

ARKATI

THE VASSALLO GROUP PUBLICATION 2018



**CHAIRMAN'S
PAPAL SURPRISE**



TRADITION. INNOVATION. DIVERSITY.

With a heritage spanning over seven decades, Vassallo Group is one of Malta's most well established and successful companies, with a staff complement of over 1,700 and investments in a large variety of key macro sectors mainly in:

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Vassallo Group Malta


VASSALLO GROUP
SINCE 1946

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ARKATI

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to the 2018 edition of *Arkati*, which documents another successful year for Vassallo Group that featured several stand-out highlights.

CareMalta, a valued member of the Group that owns and operates facilities for older persons, celebrated its silver anniversary with a number of events, which culminated in an extremely proud moment for chairman Nazzareno Vassallo when he presented Pope Francis with a special memento, featuring the fingerprints of all the residents from CareMalta's nine homes, to mark the occasion.

A photograph from this occasion takes pride of place on our front cover and Mr Vassallo recounts in an evocative interview his surprise, since CareMalta CEO Natalie Briffa Farrugia and her team organised the papal audience without his knowledge. The chairman also talks about what drives him and the Group.

Our Group CEO, Pio Vassallo, who earlier this year stepped down as chief executive of Vassallo Builders to allow him to focus on the synergy between Vassallo Group's companies, reviews the many projects we have embarked upon or are close to completing and talks positively about the future.

Meanwhile, each company CEO shares their thoughts on the performance of each member of the Group throughout this year as well as the plans for the year to come.

In this edition we have included special features which continue to add colour to *Arkati*.

We have spoken to the youngest and eldest employee within the Group who incidentally happen to work with the same company.

We have also talked to women who broke the glass ceiling within the Group and made it to managerial level. On a related note, a number of employees talk to us about the opportunities given to them to grow within the Group.

We hope you enjoy reading this year's *Arkati* as much as we enjoyed preparing it and we wish to take this opportunity to wish our Chairman, a wonderful birthday and you and your loved ones a joyful Christmas and peaceful 2019.

Charlo Bonnici

HR & Communications Director


ON THE COVER

Vassallo Group chairman Nazzareno Vassallo presenting Pope Francis with a number of personalised cards containing more than 1,500 fingerprints from every resident of CareMalta's homes.

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DESIGN AND PRODUCTION: Joseph Schembri **PRINTING:** Progress Press

A portrait of NAZZARENO VASSALLO, Chairman of Vassallo Group, smiling and holding a dark brown brochure titled 'VISION'. The brochure also features the Vassallo Group logo and the tagline 'Valuing the past. Building the future.'

‘We must be doing something right’

Vassallo Group Chairman NAZZARENO VASSALLO talks about Secret Santa and the Pope, business, and making a difference.



What do a map of Malta with Mosta printed in capital letters, a life-size replica of the Santa Marija statue that sits behind the altar inside the town's newly-crowned basilica, and a photo of Pope Francis have in common?

They are all prized possessions with which Nazzareno Vassallo (Zaren), the Group chairman, has chosen to surround himself within the boardroom of the imposing Villa Amodeo.

Fresh (save for an inevitable dose of jetlag) from his annual 8,000 mile trip to San Francisco, where he has long-standing family ties, Zaren proudly reminisces how the twinning between the city of Milbrae in California and his hometown in 1996 was the very first of its kind for Malta.

At 67, and with his grown-up children running all aspects of his business, he could spend much longer periods on the US west coast, but says that, rather than getting closer, "retirement feels further and further away".

He explains: "I feel responsible for the Group's 1,700 employees and feel I need to be close to them and create more opportunities. That's what gets me up in the morning."

The Group was a family construction business when he joined in 1967, but early on he believed diversity would be key to success – first branching out into the accommodation sector and tourism before he virtually singlehandedly created the private elderly care sector in Malta.

Zaren talks passionately about CareMalta, which this year celebrated its Silver Jubilee and provides accommodation and services for 1,600 residents.



