative power of technology in today's corporate landscape, as a key factor in future proofing the Bank.

The substantial investment being made on this front is now moving into the second phase with major changes in the Bank's core banking system. Change is not only happening from a system perspective but is taking a truly transformative approach of all processes and products that provide an efficient solution for the Bank and an effective proposition to customers.

"As clients' needs change, we are overhauling our processes to provide our customers with a more comprehensive service, in line with emerging trends and the competitive landscape."

The Bank's intent and direction is made clear through the creation of a specific team for its digital programme. The team members have been hand-picked from departments across the entire Bank, according to area of expertise, in order to bring this key project to fruition.

"This team includes active participation by our very best customer-facing colleagues, to ensure the project is implemented with the customer in mind at all times."

PREPARING FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

ESG is another critical pillar within the Bank's strategy to address the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. BNF Bank recognises the importance of incorporating ESG considerations, particularly in funding practices and business decision-making, contributing to a more sustainable economy.

Mr Debono notes that "by offering sustainable finance solutions that align with our client's strategic goals, encouraging responsible business practices, and integrating ESG factors into our decision-making processes, we help our corporate clients build long-term value while safeguarding the planet and society."

In an era of increasing regulatory complexity, BNF Bank also remains committed to upholding the highest standards of compliance.

"We diligently monitor regulatory changes and proactively adapt our processes to ensure we're aligned to this ever-changing landscape as seamlessly as possible," says Mr Debono. "There is a strong sense of commitment from the whole eco-system that we wish to continue

"As clients' needs change, we are overhauling our processes to provide our customers with a more comprehensive service, in line with emerging trends and the competitive landscape."

building on. This sense of togetherness needs to be continuously nurtured and supported by regulators and decision makers."

Due to geopolitical and social tensions, inflation and rising interest rates, local Banks will have to adapt once again.

"The speed of change has further accelerated, whilst the fear of the unknown seems to have abated, as we have become more used to change

happening faster, and more often. These same challenges are also faced by our business customers, and we are all in this journey together, sharing knowledge, experience and expertise in finding alternative solutions."

"At BNF we believe in the power of relationships, which in such a closely-knit corporate environment is also resulting in strong recommendations, leading to more prospective customers joining us in this journey. We have achieved a lot in recent years and looking ahead, there is more for us to achieve further." **M·S**



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Maintaining an outward perspective while identifying opportunities to maximise and unleash the full potential is crucial at every phase of a business lifecycle. RSM Malta takes great pride in being a comprehensive destination for business advisory services, serving as a one-stop-shop for companies. The firm offers a wide range of services starting from audit and assurance to consultancy, tax, risk advisory, IFRS, restructuring, transaction and business, financial advisory solutions as well as specialist services like wealth management, IT consulting, ESG, legal advisory and human resources consulting.

RSM Malta's goal is to support both local and international businesses, guiding them towards ensuring a seamless operational workflow, that will ultimately lead the business towards growth. By providing a comprehensive range of tailored services, industry expertise, and unwavering commitment, RSM Malta aims to put its top talent at the core of the operations, providing support, where it can have the greatest impact. From the very beginning, RSM Malta positions itself as the ideal partner in achieving sustainable growth and maintaining a competitive edge.

One of the key factors that make RSM Malta the ideal partner for a business, is its commitment to its values: excellence; integrity; respect; teamwork; and, innovation. These values guide the employees of RSM

Success in business requires partnership, collaboration, and a commitment to excellence. At RSM Malta, we strive to be that partner for every client, delivering the expertise and insights needed to achieve sustainable growth.

Malta in delivering consistent high-quality work and also demonstrate the firm's dedication to continuously improving its services to better support its esteemed clients.

As a long-term advisor, RSM Malta gains a deep understanding of every aspect of your business, enabling the firm to deliver expertise and valuable insights at the right time. This work-ethic positions RSM Malta as the ideal partner in achieving sustainable growth and maintaining a competitive edge for your business. Moreover, RSM Malta benefits from an international network with a constantly growing pool of industry knowledge. RSM Malta forms part of the RSM network, which consists of audit, tax, and consulting experts working within 830 offices in 120 countries.

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IGNITING CHANGE

THE NEED FOR FIRE SAFETY LEGISLATION IN MALTA

The Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry, through its Health and Wellness Committee, which is sponsored by Atlas Insurance, organised an event to raise awareness on the need for a fire safety legislation in Malta.



Fire safety is an area of great concern for the general public, insurers and also for health and safety professionals. Malta currently follows a set of guidelines that are now out of date and which in themselves do not hold the power of law, while the new Fire Safety Act still awaits ratification.

In her introductory speech, Catherine Calleja, Council Member and Chair of the Health and Wellness Committee within The Malta Chamber, said, "What The Malta Chamber is pushing for is to have a single piece of legislation which can be updated regularly to ensure that working or living in Malta is as safe as in other comparable jurisdictions. Fear of retrofitting is not a justifiable reason for delay. Transition periods to comply must be given, but we have to start somewhere. The longer we delay the more expensive retrofitting will be. Resources for enforcement must be provided. It is useless having legislation in place and no provision for enforcement. Otherwise, it is just a matter of time before we are 'too late' to prevent another tragedy."

"This standard is therefore about people's safety and people's lives. The drafting of the standard has to be the result of a solid interface between the Building & Construction Authority which is responsible for building codes together with the Civil Protection Department that has various important responsibilities in relation to this specific topic," said Hon Stefan Zrinzo Azzopardi, Minister for Public Works and Planning.

When asked about who will take the role of enforcing the new legislation once it is in place, Ing. Antoine Bartolo, Chief Officer at the Building and Construction Authority said that: "the authority is looking at the resources required for the enforcement of this legislation."



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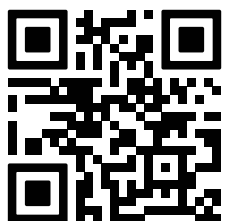
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Peter Paul Coleiro, Director General at the Civil Protection Department, gave an overview on the current realities. “A holistic approach is the way forward. Together with the Building and Construction Authority, and the input from various stakeholders, we have drafted a fire legislation which is in its final stages. Emphasis is also being made on educating the young about fire safety and we have started discussions on getting courses for those who are interested in the profession,” he said.

