

Doing business beyond our shores

For many local businesses ranging from large manufacturing companies to SMEs, IT-based companies and more, it's no longer enough to cater solely to the local market. **Sarah Micallef** and **Martina Said** meet four leaders in their respective industries who have set their sights beyond Malta's shores to tap into international markets.



Simon Pace

Photo: Alan Carville

FOSTER CLARK

With an extensive portfolio of products and distribution to over 80 countries, Simon Pace, route-to-market leader at Foster Clark, says the company is a food producer in search of excellence. "Excellence is present at all levels – from top to bottom: at a product level, including the packaging and design; the talent and how we recruit and train, with proper succession plans for all positions; in the way we source our materials and how we act across the industry. It is important for us to have proper structures and processes in place to deliver the required results."

He asserts that the international market was always part of the fabric of Foster Clark – it wasn't a move that the company decided needs to be made, but rather the reason Foster Clark came to Malta in the first place. "I think one feels encouraged when they act and succeed – it whets your appetite to explore even further. But we're not afraid to fail, so we test the waters carefully, take calculated risks, learn from them, and come back even stronger. We've proven our position internationally, now it's a case of expanding further and challenging ourselves to keep growing."

The products made by Foster Clark are specifically intended for the palate and culture of a specific consumer, says Mr Pace, therefore differentiating their product offering between countries and cultures. "Take a product like custard – it is

of English origin so it does well here in Malta. Muhallabia on the other hand, which is a typical sweet Middle Eastern dessert, is largely unheard of and most people don't know much about it. We are driven by individual markets, and the communities of the countries we operate in and have tapped into."

Being an international company brings with it its own set of challenges, one of which, says Mr Pace, is that there are a lot of different realities and scenarios to contend with when dealing with overseas markets. "The current situation in the Middle East is one example. The Arab Spring has caused unrest across the continent and a drop from one of the highest to lowest oil prices in history, currency fluctuations have reduced expendable income in the household, and led to civil wars in many countries. These factors are all part of a reality one must deal with when operating in international markets, something a local player might not even consider."

As for the company's future plans, Mr Pace says "we are working on new markets and further product development – from expanding existing product lines to creating new ones. These are targets that we are constantly pushing for."

www.fosterclark.com

CASASOFT LTD

"CasaSoft was born way back in 2004, working from my bedroom," says Creative Director Mark Cassar. "In 2009, CasaSoft integrated into a company and today we are a team of seven highly creative designers, talented developers and strategic thinkers full of passion and innovation. Our aim is to help businesses expand digitally and online – our team is capable and knowledgeable in diverse areas of expertise and is able to cater for any client requirements, whether with design and branding, web design, web development, software development, web applications, and even marketing and strategy."

Mr Cassar says positive feedback from existing clients gave him and the team the confidence to expand business operations to overseas clients as well. "We have always placed great emphasis on client satisfaction, and once we started to collect client feedback through customer surveys, it became clear that our clients were very happy with the quality of our work and with our customer service. This gave us the confidence to start offering a 100 per cent money back guarantee. We are confident that, with our high level of service, we can compete internationally without any doubt. In fact, at the moment we are working with clients from Dubai, Sweden and the USA on some very exciting projects."

As a multidisciplinary digital agency, CasaSoft offers the entire spectrum of services required for a business to go digital. "Being able to deliver such a diverse portfolio is very convenient for clients as they would need only one point of

contact for their digital strategy," says Mr Cassar. "All our clients are equally important to us and we make sure to deliver the highest level of service possible, irrespective of whether it's a local or foreign client, or whether it is a small or large project. For every project, we make sure to get the client involved deeply in the project lifecycle to make sure that we understand their requirements and shape a customised solution in order to meet and exceed their needs."

One of the company's most recent achievements was being named National Champions in the European Business Awards, positioning itself alongside some of the largest organisations in Europe. CasaSoft has won several other awards, including the Malta's Best in Business Online and Web Design Company Award in 2015, two international Design Firms Awards in 2015 and 2011, and The Best Flash Website Award in the Digital Arts 2009 Awards, "back when Flash was still in trend," says Mr Cassar.

Any plans in the pipeline? "We like to live by De Bono's words: Excellent But Not Enough (EBNE). We're glad to see all of our hard work paying off, but this does not mean that we can now lay back. Our goal is to continue securing high profile clients, both locally as well as internationally, and we believe we can achieve this by finding new ways of offering our service to organisations that value quality as much as we do."

www.casasoft.com.mt



Mark Cassar