The value behind the graphics

At Caravan Salon Düsseldorf, the Italian company will present a striking new stand and its successful organisational model, which enables motorhome and caravan manufacturers to reduce costs, lead times and complexity

Words Editorial Staff

When looking at a modern motorhome parked outside a dealership, attention is inevitably drawn to the vehicle's lines, colours and graphics, which define its personality. Behind that visual identity, however, lies a process far more complex than one might imagine. It is not simply a matter of printing decals, but of designing technical solutions that must integrate perfectly with industrial production, meet millimetre-level tolerances, ensure long-term durability and arrive on the assembly line exactly when needed.

This is precisely the philosophy that has guided MB Trading for almost thirty years. Founded in 1997 by Giampaolo Maffei and Walter Bracci, the company has grown steadily to become Europe's leading specialist in the design and production of graphics for the recreational vehicle sector. Today, the company has around 66 employees, produces more than 50,000 graphics kits a year and is completing a further expansion of its production facilities, which will increase its total surface area from approximately 3,500 to over 5,500 square metres.

"Growth has never been an end in itself," says Walter Bracci, CEO of MB Trading. *"It is simply the result of the investments we continue to make every year in people, technology and organisation."*

A company built around the recreational vehicle sector

One of the factors that most clearly sets MB Trading apart is its high level of specialisation. Today, almost 90% of the company's turnover comes from the caravan and motorhome sector, a strategic choice that has enabled it to develop expertise that is very difficult to find in more generalist companies.

"For more than fifteen years, we have worked almost exclusively for this sector," Bracci explains. *"This means we are fully familiar with the production challenges faced by manufacturers. We know exactly where each graphic will be applied, which materials to use, what precautions to take near windows, curves or the most critical areas of the bodywork. The experience gained from producing more than 50,000 kits every year allows us to anticipate many issues before they even arise."*

It is precisely this experience that turns MB Trading from a simple supplier into a technical partner. The company works alongside manufacturers' technical departments and designers from the earliest stages of development, contributing not only to the aesthetic appearance of

Walter Bracci

the graphics but also to the industrial feasibility of the proposed solutions.

Much more than graphics

For Walter Bracci, the real added value lies not in printing itself, but in the range of services that accompany every project.

"Many people think our work consists of producing decals. In reality, printing is only the final stage of a much more structured process. Before that come design, material analysis, technical consultancy, application testing on production lines and all the logistical organisation that enables our customers to work more efficiently."

Over the years, MB Trading has developed an organisational model strongly focused on manufacturers' needs, with extremely fast response times even for the most complex projects.

"In our sector, everything changes very quickly," Bracci continues. *"A manufacturer may need to modify a graphic at the last minute or introduce a new model within a very tight timeframe. Thanks to the experience we have gained and to our internal organisation, we are able to develop new solutions in just a few days."*

Flexible production and batch size one

One of the most innovative aspects of the MB Trading model concerns production management. While many suppliers still work with high minimum order quantities, the Tuscan company is organised to produce exactly the quantity required by the customer, even down to what is known as "batch size one".

"If the manufacturer needs one kit, we produce one kit. If they need seventeen, we produce seventeen. If the graphic has to be changed the following day, there are not hundreds of already printed pieces to throw away."

This approach enables manufacturers to drastically reduce warehouse stock, limit waste and introduce model changes virtually in real time.

"For us, this has become standard practice. We prefer to produce exactly what is needed rather than force the customer to tie up capital in stock."

Logistics designed for the assembly line

MB Trading's specialisation is also evident in its logistics. Each kit is packaged according to the assembly procedures of the individual manufacturer. The various parts of the graphic can be divided into different packs, dedicated to the different stations along the production line.

"In many factories, we have seen operators manually preparing the kits for the assembly line every morning. We offer a different approach: we prepare each pack directly according to the customer's requirements. The operator receives exactly the material they need at the right station, with no further handling required."

This organisation reduces internal processing times, eliminates many picking operations and lowers the risk of errors during assembly.

"It is a service that requires a great deal of organisation on our part, but it creates significant added value for the manufacturer."

Direct relationships with leading material producers

Another distinctive element is supply chain management. MB Trading purchases directly from the main international producers of films and adhesive materials, without going through distributors.

"We work directly with leading companies in the sector. This allows us to ensure immediate availability of materials, greater flexibility and highly competitive commercial conditions. It means we can respond very quickly even to urgent requests and guarantee continuity of supply."

Transparency and long-term partnerships

Walter Bracci emphasises a principle that has always characterised MB Trading's way of working.

"The projects belong to the customer. We develop, optimise and produce the graphics, but we believe the manufacturer must always retain full control of its design assets. It is a relationship based on trust and transparency."

This philosophy has enabled the company to build long-standing partnerships with numerous European manufacturers. The next step will be to further strengthen its international presence, starting with the German market, which is now one of the company's key strategic objectives. This direction will also be clearly represented at the next Caravan Salon, where MB Trading will appear for the first time with a strongly brand-focused stand, shared with its commercial partner H. D. Knorz Vertriebs-GmbH, the company that has been supporting MB Trading's development in the German market for the past three years.