

Imagine developing a method to produce components for devices used in a range of industries – medicine, cosmetics, automotive, and more – that is not only more cost-effective than prior methods, but is vastly more efficient, produces higher yields, and leaves a much smaller environmental footprint? In short, a major improvement on every measure of success.

In Slovakia, one company understood the effect that a change in approach to producing metal components would have on both their returns, and the broader health of the planet we live on. Founded in 1996 by Artur Gevorkyan, a former aircraft engineer and soldier, GEVORKYAN became a unique entity in the manufacturing sector, producing a vast array of products for a variety of industries that used a complex method that manufacturers had traditionally shied away from – powder metallurgy, or sintering.

“In the past 18 months our Research and Development department developed 77 new parts which had never before been produced by powder metallurgy,” says Artur, who is now Managing Director of the company. Products were previously made during cycles on machining machines that would last several hours. Now they are produced within a few seconds.”

The broader impact isn't difficult to discern. Where before a manufacturer might have taken a kilo of metal and, after running it along the production line, condemned half of it to scrap, this process uses every bit of the initial quantity. Powder metallurgy is a highly complex process, but the rewards are substantial.

“Imagine how children play with sand on the beach,” Artur explains. “They make some forms on the floor and this is their product. We follow a



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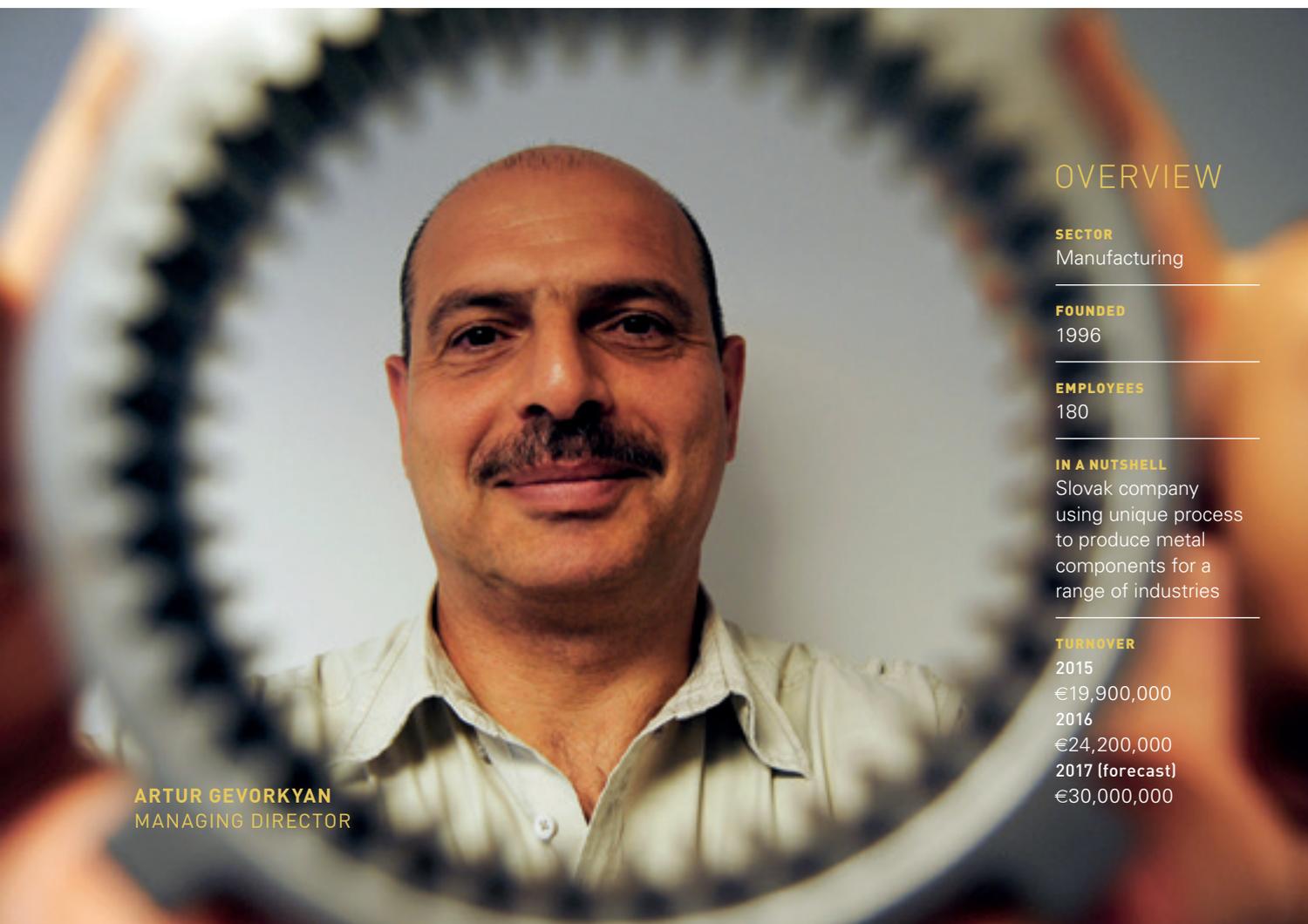
similar process with metal powder. We develop some materials using iron, copper or brass; we make some shape or other – whatever the component requires – and then we sinter this, in the same way you cook a pizza.”

