



**"You live in an extended family, including not only your relatives, but also your employees."**

**Elena Salda,**  
Vice President,  
Group CMS

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## **Elena Salda**

Group CMS

As the Italian economy attempts to recover, Group CMS provides an example of something Italy needs more of – good, solid, mid-sized businesses that are looking to grow outside of Europe, but that have a strong commitment to their local communities. And second-generation family member Elena Salda, with her considerable managerial skills and emphasis on corporate social responsibility, is just the right type of person to lead this family business.

The mechanical engineering company Group CMS is based in Modena, a northern Italian city famously known as “the capital of engines.”

“For engineering, the city and the surrounding areas are paramount in Italy, and this obviously helps to define the DNA of the business,” says Elena Salda, who is the Vice President of Group CMS and the daughter of the founder.

Of course, Modena and the areas around it are home to some pretty famous “engines,” including Maserati, Lamborghini and Ferrari, arguably the world’s most iconic car company. But in Italy, the area is also synonymous with less internationally well-known mid-sized engineering businesses, such as Group CMS.

Founded in 1975 by Luciano Salda, Group CMS comprises seven companies: CMS, a maker of machines and components; FGR, a maker of mechanical parts; Poppi, a sheet metal producer; Filling Systems, a specialist in the assembly and renovation of machines and industrial plant; Co.ma.ri,

a specialist producer of machines for compacting recyclables and waste; OSL, a maker of integrated computer systems; and CMS China, a subsidiary of all CMS’s businesses in China.

In 2014, Group CMS had revenues of €98m and employed around 500 people in 14 plants, mostly in the area around Modena.

Its clients include well-known brands such as Tetra Pak, Alstom, Sidel, Bosch and Bühler.

For second-generation family member Elena, being a family business is central to Group CMS, just as running the company is central to family life.

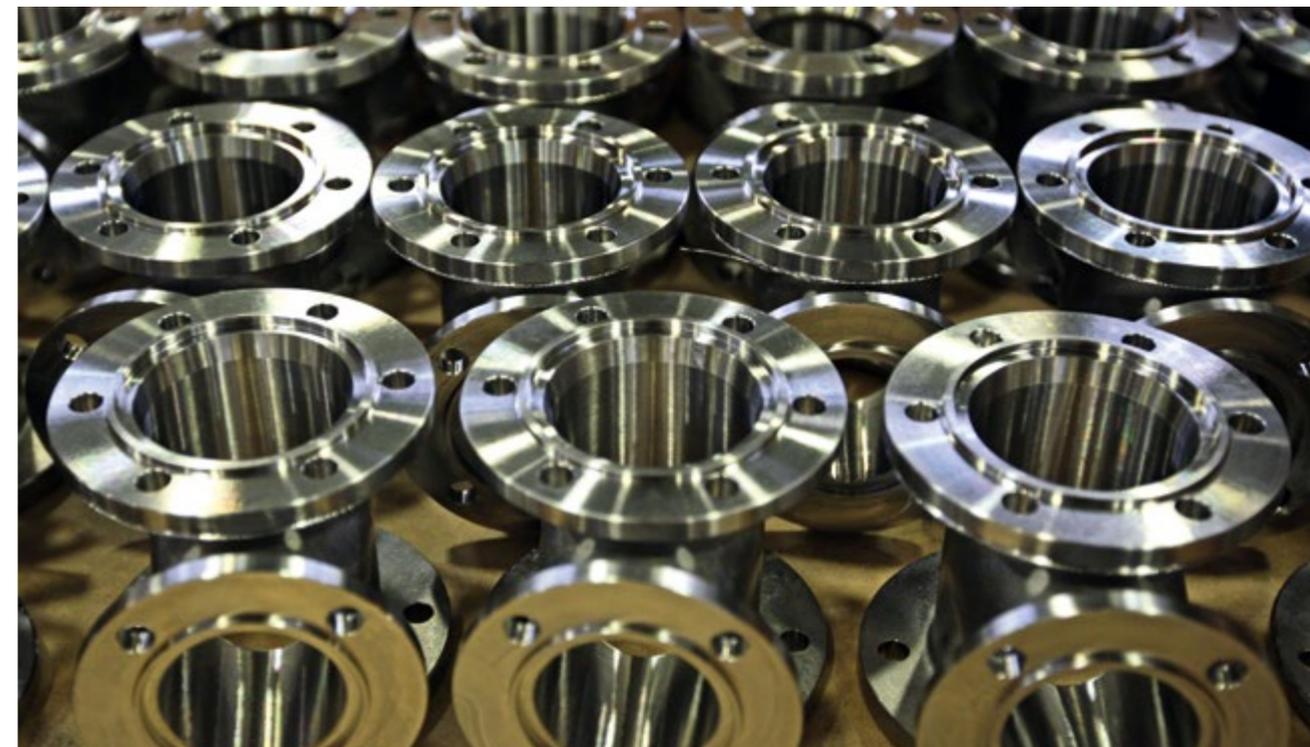
“From a practical point of view, it means being involved in the company day and night, 365 days a year,” she says. “It also means that, as a family member, you always put the needs of the company first and never stop thinking about new ways to develop the business.”



