

-- Speaker 0 00:00:04 Make It Right. The manufacturing podcast.

Speaker 1 00:00:10 What does world-class mean for your business back in July, 2019? On episode 60, I had the pleasure of speaking with Vladimir Floreseca, the plant manager at AP and G, which is a leading manufacturer of high quality monitors and traps for rodent flying insect management. Now, at the time he'd been in that role for about 18 months and had set a path to take the plant to world-class I'm Janet Eastman and on make it right. The manufacturing podcast. I am pleased to have LVladimir back on the show because right now I think me or you have now been with AP and G for three years, is that correct? Good to see you

Speaker 2 00:00:50 Close to two years. Thank you very much for having me in Janet up in new year and, uh, all my best wishes.

Speaker 1 00:00:58 Yeah. So I think that a 2021 is going to be a much better year, right?

Speaker 2 00:01:03 Definitely. Definitely. It's still looking very challenging, but you know what? We've learned a lot from 2020 and we already,

Speaker 1 00:01:13 We are ready. So I have really, the last time we spoke, you told me so many interesting things about AP and G and about how you were planning to grow the company. So let's just get a visual from 18 months ago to where we are now at the time we spoke, I think you had 17 lines, um, that you were, you were operating. What kind of components are you making? Just give people an idea about AP and G. So they understand that the setup where you're working.

Speaker 2 00:01:43 Okay, excellent. So AP and G we are leading manufacturing in, in the best industry. So when you look at rodent, you look at blue boards and do trace. So most of them, even if they are different name, they are, don't be carried the brand. Catchmaster, eh, we definitely have a hand on it. So we do a lot of private label for some famous brand. And so we do, eh, basically the plastic forming inside. So we, we have some portfolio consumables, so, eh, consumables, they are the plastic forming and also the boards, the boards, we have three big printers where we can and get different walls of paper, different size to make different kinds of boards, boards that can cut big ordinance and both got, that are very small for the mosquitoes, mice and different kinds of eh, creatures. Um, so after the consumable part, you have the glue application lines and the packaging.

Speaker 2 00:03:13 So there's different. Um, and do application lines, uh, those all from line one to seven and eh, because there is kind of very diverse and packaging and demand from the retailer and from professional, we have also different lines to, to, to package and those, those products, and there are, we call them all T pack, uh, spider line. Those if internally, you're not on the manufacturing floor, you're not gonna understand, um, what it is, but it's just, uh, basically we, we have a five lines that handles the consumables. We're going to go into the glue application line and then we have lines to go and really apply the glue on different form, different thickness and different rate. And we have different packaging lines or platform that you have, uh, a glue lab it's practically a mixing plant, or we have different, big things for mixing. We have three lines that mixes different kinds of glue.

Speaker 2 00:04:37 And, uh, we have, um, about four to five Olding tanks and we distribute them, um, on those lines. And, uh, you know, it's looking pretty, pretty simple, but there is a lot of, um, and criteria involved in it. Uh, uh, temperature needs to be at a specific temperature to transfer, to mix. It needs to be other temperature to transfer the glue to all the glue. Uh, you know, we are practically we're not running 24 hour, but at any time the plant never shut downs because you all always all the glue even doing the weekend, the glue stays in and, and after, um, Sunday night and Monday morning, it starts eating up again and automatically. And so that we can fulfill orders.

Speaker 1 00:05:40 So you say, it sounds pretty simple bladder, your brother doesn't sound simple to me, my friend. Okay. So, um, you say that you've got all these lines, you're doing private label stuff, you're doing your own product. And then I guess you recently took another company or acquired another company. So how does that fit into what you're doing now?

Speaker 2 00:06:05 Okay. --

-- Actually I think it's a, um, matchup, I would say made in, in Evan, really the vector brand and, uh, and the Catchmaster brand that bought in part of the P and G family right now, uh, vector brand. It's, it's a brand that's very recognizing the ILT, eh, and, uh, business. Uh, so we acquired this brand because we have always manufactured blue boards for this kind of lips. So it definitely is something that works to get a, we w as our finished goods or consumables for the lamps. So it really, it matched together. Now, the Catchmaster ban is around 70 to 80 countries around the world. Victor may be more. Okay. And so definitely there was a very good challenge to acquire this brand because you need to consolidate things.