“

Adding 100 beds to a retirement home gives me far more satisfaction than profit

“I had long been looking to add a social element to our Group and saw the opportunity in the late 1980s to open a home for the elderly. It was quite a challenge at the time. We had no expertise in this area and faced a culture where the public was not accustomed to paying for elderly care and tended to feel bad if their relatives were not looked after in their own homes.”

Zaren earmarked his daughter Natalie to take charge of CareMalta, and she eventually took it on after shaking off her initial reluctance. It has since gone from strength to strength.

“I’m a strong believer that if we’re going to do something, we have to do it right... We work to make money and that’s fine, but adding 100 beds to a retirement home gives me far more satisfaction than profit,” he says.

With good reason. CareMalta today also operates two fully occupied houses for the disabled: Dar Bjorn and Casa Apap Bologna. “Last year, we probably became the first company to take autistic clients and it gives me great pleasure to see children making progress. These are the pillars upon which the Vassallo Group are built and I would like to build more in the years to come.”

It was his connection with CareMalta that led to Zaren meeting Pope Francis earlier this year – though he knew very little about it due to some very elaborate scheming by his staff.

“There was a question in the Group’s annual Secret Santa last Christmas asking who would you like to meet most, and I scribbled ‘the Pope’. It happened to go to Natalie’s PA and they started working to make it happen straight away without mentioning a word to me.

“All they said was ‘keep August 7 free’ – which was a problem as I was due to be in Sicily – and then, closer to the date, informed me that a delegation from CareMalta was going to meet the Pope to present him with a special



memento marking the 25th anniversary featuring all the residents’ fingerprints.

“I had been to a general audience before with a group of fellow Lourdes helpers, and was at the back of a room filled with thousands of people, so I didn’t think it was a big deal. But once the audience got underway, one of the Pope’s assistants came over and started walking me to the stage. Only then did I realise I was going to meet him personally. It came as a huge surprise and I was overjoyed as I have a great deal of admiration for him. Amazing to think it all originated from a Secret Santa!”



It is these values, this family spirit that bonds the company Zaren has nurtured over the years, but he throws in a healthy helping of business acumen too.

“We never take on a project purely out of gut feeling. We study it very carefully and have set up a strategy board that examines and evaluates every new proposal before it proceeds further. It is vital to have a proper structure in business.”

It is a strategy that pays off: two of the Group’s companies, CareMalta and Vassallo Builders, were recently listed in the third edition of the London Stock Exchange Group’s 1,000 Companies to Inspire Europe.

“I always strive to raise the bar, but that was another surprise and means we must be doing something right. My motto is never give up. You have to dedicate your life to a business to be successful. It doesn’t happen by accident.

“Yet, for me, the important thing in life is to make a difference to the people around you. We have entire families working with us and we are also very proud supporters of our neighbourhood, Mosta. Our door is always open to them.”

That much is obvious. After all, he writes the name of the town in capital letters. ■

One group, one family

PIO VASSALLO
CEO, VASSALLO GROUP



MaltaCEO's 2019 publication by Content House
Group and taken by Alan Carville



It has been an exciting year on all fronts for Vassallo Group and I am happy to report that once again we have enjoyed a successful 12 months, consolidating the strides forward we made in 2017.

The Group has, of course, encountered its fair share of challenges. Our planned residential campus complex at the University of Malta and Vassallo Business Park in Burmarrad were held up by development permit process issues, but both projects have now got underway and we will be seeking to complete them in the shortest possible time.

Meanwhile, our interest in the tourism sector continues to grow. The Land's End hotel in Sliema, being developed in partnership with our existing partners at The George Hotel, is under construction and set to open next year; and we are also working on a new project in Paceville to be known as Number 11, which will be a contemporary urban hotel designed for millennials and the young at heart. That property will open its doors early next year.

I believe the tourism industry is very much the barometer of Malta's economy. When the sector does well, others follow suit as it creates a ripple effect. All the companies in our Group also benefit from this effect so it is an area that we will continue to focus on.

