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Fontana Gruppo stands out for its level of internationalisation. It is present on the markets of Europe, Asia and the Americas, with 19 production sites and 36 sales and logistics offices, and a work force of over 4000 people.

The Group operates in many sectors: from automotive to earth-moving machinery, from large systems to metal framing, and from electrical appliances to aerospace, offering new and extensive ranges of products.



**FONTANA GRUPPO**

SPECIAL FASTENERS

# When the bolt was called: Loris Fontana

By Marco A. Guemtare  
Editor in Chief of Italian Fasteners Magazine

The first and only interview with Loris Fontana appeared in 1996, in issue 8 of the "Italian Fasteners" magazine.

The interview was conceived and conducted by another historical figure in the world of Italian fasteners, Giannantonio Brugola, cofounder and editor-in-chief of the magazine.



Loris Fontana and Giannantonio Brugola during the interview in May 1996.

The topics discussed are still topical: the critical economic situation, market globalisation, health of the fastener industry in general and particularly, the Italian fastener industry. The personality and character of Loris Fontana is immediately perceived from the insightful answers.

"It is said that the bolt," asks Giannantonio Brugola, "is a mature product. Do you see any way to rejuvenate this product? In other words, what is the future of the bolt in technological terms?" "A product is mature," says Loris Fontana, "when it can be effectively replaced by a new one. This is not the case with fasteners where there is no substitute. Alternative products have been introduced, such as welding, adhesives, plastic, but these have only reduced the number of applications. Instead, we can say that the fastener is evolving in line with the evolution of technology. For example, the production of even lighter engines will force fastener manufacturers to adapt to these new requirements. The future will undoubtedly focus more and more on special products. Therefore, more sophisticated machines will be needed with the adoption of more complex production methods. This will translate into higher prices for customers. One suggestion that I would like to make to

manufacturers in general, and particularly Italian fasteners, is to give the utmost consideration to research".

Another current topic of considerable importance for the fastener is undoubtedly quality, and Brugola urges that "the concept of quality is increasingly asserting itself in the production sector and is more and more requested by customer. How is this growing desire for quality perceived by the Italian fastener industry?"

"Quality," emphasises Loris Fontana, "is and must be considered the calling card of Italian manufacturers. Quality is extremely important and this was immediately understood and accepted, especially by major Italian manufacturers. Making quality means investments, but above all the acquisition of an innovative business mentality, without which manufacturers cannot think of producing successfully".

And then the key question, the one everyone wants to ask and that Brugola promptly formulates: "Yours is one of the most important groups in the world of fasteners and we can say that under your guidance it has grown and developed to reach its current considerable size. What is the secret of this uncontainable success?"

"I can answer this question briefly and succinctly. My success is fundamentally linked to three things: great determination, understood as the desire to move forward, enthusiasm and a great sense of the reality in which we live and work."

Determination, enthusiasm and a sense of reality: the synthesis of success.

Three concepts that need to be carefully considered and that together are the formula for creating a great company.



Montezemolo, the President of Assindustria Monza e Brianza awards Loris Fontana a certificate of merit in memory of his brother Walter Fontana

Three principles to which must be added a fourth for guaranteed success, i.e. entrepreneurial intuition, which both the Fontana brothers possessed.

In 1952, Walter and Loris laid the foundations of what is today the "Fontana Gruppo".

The empire of nuts and bolts was formed by the Fontana brothers in stages and according to a precise strategy based mainly on the principle of acquisitions.

The acquisition and participation of Fontana in companies manufacturing special types of fasteners, including Bulloneria LOBO, DBR, Revifa, Big Bolt, Invitea, and Derk, not to mention the very important acquisition of the IBS Group, allowed a rapid acquisition of know-how as well as a specific customer portfolio, thus favouring a faster integration of Fontana in the fabric of the national economy. After consolidating its position nationally, the group began expanding its sales and production abroad, starting with the 100% purchase of GFD, one of the largest fastener manufacturers in France.

A fundamental factor for the growth of Fontana was the unwavering teamwork and collaboration of the brothers Walter and Loris. Walter was an extrovert who enjoyed interacting with people and was highly skilled in public relations, while Loris was more reflective, more discreet, highly skilled and attentive to the technical-production side of the company. In other words, the perfect integration of the two different personalities.



We can therefore imagine the trauma suffered by Loris with the sudden loss of his brother Walter on 6 May 1992, which was overcome also thanks to the love and support of his three sons Enio, Luigi and Giuseppe, who had already been working in the family business for years. Thus began, within the family, a slow generational transition.

