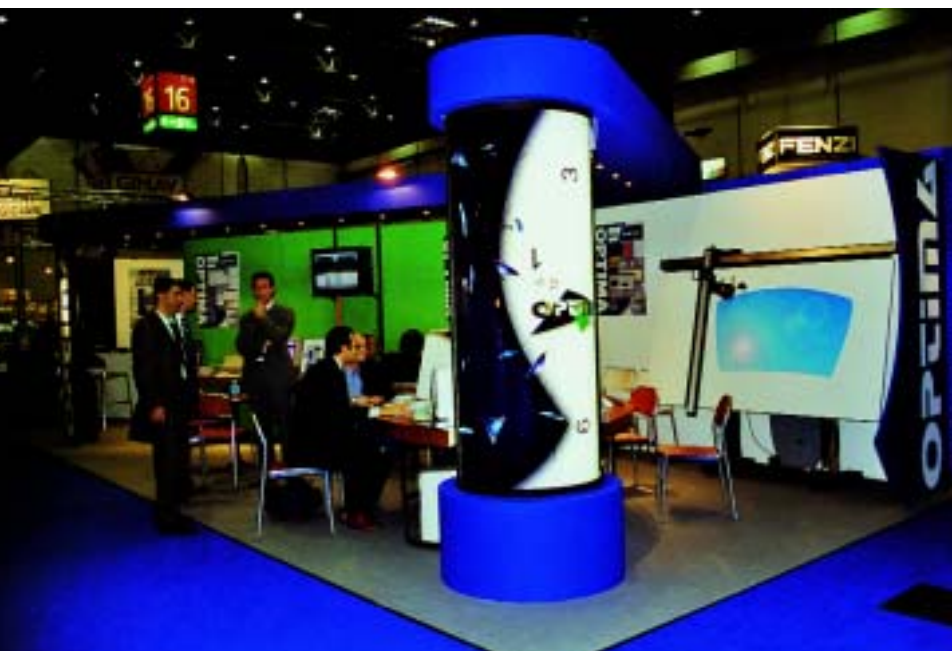




Software

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Interfacing with the future



In just seven years Optima has become a byword in integrated software for glass cutting machinery and all aspects of production and product management in its sector. The

company has evolved uniform systems that can interface with a wide range of machines and this has allowed it to win top-level customers worldwide. In this article Optima managers reveal the secret of the company's sensitivity to this sector and outline its strategy for consolidating its position in the global market.



Dermot Heaney

Optima Srl is the fruit of extensive inside knowledge of the glass cutting sector and its particular needs and specific problems. Set up by experts from within the sector, the company produces integrated software systems for running all aspects of the glass cutting sector, from templates, cutting, and reducing offcuts, to handling, storage and delivery.

In its short, seven-year history, the company has made great strides forward, and now boasts leading glass converters among its customers and partners in the search for further technological excellence. *Glass-Technology International* discussed the recipe for the company's success with its management team.

COMPANY HISTORY

Glass-Technology International asked Foreign Sales Manager Cristian Zanca for a brief outline of the company history of Optima.

The company was set up in 1994 by a group of people with direct experience of the glass-converting sector. This experience was gained in one of Italy's leading glass-handling and cutting-machine manufacturers. Each member of the group possessed extensive knowledge of the sector and years of experience of this market. This meant they were fully aware of the problems involved in the cutting and handling of glass. Moreover, each of them had held

Optima's Opty-Way® fully integrated management program

key posts in management software, process automation research and development, and technical and post-sales assistance.