We naturally remain very interested in the property market and have continued to invest in good locations. However, given the huge leap in prices – the like of which our country has not seen before in such a short space of time – we are more acutely aware than ever before of the need to be sensible and selective. It is hugely encouraging that Malta is experiencing an economic boom at present. But at the same time, we are getting to the stage where we need to strike a balance between growth and sustainability.

Many people from abroad are coming over to work for companies setting up in Malta as well as in the hospitality industry – and this has undoubtedly contributed to the country's growth. Vassallo Group has also benefitted from this phenomenon and in the process has become a very diverse company in terms of its workforce, so much so

that we have created a specific Cultural Diversity Day to celebrate all the different nationalities who are on our team.

The past year has also been interesting for me on a personal front. We took a strategic decision to strengthen our company structure to make it feel more like one family. Jonathan Buttigieg has taken over as CEO of Vassallo Builders, which has enabled me to dedicate more attention to my role as Group CEO.

I have been working to consolidate our various companies' departments, such as finance, procurement and HR. So, whereas before we had one person managing each sector, today we have created Group heads who work as a unified team.

We are holding various forums for our leaders, procurement and marketing departments – where we bring people together to discuss ideas and foster a better understanding of a group mentality. We also held our first ever Group teambuilding exercise where 150 colleagues came together in a good natured competitive spirit.

My mission is to be a servant leader, who ensures that every person, from a manager to a manual worker, feels part of Vassallo Group.

I realise it can sometimes be a challenge to change people's mentality – from thinking just in terms of the company they work with to seeing themselves as part of the group as a whole – but this is the definitely way forward: developing not just a team but a community that pulls the same rope and supports its members in every aspect of their lives.

Having played sport all my life and recently completing a gruelling Ironman event, I am also a great believer in bringing sporting ethics and the principles of teamwork to the workplace, and instilling a mentality that we can accomplish any challenge if we have a positive mindset.

In fact, as we keep moving forward I encourage all my colleagues to adopt a healthy lifestyle and get involved in sporting activities. I would certainly like to return to the football world one day and make a positive contribution to the local community, and I very much hope my approach will encourage others to do the same. ■

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We are getting to the stage where we need to strike a balance between growth and sustainability.

Trust accelerates SUCCESS



Lisa Bugeja

Lisa initially applied for a part-time job as a food server at a canteen... seven years later she is a chef tournant at a hotel.

She works full-time there and full-time at home, where she recently became a mother-of-three. Her success in juggling her family and job is only possible because of the family-friendly hours and the sense of trust she receives from her employer.

Lisa walked her way up from server to food packer, larder, food preparation assistant and eventually chef tournant at the George Hotel, in Paceville, where she helps manage two kitchens. She admits she does not plan on stopping here and has already set her eyes on a more leading role.

Satisfaction with her daily achievements and the will to advance are the main driving elements behind the progress of this 38-year-old woman, who has secured 15 years of catering experience under her belt.

Amanda Tonna

Every day is a milestone for Amanda, who for the past 10 years has looked forward to every single new day at work. She believes this positive attitude not only motivates her, but also lifts up her colleagues' spirits.

Amanda left a middle management position within the hotel services industry 10 years ago, when she heard that the Mellieħa home would be opening its doors to clients.

Initially employed as a receptionist, she soon started helping out with administrative work, and was eventually appointed as the company's first facility coordinator. The years rolled by and around 18 months ago she was appointed services manager at the home; another first for the company.

She believes that the mentoring she received from three of her colleagues: Paul Pace, Lee Xuereb and Martin Bondin prepared her for her current role.

"CareMalta provides ample opportunity for its employees to climb the ranks. This is healthy because when you speak to a person who holds a more senior position, you know they are able to understand you as they've been in your own shoes."



Dorothy Inguanez

Dorothy has been with CareMalta since its inception in 1993, and was initially employed as a laundry assistant at Casa Arkati.

Aged 22 she had quit her job in a factory to become one of CareMalta's first employees, but the move was a bit daunting, so she promised herself she would return to her previous job if things did not go well.