Speaker 1 00:07:12 So you don't have to bring those into your plant, that you're where you manufacture now, they had their own plants. So, so does your, your factory stay the same

Speaker 2 00:07:23 Factory is say the same in the sense not, we're not going to go and start producing the lamp right now. However, we need to adapt and get more, um, line of products to fulfill all those and lamps that they were doing. So we are maybe focusing on one or two, uh, Victor classic and things like that. But now that we acquired the interment, we are looking to develop a much more of those do boards to facilitate that. However, there is also because, you know, when you're directing your operation, you need to take care of the entire supply chain.

Now we are getting this brand of business. You need to understand, and all the quality requirements that they have, you need to be able to keep on bringing this and maybe bring it to a better level and also understand how you can start reducing costs and improving the service and that they have, because it's all about, eh, servicing your costumer in a, in a best way.

Speaker 1 00:08:41 Okay. So, wow. You've got a busy year ahead because we've just gone through the COVID 19 process or pandemic rather, and it's still underway. You've got a new brand you've acquired, you've been pushing for world-class. So let's just talk a little bit about the challenges that you faced through 2020 when COVID hit and how you manage through that. And where did that, the challenges of that pandemic actually bring you to, like, what did you learn from that whole process?

Speaker 2 00:09:17 Um, then try to, I'm gonna answer you, uh, most extent, uh, try to be very short and concise, but I think we would have been able to have an entire conversation on this one. Subject 2020 has been a, a year of a lot of opportunities, a lot of challenges, a lot of learnings. And I would say more, much more blessing than most of those things. First of all, we have to take and, you know, be thankful because both of us, we are here in 2021 are being on conversation and doing this and many, you know, of, of lost, loved ones and, and, and many have lost their lives, like all around the world. Now this, and then they meet came in, uh, for, so that's been, you know, we were projecting 20% goat when the pandemic hit. I don't know what I've been. It's really nice business, a Bulletproof business, I would say, because we end up with a 30% goal.

Speaker 2 00:10:40 And now I have to tell you, if you don't go, you die. So this is the kind of moment when you need to see how you build, when you need to understand what are really the core values of the company. You know, we, we do say we have a core value. It's Google go beyond expectation, laugh, unstoppable, um, energized and teamwork and ownership mind. Now we saw that we saw the engagement with our people, and I also understood with what company I was working with, the owner, the leadership, the CEO is, would be, I'm not gonna tell his age, but if you would show up every day on the floor, like I, like I did also, because my question was at this moment, depending on make, I would say, okay. And I had only one question to ask myself, is my life worth more than my employees?

Speaker 2 00:11:54 And it was a simple answer. No. So if you asking somebody to come in and to help you do something, you bring value first, you step up and try to do something like, again, some of them are being affected by it and, you know, everybody I've been affected by it, if you understand. And, and we had people along the way that I've been consulting with us, we have two people and, and, and part of the family, the P and G family that we've lost duri --

-- ng the pandemic. And we, we have many employees that lost loved ones. So you need to be really in, have a lot of compassion. And while you're running the business and very focused on, on good and fulfilling the costumers, but also the first customers, when you take care of them, they will take care of the external customers. So, um, we really implemented all the guidelines that were proposed by a, the regularly Therese of New Jersey.

Speaker 2 00:13:02 And, um, we try to, without being very empowered and a lot of empathy with our people, and, you know, at this moment it was 30%, um, of the labor showing up while you have 20% good. So it's, it's um, if you want me to point exactly what was done, I, I cannot do it. What I can tell you is we are to be very focused. We are to keep on laughing if when we were also suffering and, uh, eh, all those tools that we add applied 18 months ago, started the journey into the 5s. And the link tools all really came and very fruitful for us at this moment because people were still engaged. They knew where everything were and the new employees that were coming in because we had, while we were having people living and staying at home and taking leaves, we are to incorporate new employees in.

Speaker 2 00:14:28 We are to a consolidate a night shift that normally would be a skeleton crew of two lines. We had to extend it to six lines because increased capacity, you, you plan for 20%, you get 30, you, you need to manage. So it, I think it, uh, it was, um, uh, very insightful. We learn a lot of things. We learned that we need to do more cross-training it was not the second, the two level of training that we have not necessary. It's not enough. We need to go third string and I've three backup instead of one or two, you know? So, eh, there was a lot of, eh, learning, learning in that. Definitely.

Speaker 1 00:15:19 I know that, um, when we had spoken 18 months ago, one of the things that you were really working on was that training and getting, you know, your first layer of team up to speed so that they could train the next layer. If you hadn't done that LATAM year, you would have been in a real mess in 2020.

