



Sandwich 4.0

2003-2023: during its 20 years of activity, Palomar has transformed itself into a modern RV company while remaining faithful to its core business - sandwich panels for the fabrication of living pods

Words Andrea Cattaneo, photo Enrico Bona

Palomar is celebrating its 20th anniversary, a major milestone for the Italian manufacturer of motorhome panels. The company has integrated the rich experience of Mabel, Mobilvetta and Sima, whose merger led to the foundation of Palomar. They started out making wooden frames for sandwich panels, but now make the entire body from A to Z - i.e. the wall, roof and floor panels for motorhomes. The company's factory is in Certaldo, Tuscany, the region in which the vast majority of Italian RV manufacturers are located. The company is ISO 9001 certified, and has applied for ISO 14000 certification. We met Roberto Bagni and Anita Nencioni, the joint owners of Palomar, to take a look back over

their history and their plans for the future: Bagni handles marketing and Italy sales, while Nencioni works not only in marketing but also in foreign sales.

Aboutcamp BtoB: How was Palomar established, and what were its first steps in the RV market?

Roberto Bagni: Palomar was set up following the merger of 3 companies: Mobilvetta, owned by the Giotti family, Mabel, owned by the Nencioni family, and Sima, which was owned by the Bagni family.

Anita Nencioni: At the beginning we were a sort of separate division of Mabel, making wooden frames for sandwich panels. The 2008 recession hit us hard, but we managed to get

back on our feet and started investing in our future. And our determination to succeed has born fruit.

Aboutcamp BtoB: How did the company change over the years?

Roberto Bagni: Palomar was set up in late 2003, but it really got up to speed in 2005. We started out in a 1,000 sq.m. workshop making semi-finished parts for panels, initially only the frames, not the panels themselves. We were lucky enough to find nearby buildings to expand into every time we needed to grow our production facilities. Every time our work grew, we were able to rent or acquire more production area. We started out with 1,000 sq.m. and now we have 11,000 sq.m. in five loca-



tions. Last year our workforce grew to 110 employees - the most we've ever had.

Anita Nencioni: Once the recession passed in 2012, our work really took off and we had to grow to satisfy the demand not only for our products but also for new services. So we decided to become a fully fledged industrial concern - we started out as a carpentry workshop, but now we're a proper manufacturer.

Aboutcamp BtoB: And how have you structured your production?

Roberto Bagni: We currently have ten pantographs, ten CNC machines and six gluing lines. We have made considerable investments in the Industry 4.0 model, digitalising the company and networking the offices and production equipment to optimise our efficiency.

Aboutcamp BtoB: What types of fabrication do you do? What is your core business?

Roberto Bagni: We make both finished products, like completed body panels, and semi-finished parts. The motorhome industry accounts for the majority of our turnover, but we're looking to expand into new areas. For instance, the mobile home sector is very important for us. We also have contacts in the marine sector, and we participated at the Hannover fair last year with products and services for the goods vehicle industry. We started exporting in 2019, first to Germany, then Spain, and last year South Korea. This year we'll be selling to Australia. Thanks to the growth our business has experienced, we were able to exhibit at the Düsseldorf Caravan Salon for the first time in 2019.

Aboutcamp BtoB: What will you be showing at the Düsseldorf Caravan Salon this year?

Roberto Bagni: We'll be taking a representative sample of our products: standard sandwich panels as well as more advanced products, including our heated floor, which we presented as a prototype in 2021 and is now in full production.

Aboutcamp BtoB: Why should a motorhome manufacturer come to Palomar instead of making their own body panels?

Anita Nencioni: First of all because we make a fully customised product, we are contractors and all our products are made to satisfy our clients' requirements. A client can ask us to make any kind of panel. Our machines can handle panels up to 3 x 13 m, this is a major selling point. What's more, if you take into account the experience which led to the foundation of Palomar, we've really been working in the industry since the Eighties. A new manufacturer taking their first steps in the motorhome market can rely on our enormous experience rather than setting up their own panel production line. We have extensive expertise in the materials themselves, and we also know the suppliers very well. We have a well-established value chain that enables us to give a quick response to anyone looking to commission a product from us.

Aboutcamp BtoB: How are you organised in terms of design?

Roberto Bagni: Palomar has its own technical department which designs both standard and special products. In recent years we have been contacted by a number of companies



who make special motorhomes, tailor made for their customers, like 4WD motorhomes for use in the desert: in such cases we develop the entire product, the client does not specify the design. It's clear that we have to follow developments and fashions in the market: back in the day we made panels with wooden frames and external aluminium panelling plus plywood for the cockpit, nowadays the frame is almost always made of a water-repellent plastic, and the panels are made of fibreglass. We make the panels to our clients' specifications, but we also consult with them on the best materials for their project.

Aboutcamp BtoB: What have you done in recent years in terms of environmental sustainability?

Roberto Bagni: We have installed photovoltaic panels on all our factory roofs. And we also try to recover as much of our processing waste as possible. All the wood is recovered, and we also recover and recycle our polystyrene waste.



Roberto Bagni



Anita Nencioni