During one of the panel discussions, Dr Marthese Portelli, CEO of The Malta Chamber, started off by saying that The Malta Chamber goes beyond simply representing its members, but ensures that its policy proposals are for the general benefit of the entire community.

“As The Malta Chamber, we are after clarity and responsibility. Rather than a lot of sporadic legislation falling within the remit of various entities, departments and enforcement officers, we are pushing for a main law which regulates fire safety, and which gives the legislator enough flexibility to be able to legislate further and amend easily. The Malta Chamber is also advocating that everybody needs to bear their fair share of responsibility,” she noted.



“Resources for enforcement must be provided. It is useless having legislation in place and no provision for enforcement. Otherwise, it is just a matter of time before we are ‘too late’ to prevent another tragedy.”

Dr Portelli also highlighted how fire safety ties into proper governance structures and policies, the relationship between energy-efficient solutions and fire safety, as well as the relationship between quality and fire safety. In terms of public procurement, she insisted that one should move away from the ‘cheapest compliant’ as ‘cheap products mean cheap safety’. **M+S**





ENHANCING INDUSTRIAL ESTATES

THE COLLABORATIVE APPROACH OF INDIS MALTA'S SPECIALISED UNITS

Managing industrial areas, spread across the Maltese Islands, INDIS Malta seeks to continuously maintain and upkeep all the areas, for the ultimate benefit of the tenants and the general public. None of this would be possible without a dedicated workforce and a collaborative approach across various sectors and entities.

INDIS Malta manages 16 government-owned industrial areas, spread across the Maltese Islands. Among its daily responsibilities, one of the utmost importance is the continuous maintenance and upkeep of its administered areas.

INDIS has dedicated teams which conduct regular checks and patrols throughout all the estates, making sure that these are kept up to the required standard.

This operation involves the active participation of three specific units that have been created specifically for this purpose, known as the Community Unit, the Facilities and Estates Unit, and the Compliance Unit. Together, these teams serve as the fundamental pillars on which the Company stands, offering a bird's eye view for the maintenance, upkeep, and good order of its Industrial areas.

"We firmly believe in the significance of teamwork at INDIS Malta, as we consider it to be the key to our success."

The Chief Officer, responsible for these three important units, elaborated further on these units' daily operations and the

unwavering commitment exhibited by his teams.

The Community Unit is responsible for the overseeing of all irregularities noticed within the common areas falling under its jurisdiction. These irregularities encompass the reporting of waste dumping, abandoned vehicles, encumbering objects, as well as any damage to the infrastructure of the areas themselves, including but not limited to damaged pavements, potholes, pruning of trees, street lighting, and similar issues.

The above-mentioned outdoor spaces are not only used by the company's tenants and their employees, but also by third parties. The Community Officers responsible to patrol the designated areas, have the authority to send reports to anyone responsible for causing nuisances, damages, hazards, or health and safety concerns. However, the sole objective is to keep the areas as safe as possible for everyone, rather than to enforce.

This unit also serves other functions, such as the processing and issuance of work permits required for activities conducted within the



“We firmly believe in the significance of teamwork at INDIS Malta, as we consider it to be the key to our success.”

Company’s areas. These permits may include but are not limited to, road closures, reserved parking lots, construction works, loading/unloading activities, road markings, and the installation of required signage.

Normally, the unit requires that tenants and/or any individual/s for such works or activities submit the necessary documentation for approval, in collaboration, and if so required, with the relevant authorities such as the Malta Police Force (MPF), Transport Malta (TM), The Civil Protection Department (CPD), the respective Local Council, and any other entities. In most cases, each task necessitates Risk Assessments and Method Statements, which must be duly signed by a certified Health & Safety Consultant, and any other professional that may be required.

Over the years, the Community Unit entered into collaboration with several strategic stakeholders, such as tenants’ formed associations, and has recently embarked into further collaboration with the MPF, and TM, in order to effectively address irregularities and enhance the safety of its areas for both tenants and third parties.

Working closely with this unit is the Facilities and Estates Unit, which plays a vital role in assisting all tenants and visitors, and also other units within the Company itself, to keep its industrial areas in good environmental condition, creating a better and safer place for all its stakeholders and visitors.

This important facility has been strategically placed in Luqa, near the old airport terminal, to be in a better position to reach all estates. It is equipped with dedicated skilled workers responsible to oversee day-to-day operations, including but not limited to landscaping, maintenance, repairs, security, cleaning, and housekeeping.

The employees forming part of this unit are known for taking immediate action upon receiving both internal reports, commonly by the Community unit, and also from external complainants. The most common complaints typically relate to cleanliness and waste

collection. On average, approximately 360 tonnes of waste are collected annually from the Industrial Zones administered by the Company, encompassing construction materials, tires, domestic waste (such as fridges and other appliances), as well as daily waste.

Other challenges faced by this section are those related to repairs and maintenance, but thanks to its skilled and dedicated employees, the unit has been able to address most of them, relying solely on in-house intervention, rather than having to seek other remedies.

In addition to the above-mentioned team, the Company has a dedicated Compliance Unit, which plays a crucial role in ensuring that tenants adhere to the agreed terms and conditions laid down in the agreements. This unit is responsible for the monitoring and coordination of inspections, required both for condition and compliance purposes.

Inspections usually are carried out when a tenant seeks to extend the contract related to a particular property that had been previously allocated to him. In these cases, the Compliance Unit conducts site visits assessing the visual condition of the premises. A condition report is then prepared, to determine whether the tenant can proceed with the process of renewal and/or expansion.

Furthermore, the Compliance Unit prepares a compliance report, indicating whether the client is adhering to the terms of the original contract or not. This involves cross-checking employment records, rental payments, and other activities. Should the tenant not be compliant, the Company enters into discussion with that particular tenant for ratification.

INDIS remains committed to maintaining its estates to the highest standards possible, thereby creating a pleasant work environment for tenants and continuing to attract foreign investment to our islands, however, this cannot be achieved without the valuable input of the above-mentioned teams. **M+S**

THE MALTA SUPERYACHT SYMPOSIUM ONE YEAR ON

DR ALISON VASSALLO - CHAIRPERSON, YACHTING BUSINESS SECTION WITHIN THE MALTA CHAMBER



The unprecedented performance of the global superyacht industry in 2021 has been well-documented, with the Covid 19 pandemic being cited as the main catalyst for the rise in global order books, and the flurry of sales of second-hand yachts.

