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Luxury car icon Rolls Royce “doubles” orders with Fontana Group

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A maxi-order from Rolls Royce is on its way for the Fontana group in Calolziocorte, outside Milan. Walter Fontana frowns a bit as he talks about it.

“An additional one million hours of work, perhaps two, thousands of additional car bodies per year: our problem now is growth,” he said.

In truth, most people would be happy to have this sort of “problem.”

For the group, which has reached a new historic record of over €100 million in revenues, the rush of orders hasn't stopped. The company has added 101 new employees during 2015 and plans a new round of investments to bring together the five Italian manufacturing plants, spread out over a few kilometers on the outskirts of Lecco.

Founded in 1956 as an auto-repair shop, then supplier of engineering services and manufacturer of molds for the car body, over the years the company has succeeded in changing direction, managing to apply the strategies “preached” at conferences and round tables, which sound simple but are never easy to translate in the factory.

Abroad, make the “commodities,” while here in Italy, produce the high added-value.

“With the arrival of globalization,” explains the entrepreneur, President and CEO, “we understood that mechanical production in Italy was no longer defensible. So we changed strategy.”

The start of two plants abroad for molds, in Turkey in 2003, six years later in Romania, has not reduced the Italian scope of the group, which domestically focuses on the direct production of car bodies, using in part the same molds produced abroad.

“No huge volumes,” explains Fontana, “we have concentrated on aluminum and on the niche of the luxury segment with high added value, where we have approximately 30% of the market.”

First Ferrari, then Rover, then Jaguar, Rolls Royce and others, have entrusted the direct manufacturing of the components of the bodies to the Lecco-based group, increasing the business, even expanding to some components created for Audi, BMW and other big names in the auto industry.

“Fifteen years ago, we had 200 employees, today in Italy we are double that, and we have as many

between Turkey and Romania, with a turnover that has quadrupled and interesting development prospects,” said Fontana. “Seven new models will be produced shortly, and we have a target of €140 million of revenues for 2019: we are planning to hire over 100 employees, families that will have a more peaceful Christmas next year.”

The orders are received thanks to technology with robotic systems that work in three shifts and a virtual engineering and modeling department. With the existing orders, the company has over four years of guaranteed production, with the short-term objective of increasing the output by 50%, exceeding 14,000 car bodies per year.

“We could grow exponentially,” explains Fontana, “but new capital would be necessary. I would rule out the presence of funds because a medium-long term industrial and social vision is needed that gives value to intangible assets and to the social responsibility of the company. We fully intend on maintaining control. A listing, instead, is an idea ever present in our thoughts, could be one solution.”

P.I.