Luciano Salda founded the company in 1975,



He had the technical knowledge to get the business going,



Group CMS produces machines and components for well-known clients,

### And this commitment goes beyond the immediate family

“You live in an extended family, including not only your relatives, but also your employees,” she says. “You feel part of a wider family with the employees. It is, therefore, essential to build strong relationships with employees.”

### A challenging environment

Companies such as Group CMS, which are effectively the Italian equivalent of Germany’s famous Mittelstand businesses, are vital to the health of the Italian economy. This is particularly true at a time when Italy is experiencing low economic growth and high unemployment. But sometimes it is not easy operating in this environment.

“Italy suffers not only from the ongoing economic crisis that hit Europe and America in 2008, but also from a lack of a defined industrial policy, too much bureaucracy, high taxes and often crippling labor costs,” says Elena. “These factors sometimes make it very difficult to do business in the country.”

But she also believes that Italy has its advantages for businesses such as Group CMS.

“The country successfully supports a high number of small and medium-sized enterprises, which are the true backbone of the economy,” she says. “And, despite the problems, Italy continues to be rich in talent, creativity and entrepreneurial spirit.”

### Entrepreneurial spirit

That entrepreneurial spirit is embodied in Luciano, who, 40 years ago, left a secure job in a big corporation to set up CMS. Luciano had the technical knowledge, the work ethic and the entrepreneurial nous to get the business going. And as President, he is still very much the man in charge.

Luciano has created much of the dynamic culture at Group CMS. In his office, he had a plaque that Elena has taken and put on her desk that says: “Are you bringing me a problem or are you the problem?” Elena sees this as a warning to anyone who enters her office expecting to be given all the solutions to their problems.



The company employs more than 500 people in 14 plants.



In 2013, Group CMS opened a plant outside of Shanghai, China.



Luciano has taught his daughter to solve problems for herself.

“He taught me and the staff that we need to use our own experience to resolve our problems; in fact, to innovate,” she says. “Everyone is asked to bring their vision to the business and to make an active contribution. And we see this very much as the culture of the business.”

Despite her father’s continuing presence at the business, Elena is very much her own boss. As she says, her father has the technical skills, but she has brought much-needed managerial skills.

Her initiatives at the company include establishing Group CMS’s commitment to internationalize the business and to encourage greater corporate social responsibility.

In 2013, Group CMS opened a plant just outside of Shanghai, which now employs more than 70 people.

#### Broader concerns

Concern for all of the company’s stakeholders is another thing that is important to Elena. In her work at the business, she emphasizes the importance not just of the company’s shareholders, but also of the staff and the local community.

The company has set up a nursery that not only accepts the children of CMS’s employees, but is also open to the local community. Corporate volunteering is encouraged among staff, and the company has been involved in a number of philanthropic initiatives, including the building of a playground for the local community.

“We also have an internal corporate welfare project called Better Life, Better Factory, which aims to help improve employee welfare,” says Elena.

#### Preparing for the future

Despite only being 41 and her daughter being just 10 years old, Elena is already thinking about immersing the next generation

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Elena Salda

into the culture of Group CMS. She took her daughter with her on a recent trip to China.

“She came with me to meetings, even with clients,” says Elena. “I see it as a way to bring her into our company in a practical and simple way. In the future, growing up, she will be free to make her own choices, but with a good basis for making those decisions.”

Elena is likely to take over from her father as President when he eventually steps down.

“He still has more than enough energy to run the business,” she says. “I don’t see myself stepping into his shoes for some time, but I’m very much ready to do so when that time comes.”

Working side by side, achieving goals together, really is a great satisfaction for Elena, and the basis for reaching always new significant successes to pass to the next generation, as happened in these years.

### Elena Salda

Vice President

Company name:	Group CMS
Generation(s):	2nd
Founded:	1975 in Vignola, Italy
Industry:	Mechanical engineering
Employees (2014):	Approx. 500
Revenue (2014):	€98m