Although 2022 witnessed a decrease in sales compared to the previous year, industry experts generally agree that the total sales over the past two years still exceed those of 2020.

On the local front, as at the end of 2022, the number of superyachts registered under the Malta flag has well exceeded the 1000-mark. At a time when the industry is experiencing this historic growth, efforts to strengthen legislative and practical frameworks, to effectively service the industry and lay the groundwork for further growth, could not be timelier.

On the 6th and 7th July 2022, The Malta Chamber, in collaboration with the Malta Maritime Law Association held the inaugural Superyacht Symposium with the theme "Charting the Future".

The panel discussions, composed of local and foreign experts, targeted Malta as a Centre for Superyacht Refit; Malta as a Superyacht Destination; the Status of Regulation in the Superyacht Industry; Crew/Training Challenges in the Superyacht Industry; Brokerage Trends and Issues; and, a forward-looking session focusing on Charting our Future in Malta.

The Symposium was warmly embraced by the industry and provided a forum for key players to commemorate their accomplishments thus far and explore the future of the industry.

During the first day of the Symposium, the Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Capital Projects, Aaron Farrugia, revealed the initiation of a project aimed at creating the first national policy for superyachts. The Yachting Steering Committee, established by the Government to supervise the superyacht industry's vision development, has conducted an extensive consultation process over the past few months comprising both private and public sector representatives.

The Malta Chamber was entrusted with leading 3 out of 5 focus groups, namely, Fiscal, Legal and Administration; Training and Certification; and, Refits, Technical and Infrastructure. The two other focus groups forming the subject of the consultation process focus on Vision and Mission and Chartering and Commercial Management. The salient recommendations of The Malta Chamber members arising from the consultation process of these 3 focus groups include:

STRENGTHENING MALTA'S LEGISLATION AND FINANCIAL SERVICES

Practical suggestions of industry stakeholders centred on the need for coordination of the systems of the various Government entities servicing the industry, as regards access to certification issued to clients. Legislation-specific proposals include the formulation of a private yacht code; the introduction of a regime for private yachts wishing to conduct limited charters; the need for incentives for yacht management companies to establish themselves in Malta; and, a proposal for Malta to establish itself as a front-runner in the servicing of superyachts fuelled by green technology.

ESTABLISHING MALTA AS A TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION HUB

The potential of Malta to establish itself as an international maritime training centre of excellence – a "crew island" – was a recurring point of discussion during the various industry meetings held.

Proposals to achieve this include providing training centres with incentives to upgrade their training programmes to reflect industry requirements; focus on the accreditation of maritime training courses; and, the development of a campaign aimed at highlighting career paths in the industry, to encourage young entrants to pursue a career path in yachting.

MALTA AS A REFIT CENTRE

The salient point of this focus group centred on the requirement for the introduction of standards for subcontractors servicing the refit, technical and infrastructure industry, so as to ensure the provision of a high level of service. Operators within this sector expressed concern at the loss of skills being experienced, and the need to introduce apprenticeship schemes specifically dedicated to the specialised requirements of the superyacht industry.

A heavily supported proposal also relates to the organisation of familiarisation campaigns for foreign industry players, such as captains, whereby they can experience firsthand what Malta can offer to their clients in the refit sector amongst others. Indeed, this aspect forms part of the wider proposal that runs as a common thread throughout the focus groups related to the promotion of Malta and its services in a focused and co-ordinated manner, essentially bringing the various services together, in a holistic manner to build on Malta as a brand.

It is expected that the findings of the Yachting Steering Committee will be shortly published by the authorities to enable a wider consultation process.

When coupled with the commissioning of an extensive impact assessment of the industry, a proposal which underpins the recommendations collected thus far would mean that Malta would be well and truly on its way to build a National Superyacht Policy that addresses future challenges in this highly competitive sector, while relying on the heritage, the reputation, and the success which has been painstakingly built over the past years. **M+S**



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A WILLINGNESS TO BUILD RESILIENCE

In an era where society is bombarded with a need to get in touch with its softer side, Matthew Bartolo seeks to support individuals in their journey to 'anti-fragile'. Movers and Shakers 2023 caught up with Mr Bartolo to explore further this and other concepts.

“Mr Bartolo sees the mission of The Willingness Team as one which seeks to build a resilient society.” I truly believe that psychological services are just a tiny part of helping people with their mental fitness.”

Matthew Bartolo is very Zen, even in the way he describes himself. “I believe that my IKIGAI, my reason to get out of bed in the morning, is to help build an anti-fragile community. Through my work as a therapist and mentor, I support individuals through their journey towards anti-fragile by providing guidance, support, and tools for personal growth. I help them reframe whatever they’re going through, into opportunities for growth, to foster an adaptable, and antifragile version of themselves,” asserted Mr Bartolo.

GROWING THROUGH ADVERSITY

As a sex and relationship therapist, Mr Bartolo prides himself in helping couples get out of their comfort zone and create a space for both to grow. Adversity, he maintains, can breed growth, if seen from an anti-fragile perspective. “What for some couples is the end, for others is an opportunity to look inwards and run a SWOT analysis of the same relationship and set goals to become the couple they want to be,” he added.

As a clinical supervisor and consultant, Mr Bartolo guides leaders into creating a growth mindset within their teams. This, he feels, changes how mistakes are perceived within the same organisation, and it fosters a more transparent and agile company culture. This same culture encourages idea generation, and autonomy within the team members.

READY, ABLE AND WILLING

Willingness Team was an idea on Mr Bartolo’s notepad, doodled whilst reading for his first degree at University. “I remember doing my own market research by visiting some of the top psychologists at the time and assessing their service and response time,” smiled Mr Bartolo in reminiscence.

While reading for his Masters degree in Sex and Relationship Therapy in the UK, he got down to setting it up. “I had dabbled in some business ideas when I was younger, but nothing as structured and “big” as this. What started off as an entity that organises quarterly workshops, is now an organisation that offers more than 20 services, by over 40 professionals, and engaging not less than 60 people,” observed Mr Bartolo.