Speaker 2 00:15:41 Definitely. Definitely. And, and look, there were some very difficult situation. I'm not going to say it was all clean and organized at all time. No. And when those situations happen, you need to pivot. And, and I'm not saying that we are, um, we are perfect. So we did not remain like perfect and totally align. No. And at some point we are two people didn't understand where we need to put the energy. When you're running at 50%, you may need to say, okay, don't do this right now. Let's just focus on this and align, but we understand, and the culture that we need to go back to those things when, and they were coming and we went, we went back to them, you know, eh, but it also shows you that whenever you add something, because you were organized because everything was aligned and, and, and well plan when something was going wrong, it was visually obvious that this was out of place and you knew what to do. Um, so,

Speaker 1 00:17:03 So, yeah. Are you back at full capacity for your staff on the, on the floor now or no?

Speaker 2 00:17:09 Uh, no. I'm not back at full capacity. We, we went back at full capacity, I think at the beginning of December, but right now, beginning of January, and again, we are having, uh, the situation with, uh, with COVID, it's not, um, uh, 10% or 20% of people out. No, but you have your two, three associates going out on a, on a weekly basis because they have been exposed because they are positive or, you know, because they have some, and they have a cough or whatever allergies they have, and you don't want to take the risk. And, uh, uh, they have some temperature things, you know, so we just trying to, um, maintain, um, you know, protect, uh, your other associates and just maintain it really safe. Right.

Speaker 1 00:18:12 So what other innovative approaches, um, do you have planned, or have you implemented, um, to keep you moving forward towards world-class because, you know, the plan that you had originally had did not include a pandemic. So what innovative approaches have you decided to take or considering, or have taken to, to move?

Speaker 2 00:18:36 Okay, so good like that. I miss to tell you something also. So adding to those lines that we, we, we, we add, we also are now impl --

-- ementing a new line of a product. I cannot, eh, devolve the name of it right now, because it's still registering, but it has to do with the, um, with, uh, a bait. So we are now installing align to get into this part of the business. And I think, um, we did, uh, our, our, our, uh, maintenance department and lead it by Tom has definitely done a very good job, bringing this machine in and installing. And, uh, and, uh, we all bought to get ready to go and imagine it has been, uh, it's like two acquisitions, vector and, uh, and, and bait line. So it, it definitely, I can tell you, it's, it's, it's a blessing now. And, and when I take a couple of the, uh, out and I'm looking at 10,000 feet at night and definitely understood that we need to focus on, uh, and the cost spot and profit profitability of things and right now.

Speaker 2 00:19:59 And so, um, that's our focus right now. We do have like a, to focus this one in our distribution, and we've seen that we w we were faced with a lot of challenges on, on part of a distribution and inventory. We actually acquire a new a warehouse, uh, because things were getting very, very active. And, uh, you know, because of the pandemic now, eh, you are trying to run things very llene uh, understanding of, uh, people fulfilling orders and receiving things may, uh, two to three weeks and a lot of rotation, however, right now, because there's a huge risk that you can get out of stock of warm material. I think it's, it's maybe a safer bet to maybe increase your inventory a little bit more because you never know what's going to happen with this pandemic again, it's not over. So we have to be mindful of those kinds of things.

Speaker 2 00:21:15 And what does that mean? That means, again, it's, it's, it's increasing your costs. You, you, you getting another warehouse, it's, you know, more costs and things. So you definitely need to take this and understand where you're going to caught something else, you know, where are you going to be more profitable? So we, we definitely engage in not more of automation talk, however, again, with dependent MC supplier cannot come here, engineers cannot come here to analyze what they need to analyze on the floor and make things up. And, but again, we, we, we add people in and I'm going to tell you, I'm very proud of, of, of my team in a sense that we are the mechanism that, uh, you know, we, we saw them really good doing this this time. You know, every time there's a challenge, there's an opportunity for somebody to rise up.

Speaker 2 00:22:18 So, eh, our maintenance school really learn things and, and they would go to YouTube and, and, and the machinists, we add the contractor that used to serve your source. It was actually located in the company. And, um, since February did not step into the company for four or five months, you know, and we had another machine that was driving a learning, he had experience in things, but he learned to do all the spots while we had machine down in one, in 24 hours, because we had to run and run and run and run, and he was able to, to, to pick up those things, go to YouTube, learn how to run this machine and make things up. And so, again, challenges, opportunities we learned about, we learned that we have a lot of valued associates, that they have a lot of potential that when you show us them, they're gonna make the right step. Um, and you know, so we, we definitely learn a lot of things and, and, uh, we are taking action on, on, uh, on those learnings right now.