The speed of the process is one of its major features, despite the complexity of the process. Artur says that, where traditionally it might take half an hour to produce a single gear for an automobile, powder metallurgy is now at such a state of technological advancement that 500 gears can be produced in that same window of time.

The analogy to cooking doesn't stop there. The whole process is controlled from start to finish, allowing GEVORKYAN to enjoy greater stability, higher productivity and a higher degree of flexibility in the materials used. “We're

not buying a pizza already made to put in the microwave,” Artur says. “Instead we are in control from the very beginning. We decide what goes in the pizza and how it is cooked.”

When life began for GEVORKYAN a little over two decades ago, there was just one person in the driving seat – Artur himself. The Armenian, who moved to Slovakia in the early 1990s having set up a smaller company in the Ukraine, had little money, and few contacts. Still, however, he persevered, and for the first year, the company remained as it began – just him. Later his wife came on board, and the following year another employee joined, making three of them. All continue to work for the company, as do many of those who subsequently joined. More than 180 people now work there, across the Research and Development department, sales, manufacturing and administration. →



ARTUR GEVORKYAN
MANAGING DIRECTOR

OVERVIEW

SECTOR

Manufacturing

FOUNDED

1996

EMPLOYEES

180

IN A NUTSHELL

Slovak company using unique process to produce metal components for a range of industries

TURNOVER

2015
€19,900,000
2016
€24,200,000
2017 (forecast)
€30,000,000

His emphasis on pursuing an environmentally sustainable method of produced metal components has much to do with the move he made to Slovakia from the Ukraine, which he found to be a difficult place in which to live and work.



"I know what it means to be in a city where you turn on the tap and dirty water comes out," he says. "You don't drink it and you have to go to the shop and buy water because all the industrial waste gets into the water – it's not been cleaned."

"Protection of the environment needs to be part of your company's mentality. One reason why I chose Slovakia is because I came from Ukraine to visit some customers here exactly 20 years ago and it was a very nice country – small and clean. They take care of the environment, and it's very difficult here not to have a consciousness like that. If, as a company, you don't use environmentally sound practices then you will look dirty."

The rapid growth of GEVORKYAN from its slow beginnings has much to do with its emphasis on targeting foreign markets. The company now has customers across the world – in Brazil, Finland, Hungary, China, India, the United States and beyond. From its cash-strapped beginnings, it now record an annual turnover of more than €20 million. Another factor in its success is a willingness to take on risky project that its competitors shirk from.



"If I receive a project proposal from a client and I have no other orders on then I really have no choice but to accept it, take on and solve their problem," Artur says. "We don't sell parts, we provide solutions. It's about their flexibility, and our solutions. This is the reason why we grow – we show to people that we will take on their crazy projects, and deliver."

When asked what his proudest achievement is, Artur doesn't pause. His employees are the basis for the company's success, and in return for their dedication they are rewarded.

"Our engineers really like what they are doing and they think about the job 24 hours a day, and even in their sleep. The main reason that we can finalise these projects is that the idea remains in their brain. They will find a solution whatever is happening – maybe when they are swimming or running or playing with their children. Their ideas, and commitment to solving problems, are the main motor behind the company."

GEVORKYAN functions like a family, with each member valued for their input, and supported when needed. "I cannot work in another way," Artur says. "I like people around me, and when they are like your brother or sister and they have a problem, in my philosophy it is necessary for me to be first person to know about the problem and for company to help. It's logical. They spend all their productive time in company, for our company."

As such, retention of staff is a key priority. Artur doesn't have his own desk at the company office; instead he moves among staff, working side by side with them every day. If an employee doesn't like his or her position, Artur will consult with them to see where they might be better suited. "If they say they don't like their job, we find another position for them. The target isn't to push them to work harder, but instead to understand what kind of job he or she has a talent for. It's like with children – if they have a talent for music, send them to music school."

At the end of the day, it's they who keep GEVORKYAN moving forward, taking on these "crazy projects" that Artur speaks of, and in the process, breaking new ground. "It's my staff that are important to me, absolutely. The rest is just pieces of metal and piles of metal powder."



LEARNING POINTS

Look at what project your competitors are refusing, and see if you can come up with a solution. This will ensure you stand out.

Staff are the backbone of any company. If an employee is struggling, see where they might be more effective. It's better to keep your workforce together, rather than having a high turnover.