Mr Bartolo pointed out that the secret behind The Willingness Team’s success is that it was founded by a client. “I was a client of diverse professionals, and now I lead the biggest private interdisciplinary team on the island. Our services range from Camp Willingness where we run a program that teaches kids about emotional regulation and entrepreneurial skills, to Employee Assistance Programmes,” said Mr Bartolo.

BUILDING MENTAL FITNESS

Mr Bartolo sees the mission of The Willingness Team as one which seeks to build a resilient society. “I truly believe that psychological services are just a tiny part of helping people with their mental fitness,” said Mr Bartolo.

Mental health issues, observed the expert, are on the rise. One can choose to keep treating one person at a time, or treat the cause of most mental health issues – society. Mr Bartolo expressed the considered opinion that unless all work together to fix society, the situation will only get worse.

“This is why we are investing a lot in designing, conducting, and publishing research, and then building educational campaigns around our findings. We found that this helps alleviate some of the people’s pain and confusion. Misinformation, especially around expectations and social norms causes a lot of anxiety amongst people,” noted the founder of The Willingness Team.

The Willingness Team works also with companies to help create a mentally-fit work environment. The team is currently developing Performance Improvement Plans to help support both the company and the employee when there are performance problems, due to mental health issues. They sit down with HR and the employee and set out a plan to help the employee deal with their issues to get back to feeling fulfilled at work.

A FOCUS ON COMPANY CULTURE

But, with so much insecurity in society, what values drive The Willingness Team and how does the company culture evolve? “This is a good question, as I literally just got out of a meeting discussing this year’s clinical audits, and one of them will be assessing our company culture and how our team feels about being part of our organisation.

Last we checked, our team rated working with us an 8 out of 10. Does this mean that we’re one happy family? Definitely not. Does it mean that all will talk highly about what we do and who we are? Again, no,” smiled Mr Bartolo.

What the Willingness Team does, however, observed Mr Bartolo, is to, promote the growth mindset that the team talks about so much. Its main drivers when it comes to people management are the two Japanese concepts: IKIGAI and KAIZEN.

Mr Bartolo explained. “Ikigai is about finding harmony between Passion (What you love), Talent (What you are good at), Purpose (What the world needs), and Profession (What you can be paid for). We have goal alignment meetings where we sit with every individual and discuss their goals, and that of Willingness, and how we can align them together.

“Kaizen is a Japanese term that translates to “continuous improvement”. It focuses on making small, incremental improvements in processes, systems, and practices over time. Improvements can lead to significant advancement and growth. To stay focussed on this, the core team has a feedback session every other week. We give and receive feedback from all. Mentioning one action that we appreciated and one aspect we think the person can grow in”.

STRENGTH IN FLEXIBILITY

Mr Bartolo said that over the past 12 years Willingness has not only adapted, but has grown stronger, through any adversity that it was struck by. No matter what challenges the team was faced with, Mr Bartolo emphasised that this was taken as an opportunity for growth. “This is all thanks to the willingness to adapt that is common for all team members that stay. This is what I mean by Anti – Fragile. Willingness evolves and adapts to its surroundings and situations, in a way that it has never stopped growing,” concluded Mr Bartolo. **M&S**



VISIONARIES & TRUE LEADERS WHERE ARE YOU?

SILVAN MIFSUD - THE MALTA CHAMBER COUNCIL COUNCIL MEMBER AND CHAIR
OF THE FAMILY BUSINESS COMMITTEE, THE MALTA CHAMBER

Silvan Mifsud, The Malta Chamber Council Member and Chair of the Family Business Committee delves into the reality faced by many family businesses, who would need to take the extra plunge to become the true leaders that they really are.

How can you simply define Visionary Leadership? Put simply, visionary leadership is when a leader inspires others to pursue a long-term vision. Visionary Leadership builds on participation, communication and goal setting. You can say that leadership includes being a visionary, as a standard personal characteristic. At the end of the day, true leaders are those that create a vision of the future, and inspire others to turn that vision into a reality.

The term 'Visionary leadership' was first coined by Daniel Goleman in 2002, as part of the Goleman Leadership Styles framework. Goleman defines visionary leadership as "the ability to take charge and inspire with a compelling vision", and postulates that this type of leadership is best used "when changes require a new vision or when a clear direction is needed."

Like everything in life, nothing comes with just advantages. So even Visionary Leadership comes with its downsides. It could be the case that great emphasis is placed on the future, that the visionary leader often loses sight of the present, with no appreciation of the smaller details that impact the day-to-day operation of the organisation. The vision may be lost if it's too intertwined with the personality of the leader, and if proper succession planning is not carried out effectively. An organisation may also be taken up with a leader's vision, which might lead to other potentially good ideas being ignored.

However, these downsides fade almost into oblivion when compared to the upside of visionary leadership. An organisation with visionary leadership at its helm, has a clear idea of the overall goal that everyone is working towards, where everyone's energy is focused on what ultimately matters to make that overarching goal a reality. Moreover, such an organisation would be proactive, constantly looking around it, and able to foresee upcoming challenges. All this sets fertile ground for innovation and creativity, thus allowing the organisation to thrive in these areas. Ultimately, visionary leaders generate a sense of purpose, motivate employees, inspire unity and get everyone on the same page. The risk-reward trade-off is clear. Visionary leadership can take organisations way beyond.

Yet, as a financial and business consultant, especially with Family Business, I see it in such short supply. Many family business owners and leaders, many times declare that they find no time for the things that visionary leaders would focus upon. What do they spend their time on? They focus on trying to win a tender or dealing with daily operational issues. I constantly see family business leaders and owners who employ 50,60, 70 or 80 employees or more, involved in their comfort zone i.e., micromanaging things. They seem to be like firemen, always running around dealing with the latest crisis (fire) they need to sort (put out). I dare say that family businesses suffer from an epidemic of control and micro-management. In many instances, family businesses have grown to a certain size but its owners and leaders still try to control and direct the business using the same mindset and methods they used when the business was much smaller. The symptoms are always the same.

"Visionary leaders generate a sense of purpose, motivate employees, inspire unity and get everyone on the same page. The risk-reward trade-off is clear. Visionary leadership can take organisations way beyond."