In addition to his commitments within the Company, Enio replaced his uncle as President of UPIVEB. During his long presidency he brought forward numerous important initiatives and innovations that are still today an operational base of the Association. The establishment of the "Italian Fasteners" magazine is one of his wonderful initiatives. He also did a lot for UPIVEB in Italy and in general for the entire Italian fastener industry, participating in many conferences and numerous working meetings. He is Vice-President of EIFI, the European Institute that brings together all the various national associations of fastener manufacturers in Europe.

Luigi, who, due to his engineering background, already worked alongside his father in the technical aspects of the company, dedicated himself more and more to the management of production while Giuseppe, due to his culture and predisposition, has increasingly dedicated himself to the strategic and financial management of the Group, subsequently assuming the position of CEO.

Thus, the Fontana "tree" has become stronger, more powerful and independent with the passage of time.

Loris, who had always overseen his "creature" on his own, so much so that he identified himself with his product (he was known as the "King of Bolts"), slowly handed over the control of the company to his sons, who in some way, especially in the way they organised themselves, evoke the initial spirit of collaboration and understanding of the two founding brothers.

When Loris Fontana passed away in





Loris Fontana with his sons, Enio, Luigi and Giuseppe, during the inauguration of the new headquarters in Veduggio

2018, the "creature" he had brought to life with his brother Walter, had become a powerful, consolidated and thriving company full of vitality and great potential, so much so that today the word "bolt" is synonymous with Fontana.

Today, the Fontana Gruppo is present in 29 countries with 19 production facilities. It employs more than 4,000 people and has a turnover of more than 800 million euros.

The spirit and philosophy of the two founders is now an integral part of the Group's DNA: a guarantee of continuity.

But many people still ask themselves: "But who was Loris Fontana really, what was his real personality?"

Loris Fontana was first and foremost a great worker and businessman. His long entrepreneurial career did not lack recognition, both nationally and internationally, but his biggest gratification came when he was awarded the title of "Cavaliere del Lavoro" on 2 June 2001 by the then President of the Republic, Carlo Azeglio Ciampi with the following reason: "To Loris Fontana - President of Fontana Luigi SpA and other Groups - for the important and inclusive role he played in the field of entrepreneurship, contributing greatly to the development and commercial success of Italian bolts in Italy and the world".

Loris Fontana was also quite shy and reserved, although he was an excellent entrepreneur possessing great professionalism and especially: in other words, a person with a great personality and a wide variety of interests.

"He had the great ability to synthesise", remembers his son Luigi. "You could talk to him about a problem for a quarter of an hour and he would give you the right answer in three seconds.

He particularly loved art. He loved beauty".

Although work was a big part of his life, he always maintained a beautiful and concrete bond with his family.

"For him, everything he had achieved in life was just a starting point," recalls Enio. "He never missed out on going to the factory on a Sunday, but despite all this, his family was always of paramount importance.

He had a beautiful relationship with my mother. They lived for each other".

It must not have been easy for Loris Fontana to combine his role as entrepreneur with that of father.

"He was an authoritarian father, very committed to his work but also close to us children when we needed him", says Giuseppe.

"Throughout his life, he always had a very strong connection to his land of origin: Brianza, where he was born and where he

grew as a man and entrepreneur".

The Fontanas have always displayed a profound attachment to their territory. They have always maintained a strong interest in social issues, as demonstrated by the "Villaggio Fontana" which is a holiday resort situated in Veduggio for employees and their families, not to mention the many solidarity projects carried out both in Brianza and in many areas of the world where the Fontana Gruppo has its plants and branches.

At this point, one question needs to be asked: "What is the future of the Fontana Gruppo?"

And the answer is that the future of the company certainly involves a consolidation in markets where it is already present, while taking advantage of growth opportunities in strategic and expanding markets, especially those with strong potential to work in synergy with customers.

Today, the multinational company is led by Giuseppe Fontana as CEO, assisted in his role by his brothers, Enio and Luigi, while the Business Development and Operations are managed by the third generation, in the person of Fabrizio and Alberto Fontana. The Group has launched many consolidation programmes, particularly in the Americas. In 2014, it acquired Acument Global Technologies with plants, research centres and logistics offices in all three American markets, while the following year it became part of the BG Fastening Group, a company with offices and plants in India. In March 2018, work began on the construction of a new plant in Santa Caterina, Mexico.

Thus, the history of the "Fontana Gruppo" continues with certainty and determination; an initiative conceived, launched and implemented by the brothers Walter and Loris Fontana. ■



Office building and plant in Veduggio

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