

# Igor Giglio

## CEO, Saint-Gobain Abrasives

WE SAT DOWN WITH IGOR GIGLIO WHO BRINGS EXTENSIVE INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE TO SAINT-GOBAIN AUSTRALASIA AS HE BUILDS ON THE SUCCESSES OF THE PAST AND DEVELOPS A NEW PATHWAY FOR THE BUSINESS IN OUR EVER-CHANGING INDUSTRY.

**NCR:** How about we start with a bit of background on Igor Giglio?

**IG:** I was born in Italy. However, for the past 16 years I've lived and worked outside Italy. I am fluent in English, French and Spanish.

Basically, I started at Saint-Gobain 20 years ago this month, starting my career in Italy as Export Manager at the Abrasive business unit. The territory included the Europe, Middle East and Africa region, other parts of Western Europe, and eventually expanding to include South America.

After six years in Export, I sought a role with less travel and was offered a Business Development Manager's position in Thailand, initially as a six-month assignment. However, I ultimately spent eight years in the country, firstly as Business Development Manager for Southeast

Asia, before being appointed Thailand Country Manager, looking after all our abrasives business segments.

I was then repatriated to Italy to join the Ceramic Division; the mature, low growth markets did not present the opportunities to which I had become accustomed in Asia. I then moved to Luxemburg to run the global strategy and product management functions for the Construction Products division, until I took up my current role in late 2017.

As a result of all my travels, one of my children was born in Thailand and the other in Luxemburg. We travel on Italian passports, but we really are an "international family".

**NCR:** And perhaps a bit of background on Saint-Gobain?

**IG:** Of course. Today, Saint-Gobain is



one of the oldest and largest Top 100 industrial groups in the world. We are over 350 years old and have survived and prospered across the centuries through our resilience and ability to adapt and grow – this has been key to the success of the company.

Today we have a turnover of approximately €41 billion, 180,000 employees, and operate over 950 manufacturing facilities in 68 countries. I say this to illustrate our depth, strength and capacity to reinvent ourselves.

Saint-Gobain is a French organisation that started out in glass manufacturing – we are so much more today. Of interest to the collision repair industry, the group acquisition of Norton in the 1990s became the basis of the Saint-Gobain Abrasives business today.

However, we continue to evolve, and at the end of 2018 we announced a global reorganisation known as "transform and grow". This initiative is based on three key priorities: being closer to our customers and markets, embracing the digital revolution, and to be more agile – accelerating our decision-making process.

At Saint-Gobain Abrasives we are moving away from a product focus to a solution-driven business. This was



The Melbourne Head Office.

demonstrated at the recent Collision Repair Expo where we introduced our Automotive Body Repair (ABR) process tubs. These are an innovative way to showcase our premium range of Norton products targeted for each area of the repair process – panel, paint and polish – all packaged into convenient reusable tubs.

**NCR:** When you first took up the role, what did you see as the initial challenges?

**IG:** The big challenge was to ensure continuity of the good work that had been done by my predecessor, who had been here for five years. Taeke Meerveld made significant improvements in the business and I needed to maintain the momentum.

In addition, I wanted to develop a sense of trust within the team, so we had a “kick-off” meeting with the slogan “One Team – One Direction”. I used the imagery of a rowing team as I wanted to convey the message that I was in the boat, shoulder to shoulder, rowing just as hard as everyone else. It really did bring the team together.

From an external perspective, whilst I needed to understand the Australian market, I was able to share my global experience in the abrasives industry, which added value as it helped to enhance our experience.

**NCR:** And how would you characterise the collision repair industry now that you’ve been here for almost two years?

**IG:** One of the first things that struck me was the real sense of belonging right across the industry – it’s in the DNA of the people. I see competitors interacting for the good of the industry and it gives me a real sense of camaraderie, which is unique from my perspective. It’s an industry driven by passion, which I was impressed to see demonstrated at your Lifetime Achievement Awards breakfast, engaging the next generation – the father-son connection was so great to see.