THE COMPANY TODAY

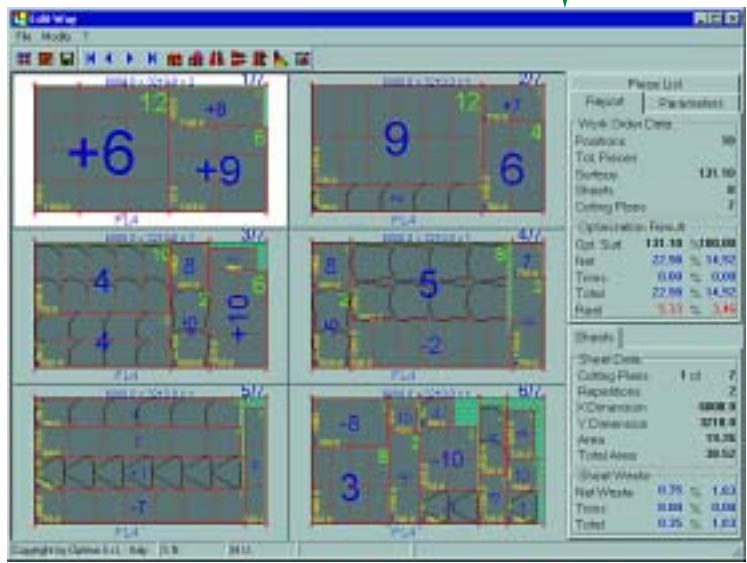
With over 1,500 installed cutting optimization programs worldwide, today Optima is a hi-tech entity. Pursuing development and providing assistance, the company is composed of a mixed team of employees and external partners, all of whom are widely experienced and highly qualified, with university degrees in technical disciplines, IT and CAD/CAM. Mr. Zanca claims that the size and quality of the company guarantee continuous software development and assistance to customers with Optima systems installed, and especially to machine constructors, which Optima supplies with software.

SALES NETWORK

On the sales side, Optima possesses its own sales network, which covers most of the world market. The company's French branch was set up three years ago. This has since been followed by the recent opening of a North American branch, *Optima of America*, based in Montreal, Canada, to better meet post sales needs and customer service requirements on the North American market. Naturally, this is part of an overall strategy of commercial growth for the company, which will need to decentralize its operations on the most important foreign markets. Since the beginning of its operations, the company has also developed an extensive network of partnerships with the leading companies in this market. The most important of these is undoubtedly the French company *Cilpak*, for the distribution of turnkey systems to glassworks. In addition, Optima has been called on to work jointly with other Italian and foreign companies on special technological developments.

OPTIMA PRODUCTS AND TECHNOLOGY

Optima's Microsoft, Windows-based software, developed, produced and sold by the company, provides the end-user with guarantees of reliability, combined with assurances of flexibility, when it comes to upgrading the



product. The company boasts a very wide range of solutions, which can cover the needs of medium-to-high level customers:

- *Opty-Way*, is a fully integrated management program for flat-glass cutting tools in regular shapes. It features a high-yield off-cut optimizer. Another feature is a direct link-up to automated cutting systems, with orders, warehouse, offcut and production trestle management.
- *Opty-Way Enterprise* is a Windows-based client/server system for fully integrated management of all glassworks operations. Featuring a DBMS Microsoft database and direct link-up, it provides optimization of cutting operations on automatic tables. Other features are CAD-assisted design with a bookshop of pre-set parametric templates, control and piloting of NC workstations, management and control of production feed readings of external data on terminals and bar codes.
- *Optistrato* is an interactive management program for optimizing shearing on flat surfaces. It also features cutting sequence layout and customized cutting on automatic tables.

These core products are flanked by a wide selection of additional modules, which integrate the range:

- *TV-Way* is a system that visualizes the cutting or shearing surfaces on the cutting table or the shearing machine. It features cutting sequences, beam, image zoom, level indications, finishes, and trestle codes.
- *Rack-Way* is a module for managing the outflow sequence or the flow of materials being processed. It is an integrated system with an optimizing algorithm for calculating the production flow and cutting offcuts.
- *CAD-Way* is a two-dimensional CAD for creating parametric and free templates. The graphic design system

Optima's Rack-Way outflow sequence management module



features all primitive graphics and import/export of widely available and sector graphics. It also boasts image acquisition and treatment via scanner.

- *Opty-Way SK* is an assisted planning program for the creation of parametric templates. This system means that users can create customized parametric templates on the basis of their own specific needs.

NEW PRODUCTS

Software Development Manager Marco Menzolini listed the following products, which are the latest additions to the company range:

- *Opistrato 2.5*, which is the first and only software system available on the market for the interactive management of plants for cutting and working laminated glass. The latest version of this series also makes it possible to manage grinding cycles for laminated low-E glass.
- *Opty-Way SK* is a CAD system for two-dimensional parametric design. The company claims this is a hi-tech solution, despite the 'intuitive approach', and this makes it highly appropriate to the glassworks market.
- *Opty-Way G/P* is a dedicated software system for glass converters or glaziers. It is conceived for the production of the geometrical shapes typical of glass doors or windows. This system can produce cutting or working profiles for NC machines on the sole basis

of parametric figures taken from a special 'bookshop' of holes or marks supplied in window producer catalogues.