Speaker 1 00:23:37 I think it's, it's really interesting. I mean, we have a pandemic. I want to ask you for a success story, and that's where I'm taking you now, Vladimir. But I mean, you think about it, there's a pandemic, you post 30% growth in the year. You acquire a company you're getting ready to fire up a new line to make something brand new. I mean, you've had a successful year in a really, really challenging year. So now I'm going to give you the opportunity beyond those things, to share a success story that you can think of over the last, even, even if it's not true. COVID, um, over the last 18 months, since we last spoke,

Speaker 2 00:24:16 Ah, got it a lot. Um, um, but to, to, to I'm getting even TBI is because there's so many, I think I don't, I'm out, I'm out of words, really, to, to express one. And however, I think everything has to do with the group of people and you, you, you work with, you know, you, you give --

-- them trust, um, and you kind of activate the, their potential. You know, you, you need to remain very humble and confident. Um, it's about uni really help them first try to bring some value, um, to them. Now I've won one, doing this with them about four months ago while we have many trucks coming in and out. And, um, I'm pulling up into the parking and, uh, somebody knock, you know, everybody with mosque and things. So I don't know where it is. I understand he's a truck driver and I go down and it, and the person starts speaking to me in Spanish and said, Oh, and, and call me by my middle name, not middle name.

Speaker 2 00:25:53 I don't have a middle name by my first name. And it said, <inaudible>, you don't, you don't remember me, you know, but I don't see, I don't, I don't know it is. So it tells me his name and it was one of my aunt used to work for me in Dominican Republic. No, as a forklift driver. And I remember I was a supervisor at this time and I called him. He was very disciplined guy. And I put him in a training for us as a driver. I'm a truck driver assistant. And he went from there and he learned how to drive a truck. And now is in 20 years later is in the States driving trucks and, and, and, you know, eh, making some good money on trucks and doing things like that. And he was telling me, it's practically the same age as I am, maybe a little bit older.

Speaker 2 00:27:00 And he was calling me like Papa like that. You like my dad, you know? And I said, look, I didn't do anything. You had all this potential and you make the right thing. You know, and people, there are so many people around you and in all and plants, they are maybe not the loud person that talk a lot and, and very enthusiastic, but they have tremendous potential. So they may be, you see them over a year, but they can do this. So it's about showing people that they can always do a more. Um, so, eh, this was one, one of the story, but at my plant at T P and G we, every day, we have a success stories. Uh, we have people that have been working for 26 years and they have been teaching orders and, and things they have, they are very engaged with the company, the same way, the leadership team and the owners, or engage with them, you know?

Speaker 2 00:28:17 So again, understand that, um, uh, for me, um, um, I'm very blessed to be in, in, in the position I am to have a team and like that. And, and I'm looking forward to just keep on learning, keep on learning from them and learning, eh, from people like you. And <inaudible> that I meet, you know, it's, uh, I think the challenges are just studying and, uh, as challenging or studying the learnings also coming our way, even faster, we cannot, um, be afraid to, to fail. You know, it's just part of the process. You know, we have, we have failed in many processes in our, in, in, in our company. I can tell you that. And, and what we do, we take a step back and we just thought, <inaudible> look at it and try to improve every day, approve a little bit more, uh, document what you improve. And again, if it doesn't work, try continuous improvement and mind frame, you know, and yeah.

Speaker 3 00:29:33 Well, your journey to world-class has been both a professional one with the company, but also a personal one, hasn't it? Yes.

Speaker 2 00:29:42 Um, you know, I'm always looking to learn a little bit more. I think that I had a, when my transition near to the U S allied a little bit of a challenge, I got a lot of weight and, um, you know, it's, it used to live in a tropical country and you come here in the winter, you get some weight and then you never lose it. And things like that. And you get a little bit sluggish, if you don't move it's about energy, you know? And so, and everybody knows me as very, eh, energetic, but I wanted to remain the mind and very tight. So I really engage in, into, uh, I think the past two, three years, uh, understanding my, a buddy controlling my, a way, uh, engage in like intermittent fasting that, uh, and, and all those things are helped me really gain energy of a very Chris' mind and, and understand that you need some time to take a step back.