No time to think. No time to communicate well. No time to plan the future. In such family businesses, the culture of micro-management from the top, means that the family business leadership is always fully concerned with dealing with operational issues and patching things up, rather than finding long term sustainable solutions. This culture ultimately destroys value and inhibits businesses to truly grow.

This means that contrary to foreseeing upcoming challenges on the horizon, they would deal with issues and challenges when they become a crisis. This means that many family businesses waste most of their energy running on the spot. It reminds me of a hamster I once had, who spent most of its life running in its wheel, without ever going anywhere. **M&S**

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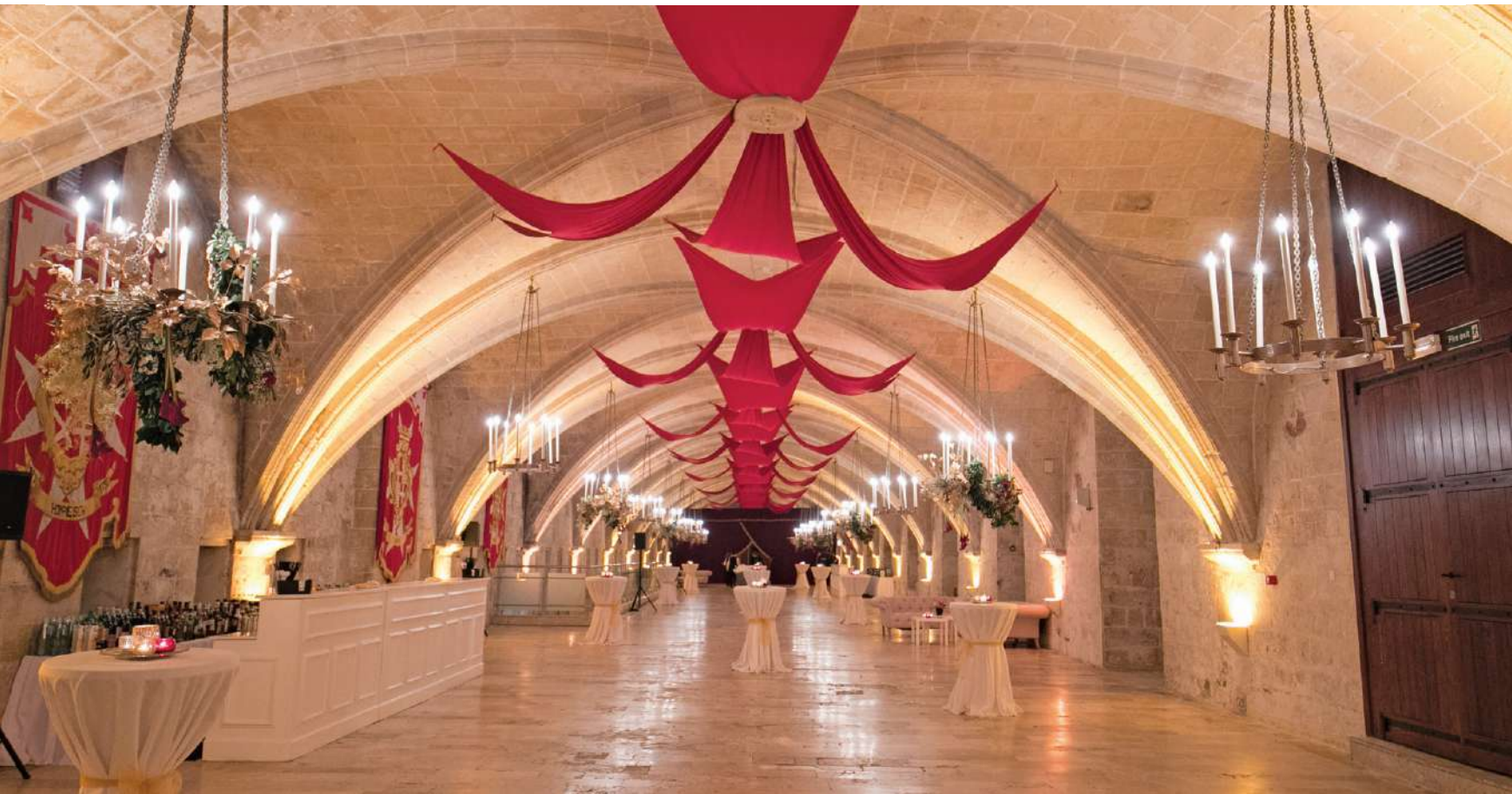


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LEVERAGING EXPERTISE TO DRIVE INNOVATION & EXCELLENCE

From humble beginnings to a leading technology and managed services provider, Gordon Bezzina, chief technology officer at BMIT Technologies plc, and its longest-serving employee, has led and nurtured the company's amazing technological transformation over the years.

“I got involved in the company during a crucial period of growth and opportunity in the online gambling industry. At that time, the UK introduced higher taxes, and Malta stepped in to attract gaming companies by offering tax incentives,” Gordon explains.

Recognising the emerging opportunity in the online gambling industry, BMIT Technologies established its first data centre in Qormi, in 2003, serving as a colocation facility for gaming companies.

“As the industry evolved, BMIT expanded its facilities to accommodate the growing demand – we now have two data centres in Malta and points of presence in Italy and Germany. In recent years, the company has diversified its portfolio to include cloud services and managed solutions and position itself as a one-stop solution for clients’ IT needs, catering to various sectors and industries,” Gordon says.

The journey has been marked by continuous growth, dedication, and a strong customer focus but the most significant change in the company’s history is the transition “from a pure colocation provider to a full stack IT services provider.”

“We offer comprehensive services such as cloud services, managed services, colocation, DDoS protection, cybersecurity, and offsite management. Clients can rely on us as their single point of contact for all their IT requirements,” he explains.

The role of the CTO has also evolved.

“Initially involved in technical tasks, my role as CTO now focuses on leading and directing the company’s technology strategy. It is crucial to choose and adopt technologies, upgrade offerings, and bridge the gap between technology and business strategy,” says Gordon.

Regarding AI, he emphasises the CTO’s responsibility to anticipate and assess its potential application, ensuring ethical and responsible implementation.

Staying updated on the latest technologies, trends, and innovations is essential for making informed decisions.

