

A Snapshot of the Future

Fujifilm is developing leading-edge technology and determining the way future families will capture those special moments.

Images courtesy of Fujifilm

The way people capture and record moments in time has shifted dramatically over the decades. With the rise in digital cameras, the industry has undergone a period of rapid technological advancement. As Fujifilm looks towards the future, this innovative company will focus on investing in quality products and cutting-edge technology.

Leading this charge is Peter Struik, President of Fujifilm Manufacturing Europe B.V., and Director of Fujifilm Europe B.V., who has focused on identifying and exploring new business opportunities for Fujifilm. *The CEO Magazine* sat down with Peter to find out what he sees through the company's camera lens.

***The CEO Magazine:* With technology rapidly evolving in your sector, how have you ensured that Fujifilm remains relevant and competitive?**

Peter: I think what we are doing centres around our existing products like photo paper and offset plates. We are basically just trying to excel in our operational excellence. We want to excel in

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- Peter Struik

the product categories that we are in, and we want to stay in those markets.

In the meantime, we are also developing new products, especially in membrane production where we are now hoping to launch our new products this year.

Despite technological and market challenges, how have you continued to create new opportunities for Fujifilm?

It's a continuous process. We have a research and development centre on the manufacturing site and we are the development centre for our photo paper products. All the new photo paper products are being developed on this site. That's the first part of our plan; to develop products that the market needs and ones that add higher value. We are bringing out products that have a higher margin than the average products.

We also really went for completely new technology in developing that membrane production. We implement slow evolution in our existing product ranges, and revolution in our new business.

What have been the most significant milestones for you and Fujifilm in recent years?

If I look at the manufacturing site, when we had to shut down the film factory in 2006, that was a major hurdle for us. That was, more or less, creating a burning platform from which we started our new business design.

We are a very close corporation and we have strong ties with our colleagues in Japan, especially with regard to product development. However, the key technology was actually created here. What we did was we asked ourselves, “What is the specific knowhow of Fujifilm?” and “Where are we stronger than other companies?” We kept coming back to our film technology and our thin layer coating technology. Now we are looking at how we can utilise this technology in other products.

At the same time, we implemented a new business development group. It's a small group of people who go out to the world and say, “What are the issues in the world and what fits to the technology that we have?” Through a long process we came to this membrane technology. >



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How have you engaged with staff to generate new ideas and projects?

As I said, when you shut down a factory you have to reorganise significantly, and of course people understand that it's not business as usual. That sense of urgency surely helps. It forced us to look at our operations and ask ourselves, 'What are we going to do in the future? Are we going to be dependent on new products from Japan that have been developed there, or are we going to try and develop our own products?' We decided to do the latter, with the approval and support from our colleagues in Tokyo.

We have started these new products, and I must say one of the strengths of this arrangement is that our research and development people and our new business people work very closely together. That means that we can react quickly to market demands and approve our new products. That process is also completely different from our existing business, as there you are just focusing on keeping costs down and not changing anything which would ruin the process. While with new business, you're always changing your process.

Besides having these new business people looking at new technologies, we also implemented a program throughout the whole factory. We asked ourselves, 'What is entrepreneurship?' We were just the production site and we were entrepreneurs in the sense that we managed our costs, but if you supply to new markets you really have to have a different kind of attitude than for existing business. That was quite a challenge, but I think Fujifilm is making a big transformation.

How do you work with suppliers and partners to capitalise on new opportunities and maintain your high quality standards?

We try to do as much as possible but of course it also depends on your supplier. With our existing

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- Peter Struik



business, we try to look at the supply relationship as if we were one company. How would we design both of our processes if we were under the one company? Not just looking at optimisation in the one plant, but looking at what we would do across the whole chain and what would be the best for all involved. That kind of holistic view that we take with our partners is very important.

For new business, our main focus at the moment is on finding customers who are willing to co-develop our products. They are putting in the requirements and test sites, and we are developing based on that. With each iteration we try to improve and get a step closer to the final target.

Where do you see Fujifilm going in the future and how will your industry continue to evolve?

I think some of our product portfolio will disappear within the next decade or so. What you'll see now at Fujifilm is that we are very much looking at the new business that we're developing here, which is still very small, so that we have time to grow. Especially in Japan, we're expanding into the pharmaceutical business where we're looking at those important lifestyle products which people really care about. For instance, regenerative medicine, looking at

how we can help the body to regenerate itself rather than just pumping it full of medicine. Those are the areas that Fujifilm as a whole is developing.

On the manufacturing side, my dream and hope is that we will transform our photo paper production into the new membrane production.

What we are also doing on the site is trying to be as sustainable as possible. It's an issue everywhere, and everybody talks about it, but we actually try to implement it. Two years ago, we installed five wind turbines on our site, so now 20 per cent of our energy comes from wind energy on this site. We are also building our own water cleaning plant so we can reduce our water loads and our impact on the environment.

I think the key issue is to ensure that you are both ecologically and economically sustainable. I think being ecologically sustainable will become more and more of an issue and I hope we are doing our best to do that.

What we're focusing on is how, as a business, we can make the transformation from existing business to new business. There are lots of books written about it but actually doing it is both difficult and fun. •