Speaker 2 00:30:49 You cannot be all the time, eh, uh, focus on work. And, and I look, um, I would not be, uh, you know, I have to think, eh, my wife, uh, that keep up with me with all this energy and our two wonderful girls that I've learned a lot from the three of them doing, doing this pandem --

-- ic. He has been, uh, uh, very challenging. Also, you know, you have the kids learning from home while me, I can definitely cannot stay home. Thank God. Um, and my wife is, uh, able to do it however she's working. And also the kids are learning. So it's, sometime you say, Oh, okay, I have a tough job, but I think they, they do, she had a tougher job than me because I can tell you that I was running to go to work, because it would be very, very tight for me to do anything with those girls and, and keep the rain like that. So could, could those two, those two, my wife, she, she really did a great job on that and keep on doing a good job that she does. And now I also engaged this past year in year and a half in what I would call that I wanted to really learn about, um, you know, financial and dependence. And, and, and I got engaged with a very good group of people, um, very close minded. And so I got my license as a financial planner and some great Michael <inaudible>.

Speaker 2 00:32:42 So I engage with, you know, whoever you, you, you surround yourself with the choose, the five people you surround yourself within, get more in touch with that's how you're going to be in the next five years. So really wanted to understand how would I can plan better, you know, you and not really stay on the rat race, you know, make some proper investment and start learning about things. You know, you know, I think I understand that I can take some very good decision on understanding waste and the manufacturing site and things like that. But personally, I also wanted to, to see what kind of waste did I add in, in my personal life and system and, and spending and things like that. So, uh, it was a very good for me to get engaged in those kinds of people, and they're still mentoring me. And so that's, that's one of the thing. And, you know, I was able to get back to cycling. I got, uh, in 20, 20 and 2000 miles on my bike outside just nice, you know, but, uh, yeah, we're gonna keep on doing that and, and, and, um, you know, trying to help people, um, you know, to inspire people to go,

Speaker 1 00:34:05 Yeah, let Amir, I'm going to ask you one last question. And we'd like to ask all of our guests this one, um, any key takeaways from what you've seen in the last year and where you're planning to go, that you would leave with manufacturing leaders at this point.

Speaker 2 00:34:20 Uh, so whenever my key takeaway is Janet, whenever you, you face with challenges, you need to understand to this, there is a learning, and there is an opportunity to learn something. And that's gonna allow you to raise above this. Now we are splint in managers, quote-on-quote supposed to be leaders, you know, and now we definitely need to be, stay humble, confident. Um, you know, you need to do the right thing, a try to provide value before you receive, eh, anything, you know, and, uh, eh, again, if you don't go, you're dying. If you're not learning something every day, again, you're not going. Um, so, eh, the, uh, body it's, if you can make an improvement of 50 cents every day, that's wonderful. You know, it's gonna keep on going and going and going. Eh, so, eh, this is the frame of mind we need to have as leaders and managers and directors.

Speaker 2 00:35:47 We need to understand that we are dealing with people. So a very, a lot of compassion, and those are, um, I think those times just taught us a really the thing that needs to be valued, you know, teamwork, compassion, empathy, and understand that, uh, with, uh, the same way that you facing the silence. You're not by yourself. You're not by yourself. You have a lot of other, uh, companies going on the same thing, and maybe he should be engaging in and supporting each other, understand there's this competition going in also in, but there can be an unhealthy competition. And, um, yes. So that would be my, my, my advice be, um, barely confident and do the right thing.

Speaker 1 00:36:49 I love it. Bladimir it is always such a pleasure to talk to you. You're quite inspiring. So thank you so much for joining me and good luck with AP and G and all your new products and your new lines. And, uh, we'll be in touch again to have you on the show again.

Speaker 2 00:37:02 Thank you. Thank you very much, Janet. Uh, again, happy new year, stay safe. Okay. Always a pleasure. And, uh, please tell Kevin looking forward

Speaker 1 00:37:14 To meeting him.

Speaker 2 00:37 --

-- :15 Definitely. Okay.

Speaker 1 00:37:18 Thanks Vladimir. Thank you. That is Vladimir Floresca. He has a plant manager at AP and G and he is based in, is it Bayonne, New Jersey? New Jersey, Bayonne New Jersey. So that's our show this week. Thanks so much for listening to make it right. You can check out our Twitter and LinkedIn feeds that are on our podcast page. We're also on iTunes, Google play, Stitcher, Spotify, and YouTube, and keep in mind that make it right as brought to you by Kevin Snook. He's a leadership advisor and author of the bestselling book, Make It Right. Five steps to align your manufacturing business from the front line to the bottom line until next time. I'm Janet Eastman. Thanks for listening to make it right by Vladimir.

--