“Change should be purpose-driven, meaningful, and impactful, avoiding guinea pig scenarios. Thorough testing and patience are essential during implementation, with backup plans and rollback strategies in place,” he adds.

BMIT was recently recognised as IT Supplier of the Year at the EGR B2B awards and this highlights its ability to provide bespoke infrastructure and IT services.

“The market’s growing need for hybrid IT solutions, combining on-premises, cloud, and multi-cloud service providers, showcases the advantage of BMIT’s expertise in colocation, public and private clouds, and managed services. This expertise enables BMIT to design, deliver, and support tailored hybrid solutions, empowering clients to leverage



“It is crucial to choose and adopt technologies, upgrade offerings, and bridge the gap between technology and business strategy”

the benefits of cloud scalability, cost efficiency, and data control.”

Gordon’s aspirations for BMIT include becoming more pervasive in the local IT industry and solidifying its position as a leading technology solutions provider.

“We want to establish the BMIT brand as a staple IT provider, be pioneers in our field, and drive innovation and excellence in everything we do.

“Our hunger for doing business and servicing the local IT industry remains strong. Our wish and eagerness to deliver exceptional technology solutions have not diminished. We are committed to leveraging our expertise to drive innovation and excellence in everything we do,” he concludes. **M•S**

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GO BUSINESS

MAKING BUSINESS SENSE

UNLOCKING THE STRATEGIC POTENTIAL OF MANAGED IT SERVICES

Technology is crucial to any business. But as technology grows in sophistication, so do businesses' requirements. "GO Business was set up specifically to support businesses with the communication and ICT support they need. Through our distinct setup, we not only intend to keep focusing on business customers as a special segment with specific requirements but to also enhance our offering in the near future," says Arthur Azzopardi, Chief Officer of GO Business.

GO has been supporting business customers for a long time but as technology developed, certain niches required more specialisation.

"Today, where uninterrupted and seamless connectivity is critical to any business, it is impossible to imagine a reality without 24x7 connectivity and the networks and systems that enable this," says Arthur.

"Businesses' requirements are complex, and this will be the case more so in the future. In line with our company's purpose to drive a digital Malta where no-one is left behind, our main interest is to keep investing in our committed team of professionals who specifically support our businesses clients with their technology needs," he added.

GO Business constitutes a team of over 70 professionals, supporting

a significant segment of local businesses with enterprise solutions and mission-critical connectivity services. GO Business is also the telecoms provider of choice in mission critical situations and large-scale events.

"Being dynamic in today's world is crucial but this means being ready to shift gear and respond to the sudden expectations of the market. A case in point was when during the pandemic, we had launched GO CloudTalk, a unified communication solution for nomad businesses that allows them to keep their communications running seamlessly from wherever they are, a service that has been picking up very nicely."

"We have also launched a new self-care experience specifically for business customers while we continue to experience an unprecedented increase in our business mobile customer base and in our retail and wholesale broadband connectivity offering."



Speaking about how GO is equipped to protect its business clients from cyber security threats, Mr Azzopardi noted how such threats too, are becoming even more sophisticated.

“We have experienced several cases of large scale DDOS attacks on sensitive business customer networks, and through the quality of our local infrastructure and our significant investment in international presence, we have helped mitigate these attacks, many times, even before they even land in Malta,” he added.

Perhaps one of GO’s most important recent investments was in its collaboration with Cybersift, a venture that applies cybersecurity through the use of machine learning to provide organisations with advanced, self-learning tools for detecting threats.

“We are noticing how ransomware, coupled with phishing emails are, particularly on the increase. Investigating attacks after they happen is no longer enough and this is where we see that AI and related technologies will prove to be crucial in providing business continuity to our customers. Our investment in Cybersift has given us the tools to help businesses not just mitigate these threats but to pre-empt them.”

“Ultimately the level of security and protection we can provide depends on the quality of our people, education and constant training and awareness. GO invests significantly in this space and I believe that locally, our expertise is unmatched. Over and above, our security offer is ISO 27001 certified by independent professional security experts.”

GO Business has also been actively supporting its business customers even on the sustainability front.

“Another important investment for us was the one in Sens Innovation – an organisation that for a long time has been helping commercial space owners, especially in the hotel industry, optimise energy consumption.”

“However, besides being the right thing to do, we also acknowledge that ESG requirements and increased energy costs have compelled businesses to operate more sustainably. We too want to lead by example by minimising our environmental impact and this is why we will also be moving to new, carbon-neutral premises next year,” said Mr Azzopardi.

Many small businesses still prefer to retain certain levels of control and might feel ‘threatened’ by the idea of letting go and to trust the concept of ‘managed services.’

“This is also a reality and we also know that this will become more challenging over time due to increasing complexities of the skills required to do this well. While larger customers might have their own setup, others prefer to focus on their core business and leave it up to trusted partners like us to take care of digital requirements,” explained Arthur.

The current drive both at local level and EU level to push business to go digital is expected to bring an increase in potential business.

“We can handle this because we have continued building on our portfolio of products and services and we are constantly investing in our in-house team of high calibre experts to be able to continue offering enterprise solutions to our customers’s evolving requirements.”

Mr Azzopardi lamented the persistent challenge brought by the lack of human resources and escalating HR costs across all industries.

“In this context, running a secure and effective IT infrastructure requires a wide range of skills that are not found in one individual. On the other hand, for many businesses, it is no longer feasible to employ their own experts whose expertise is only required a few hours per week. This is where GO Business is making business sense for our customers.

“Of course, the needs and requirements of a large and complex organisation will be different to those of a small company and this is why our teams are set up in a way that they can adapt to customer size and requirement complexity.”

“We have learnt to leverage the expertise of our resources according to what our customers need. Over time, these needs change too and this is helping us understand the evolution of our customers’ requirements to assist them better.

“We are already seeing an increased demand for multi-site connectivity, more bandwidth hungry networks and quicker responses to network changes. And this is where we will be enhancing our offering,” concluded Mr Azzopardi. **M+S**

“Investigating attacks after they happen is no longer enough and this is where we see that AI and related technologies will prove to be crucial in providing business continuity to our customers.”