The industry has seen many changes over the last 20 years. The consolidation of repair shops and insurance groups is now playing a bigger part in the relationship between the vehicle owners and repairers themselves. Other improvements in car safety standards, repair technologies, OEM parts materials, and innovation of products used in standard repair methods has also changed the market landscape. Today we see many more suppliers vying for a piece of the business in a market that is ever-evolving and consolidating. Saint-Gobain has remained a leader in the approach to innovation and developing new ways to provide process solutions.

**NCR:** What do you believe are Saint-Gobain’s key strengths and how will you leverage them?

**IG:** Throughout the organisation, our underlying strength is our people. We have a culture of self-motivation, a capacity to continuously innovate, a renewed customer-centric marketing focus, the digital experience, and a real passion for the business. It’s the right alchemy and it defines our success.

There are four non-negotiable pillars on which we build our business:

- Provide the safest products to our customers
- Enhance our customer engagement
- Deliver excellence in service
- Be recognised as a provider of high-quality solutions.

Interestingly, as a result of our R&D spend, which is three percent of sales, one in four products we sell today did not exist five years ago. I see this as a measure of our commitment to our customers.

**NCR:** Perhaps you can expand on your activity in the digital space?

**IG:** The digital space will require more and more engagement from us, because here in the region it will be

core to our strategy. We are investing more than ever before in automation, CRM and social media platforms to ensure we gain traction in this space and further engage our customer base.

**NCR:** And what have been your key highlights thus far?

**IG:** We have been very dynamic. We have diversified both across our existing segments and expanded into new segments in addition to the automotive aftermarket. The team in Australia has certainly made my transition here a welcome one and has worked toward our vision to expand in these key markets.

A highlight would be the Collision Repair Expo held in Melbourne in April, showcasing our premium process solutions whilst being able to engage with the market. This brought our specialised automotive team together from around the Pacific to reinforce our commitment to the collision repair industry, where we held a Norton distributor event at Crown Towers in Melbourne. This was a great opportunity to give back to our partners, awarding our supplier of the year awards.

**NCR:** So, how will you differentiate the Norton brand in the increasingly crowded abrasives market?

**IG:** We are a one-stop solution for all abrasive needs. We have the

**2018 Distributor Awards**



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- - M O V E R S A N D S H A K E R S - - -

capabilities to provide all the cutting, grinding and polishing requirements from start to finish. As you mention, it IS a crowded space, but what we can offer goes well beyond the physical product, which differentiates Norton from other brands. We have the backing of a full team for support along the way, including customer service, warehouse facilities, sales, product management, marketing, training and application engineers to ensure we are able to find the right solution.

**NCR:** What are your plans, if any, to integrate the Farécla range in Australia?

**IG:** Although this is still a very recent acquisition, Farécla is now very much an integral part of the Saint-Gobain community. In regions such as Australia, Farécla has a long-established historical presence with over 40 years servicing a strong customer base. It is not our intention to disrupt what has been built over this period. In fact, there are opportunities for synergies between the Norton and Farécla brands that we need to leverage without causing disruption, so in the short term it is business as usual with Farécla. In the longer term, I think we will converge more and more, but what has been built over time will be preserved. There is a whole raft of reasons we acquired this business and you don't turn it on its head just because it's now part of Saint-Gobain.

This is not the only recent acquisition the company has made; we continue to diversify and create

opportunities for growth and create synergies across our markets.

**NCR:** What do you see as the biggest opportunities for your organisation today?

**IG:** We really have just started our journey, which we will continue in the coming years. It is based upon customer engagement, which is a crucial part of our journey.

For example, two years ago in Australia we launched the "we are customer service" campaign. This required all the functional departments in the business to spend time to identify and understand the customers' needs and how they fit into the customer service proposition.

Customer Service is a not a "behind the scenes" department, it is a bridge between the organisation and the needs of the customer. Encouraging all our functions to interact with our customers allows us to deliver the customer what they want, when they want it. This really does reinforce our customer-centric approach.

**NCR:** If you could leave our readers with one last thought, what would it be?

**IG:** Let me paraphrase one of my regional colleagues, as I really do believe it is relevant here in Australia. Motivation is everything. You can do the work of two people, but of course you can't be two people. Instead, you need to inspire the next person down the line and get them to inspire those who are next in line. We see this as one of the fundamentals of true leadership: trust, empowerment and collaboration.



At the 2019 Collision Repair Expo.

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