TARGET CLIENTELE

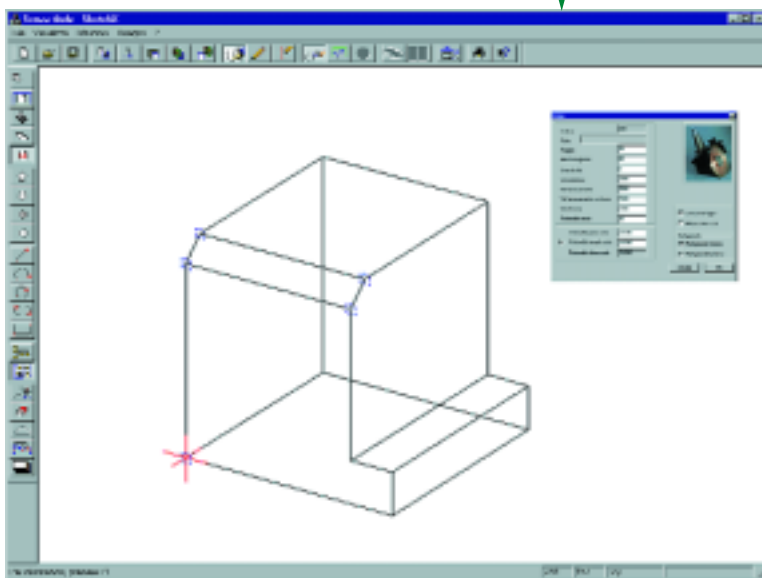
Optima's Italian Sales Manager Rossano Bozzoli explained that, as far as the company's target clientele was concerned, from the very first, Optima has constantly sought to place a medium-to-high range series of products on the market. However, he also added

that the company does not intend to neglect the world of smaller glass converters. It can be said that Optima is a presence in many top-level companies, both in Italy and abroad. These include VAM, one of the ten leading private companies in Italy; *CristalGlass*, Spain, the top-ranked company in that country; *G. James*, Australia's top-ranking private group; and *Macocco*, one of the main non-Saint Gobain French groups. Besides these impressive references, the company is also present in installations that are part of the Saint Gobain group itself.

FROM EXPERIENCE TO SUPPLY

When asked what Optima could offer constructors of technology for the working of flat glass, Mr. Bozzoli stated that, on the strength of the company's own experience in the glass cutting sector, Optima had become a supplier of the most important glass converters. He claims that the company is in a position to supply each of these companies with an

Optima's Sketcher program



integrated range of its own products, plus technological updates, and assistance hotlines to the end user. Last but not least, Optima also has the ability to act as a partner in the development of technology for new products from producers.

TOTAL SUPPLY

Optima claims it can supply glassworks with turnkey software systems, as it can draw on a range of products that cover the whole organizational structure of a medium-level glassworks, from sales orders to the driver's delivery list. Another plus is that cutting machines and automatic spacer bending machines can be directly computer linked or have the potential for interfacing with numerous NC glass working machines now available on the market. The company also states that such is the uniformity of its integrated systems that it guarantees maximum satisfaction of customer needs, which fully justifies the investment required.

OPTIMA AND GLOBAL COMPETITION

When asked about Optima's role as a software producer and automation processes in the global market, Mr. Bozzoli stressed that, no matter what sector a company operated in nowadays, competition had reached an unprecedented experimental level. He explained that the mere survival of any business venture today involved maintaining the kind of efficiency levels that until some years ago only the Japanese or large companies were believed capable of. Reaching projected market share and operating profit also depends on a prompt response to demand from the market. Arriving on the market with a head start of a few weeks on competitors can make the difference between the success and failure of a business venture. This, says Mr. Bozzoli, is equally true for suppliers of products and services. He sums up by stating that increased productivity, continuous technological innovation and the search to tune in to the direct experience of end-users form the basis of Optima operations. ■