FROM THE YOUNG CHAMBER NETWORK

MEET THE NEW YCN STEERING
COMMITTEE FOR 2023-2025



REUBEN DEBONO - MAYPOLE

Reuben Debono is a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) and a Fellow Chartered Certified Accountant (FCCA) by profession. During the early years of his professional career, he gained valuable expertise in this industry while working with Grant Thornton (Malta) as a Senior Associate for four years, followed by three years as Manager of Business Risk Services.

As his career progressed, Reuben felt compelled to further his academic credentials, and he completed a course leading to a Diploma in Maltese Tax and Banking and Financial Institutions, as well as a Master's in Business Management (MBA) from the University of Reading's Henley Business School.

Since joining Maypole, as Director, Reuben has been tasked with overseeing the development of the strategy of the Group to ensure sustainable growth.



ALEXANDRA SCIBERRAS - INVENT 3D

Alexandra Sciberras is the co-founder and Chief Operating Officer (COO) of Invent 3D, an established company founded in 2018 that has emerged as a prominent player in Malta's additive manufacturing and product development sector. Invent 3D has successfully ventured into diverse industries, including automotive, aerospace, and medical fields, distinguishing itself by employing sustainable materials in its product offerings.

Within the Invent 3D organization, Alexandra also assumes the responsibility for team coordination and project management. With a background in pharmacy, she possesses a profound interest in medical projects and actively seeks collaborations to merge product development with healthcare applications.

Alexandra has an innate and deep-rooted enthusiasm for the startup ecosystem and she actively contributes to the growth of aspiring entrepreneurs through her involvement in mentorship programs. As a mother of three young children, Alexandra is particularly committed to fostering inclusivity in the workplace and empowering female entrepreneurs to pursue their aspirations.



JOEABY VASSALLO - I+A LTD

Joeaby Vassallo is an architect and branding specialist with a decade of experience, excelling in strategy, design, and business development. As Co-Founder and Director of I+A, Joeaby proudly forms part of the team behind the studio's success, in becoming one of Malta's leading design firms, completing notable projects, with one of the recent ones being the Food Court at Malta International Airport.

With a degree in Architecture and Civil Engineering, he possesses a strong strategic mindset and meticulous attention to detail, also having a deep understanding of the design industry, where human-centric design creates captivating experiences. One of his significant accomplishments was his involvement in organising the Feast of Cyril and Methodius at San Anton Palace in May 2016, alongside the Ambassador of the Republic of Malta for Bulgaria, H.E. Prof. Lino Bianco, under the distinguished patronage of H.E. Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, President of Malta at that time. As CEO of the Golden Glitch, Joeaby strives to promote Mediterranean design excellence, while also showcasing the region's rich contemporary culture.



THOMAS CREMONA - IDISAV

Thomas Cremona is the founder of idisav, a consultancy practice that is focused on providing guidance on exit planning of business operations, including assisting entrepreneurs with acquiring and/or divesting of business units.

His professional background includes a qualification in accountancy through the ACCA study course, and he also formed part of the Advisory team in a 'Big Four' accountancy firm. Subsequently, Thomas founded and operated one of Malta's largest property management companies which was later acquired by a listed entity.

Outside the office, Thomas is also an avid endurance sports athlete and has established numerous world records in ocean rowing. Nowadays he stays active through road and trail running.

Thomas looks forward to actively participating in the YCN committee and ensuring that the members of The Malta Chamber perceive it as a rewarding experience.



FRANCESCA VELLA - GRANT THORNTON

Francesca Vella is a Manager with Grant Thornton's Advisory team, specialising in economic advisory and sustainability services. With eight years of experience at the firm, including a two-year placement in Grant Thornton's Dublin office, she brings expertise in economic research, policy analysis, and non-financial reporting to the table.

Francesca holds a BSc (Hons) Degree in Economics and Management from the London School of Economics. She is also a certified PRINCE2 Practitioner, a fellow of the Royal Statistical Society, and has been a member of The Malta Chamber for two years. Moreover, she is currently completing the ACCA qualification. Francesca has achieved full accreditation with the GRI Professional Certification Program 2021, focusing on sustainability reporting, GRI Standards, Reporting on Human Rights, and integrating the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

At Grant Thornton, she provides a range of economic research and advisory services

to both government and industry, including market and policy analyses; CBAs and feasibility studies; EIAs; advocacy reporting; evaluations; strategy and policy development; and, non-financial reporting.

DAVID SCIBERRAS - INVENT 3D

David Sciberras is a warranted Engineer with a passion for innovation, collaboration and disruption.

Joining The Malta Chamber in 2019, David immediately joined the YCN Committee to further support growth & collaborative efforts within The Malta Chamber. Together with his wife Alexandra, he launched Invent 3D, a bootstrapped startup, in 2018, targeting innovative Product Development & 3D Printing. Invent 3D served to disrupt the manufacturing landscape with applied 3D Printing for Jigs & Fixtures, sustainable products and new, cutting-edge designs for trophies & merchandise.

Following this success, David also launched ELM Fabrication, a startup tackling sustainability & circular economy. Passionate about the Startup Ecosystem, he finds pride in mentoring many startups & entrepreneurs throughout their growth journey.

Between juggling 3 kids, a family life, gym time, 2 startups and the YCN Committee, one can safely say that he likes to keep himself busy!



JUSTIN PAUL ANASTASI - OVERPWR

Justin Paul Anastasi is a seasoned HR professional with extensive experience in hyper-growth businesses across multiple countries, with a proven track record of success in all facets of HR, including leadership and organisational development. Justin strongly feels that his success can be attributed to a sharp commercial and business acumen, as well as his unwavering commitment to the "Human Element," which he considers to be at the heart of everything he does.

Justin Paul considers himself to be an active contributor and influencer in the constantly evolving HR field, continuously promoting innovation and transformation, and engaging with the HR community both locally and internationally. Now an entrepreneur, he founded OverPWR which has investments in several companies, such as We Consult You and soon-to-be-launched Hireroo.com. Together with his team, Justin Paul provides a range of core HR services, including recruitment, executive management, and talent advisory services. Justin Paul's clients come from various industries, including gaming, fintech, performance marketing, financial services, and tech, and are located in multiple countries and his core mission is to help these clients optimise their workforce and grow their businesses.



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CREATING ATTRACTIVE & SUSTAINABLE BUILDING EXTERIORS

In this issue, Halmann Vella Ltd will provide some insight on façade engineering and the impact it has on our built environment. Given their 20+ year experience in the field, we shall be looking at a number of aspects that contribute to an attractive and functioning building envelope.

Façades have evolved into becoming today's modern architectural language of expression, delivered by architects on behalf of their customers, for the enjoyment of the public.

Whether it is a high rise in an urban setting or a new building within a historical context, the exterior is often the most recognisable and memorable aspect of a structure.

Hilton Tower and Baystreet were the first commercial ventilated façade projects undertaken by the company back in the late 90's.

Fast forward to 2023 and a multitude of façade projects later such as Laguna, located within a marine environment and clad in a ceramic ventilated facade, to Smart City, which is a high rise building within a marine context exposed to north-eastern winds, to Sterling with its tapering travertine façade walls and Project House clad in large panels of flat and curved hardstone sections - to name but a few, one can observe that projects have become multidimensional in terms of design, material use and functionality.

Whether it is a high rise in an urban setting or a new building within a historical context, the exterior is often the most recognisable and memorable aspect of a structure.



"We work very closely with Project Architects at pre- and post-construction stage, to detail and fine tune their vision and requirements. As a result, it is our obligation to actualise their objectives and implement them on site in a timely manner, and in accordance to European building codes and other standards," says Perit Hugh Vella, CCO and façade engineer at Halmann Vella Ltd.

Each project is treated differently. The context, building use, live loads and wind pressure will dictate the sizing and material of the underlying sub-structure, as well as the allowable maximum size and thickness of cladding panels set over it.

"Design and detailing are always based on a thorough as-built survey of the structure in question. This exercise normally outlines any underlying issues that might affect design intent, fabrication, and hinder installation on site," says Perit Stefania Buhagiar, project manager at Halmann Vella Ltd.

The Project House regeneration project is considered to be one of the largest façade cladding projects that was completed recently, in 2021.

The brief was to clad an existing masonry building in 2600sqm of 30mm thick hardstone panels with a fire stopping barrier running in between floors on each elevation. Given the extent of the site, works were split in 26 phases and took around a year to complete.

Ventilated facades may be an excellent sustainable building strategy. They are intended to enable circulation between the cladding and building envelope, resulting in a natural ventilation system that can aid in better thermal insulation by keeping temperature fluctuation and humidity levels inside the building low.

Nowadays clients are resorting to LEED and BREAAAM certification to enhance a building's performance. This will eventually help attract good customers, enhance a company's brand recognition, and also increase property market values.

Hugh Vella concludes "We are proud of our portfolio and eager about what is to come. We strive to keep on doing our best by keeping up to date with new technology, understanding the clients' needs and working towards standardising customisation for better and more practical solutions." **M•S**



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AI IN LAW

Science fiction, real threat, or same old?

BY ANDRÉ ZERAFÀ

André Zerafa explores the impact of generative artificial intelligence (AI) on the legal profession, analysing the ways in which this emerging technology could disrupt traditional work practices. What are the implications of generative AI for legal research, due diligence, document drafting, education, and analysis?

The application of technology, more recently generative artificial intelligence, to work practices in the legal profession is touted as a real threat to the traditional manner in which legal advice is delivered, particularly to the role of a lawyer giving advice and interpreting and applying legislation. The main difference between the traditional application of (extractive) AI and generative AI, is that you can ask the latter practically anything with the user retaining a high level of empowerment depending on the questions (prompts) being asked. It is already a firmly accepted fact that generative AI *can* be applied to legal work, however, it is moot whether generative AI *should* be applied to legal work. According to a recent Thomson Reuters study, very few law firms are planning to use generative AI for their legal work, while the same survey indicates that associates are *less* inclined to use generative AI for their work, when compared to partners in the same law firms.

It is undeniable that generative AI is a true disruptor. The disruption is real and tangible, especially around the areas of legal research, legal due diligence, drafting or review of legal documents, legal education and legal writing and analysis - so practically all areas touched upon by a legal practice other than 'lawyering' (or advocating in a court of law) and negotiation. While artificial intelligence chatbots in their current form have not yet achieved the same level of expertise as a human lawyer giving legal advice, it is undeniable that chatbots are already equipped to provide basic replies to legal questions, drawing their responses from a huge pool of data from a variety of sources at a speed which is unmatched by the human brain.

Technology is considered to be an opportunity, rather than a threat - and rightly so. Technology should make our lives easier, enabling us to deliver top-notch legal services in the best interests of our clients and society at large, in an efficient manner. Furthermore, the correct use of technology would enable lawyers to really focus on what they should be good at, namely, to be their client's trusted advisors, to unravel complex legal problems, and to advocate meaningfully and coherently.

The challenge for legal professionals is to embrace this technology and use it wisely. Lawyers should play a crucial role in providing datasets to the technology to reduce its capability to hallucinate, if it has the right answers to the questions put to it. Artificial Intelligence is the ideal tool to enhance a lawyer's skillset, and it definitely should not be regarded as a means to reduce the need or demand for lawyers in society. If one were to consider lawyering as a mechanical exercise where one spews replies to questions, then the profession is certainly under threat. However, providing advice does not amount to replying to questions, something which any chatbot can do. There will certainly



be a re-dimensioning of legal services and one could foresee that the value-added provided by the more specialised legal professionals will be increased. On the other hand, research capabilities will be elevated so much that it will not allow us time to think and consider.

There are still several concerns around generative AI which need to be addressed, including but not limited to, data privacy and security, as well as legal liability and accountability,

The jury is out on how the legal profession will survive this challenge. It will certainly change forever and drastically so. **M+S**



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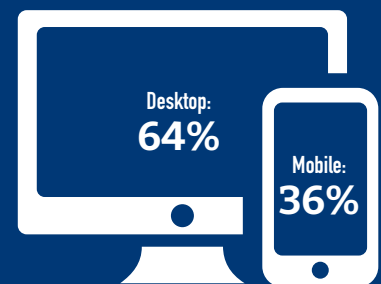
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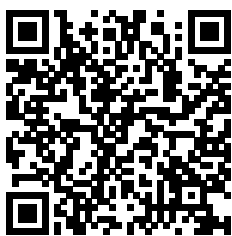
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