However, she felt at home from the very first day: "As the years rolled by, new employees, managers and clients came and left, but I remained."

Every day at 7am, a determined Dorothy travels to Casa Arkati in Mosta by bus from Tarxien, her love for the home growing by the day.

Throughout these 25 years she became a mother, but she also advanced in her career and she was recently appointed care assistants' supervisor at Dar Bjorn.

Asked what she gets back from the job, Dorothy pauses, then says: "It's something I never really thought about... but it has to be a great satisfaction and sense of discipline."



Gordon Micallef

Gordon was about to quit his job because of a health scare, but the company stepped in, and the 47-year-old is now a proud Works Manager with Vassallo Builders.

Gordon has come a long way: he learnt construction skills at 16 from his father, eventually setting foot in the world of self-employed.

He was eventually sub-contracted by Vassallo Builders for some projects, until one day he was asked whether he wanted to become an employee. It was 1999 when he accepted the post of a builder.

Sadly, some years ago he had to quit because of health issues: "The doctor told me I had two options: end up in a wheelchair or choose another career."

But when he handed in his resignation letter, Gordon was offered the post of a foreman. Reluctant at first, as he had never worked in a team, he finally decided to give it a go. He recalls working on the PN headquarters, the US Embassy and the Phoenicia Hotel projects among others, until he was eventually promoted to Works Manager in 2016. He has no regrets.

Denise Tierney

Around 12 years ago Denise was working in the hospitality sector. However, she had just got married and she knew the working hours clashed with her family-focused ethos.

So she joined CareMalta as home secretary at the Żejtun residence and soon realised the job would not only help her improve her career ambitions, but also her personal ones.

After a year at the Żejtun home, Denise moved to the head office in Rabat to run the payroll department.

She attributes part of her success to the support she received from CareMalta CEO Natalie Briffa Farrugia, whom she first met at the Żejtun home. The other part she attributes to her commitment: she goes the extra mile in whatever she does, and even when she got injured in a car accident, she continued working remotely while recovering at home.

In the end, Denise, who was eventually promoted to her current role as Natalie's personal assistant, managed to maintain a healthy work-life balance. ■



A caring reputation through the years

NATALIE BRIFFA
FARRUGIA
CEO, CAREMALTA

'Care' is not just part of the company's name, but also part of the ethos of the company. Care has become an integral part in the continuous professional development of over 1,000 people employed with CareMalta.

Does care ever come in the way of business?

"Care makes the business; we are here because we care. I believe that if we disregard the care component, we would be outrun.

"The core of our existence is that we continue to give care. That is how we managed our reputation for 25 years and it is how we plan on continuing to manage it."

The company has in fact created what is known as the iCare concept. Brewing for some time, the concept was launched in May following a year of research.

"The iCare concept is part of the company's 2020 vision, however, we have already witnessed a difference, and in some instances, complaints have been replaced with compliments."

The concept has seen the development of a training programme for all employees: every day an iCare session is held in all the homes, bringing in people from different departments around a table.

There they discuss the residents' journey at the home: from pre-admission, to admission, their first breakfast, meeting others in the lift, room service etc...

These focus groups guide employees on how to ensure compassion, engagement and professionalism in all that they do, whether it's handling a complaint or supporting a client with depression.



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Care makes the business; we are here because we care.

With more than 1,000 employees passing through the iCare process, the concept will act as a universal language, bringing together the different nationalities that work for the company. Employees come from each corner of the globe, and one facility could host up to 40 nationalities under one roof.

Natalie believes the iCare common language could be rolled out across the whole group in the future.

Looking over the past year's milestones for CareMalta, Natalie is very proud of the company's 25th year anniversary.

"As a private service provider we were the first to embark on Private-Public-Partnerships within the care sector and we have come a long way. Along the years we not only provided a service, but we have also developed our own specialities.

"Nowadays, we cater for the highest dependencies in care and all our private homes are specialised in nursing care."

Care Malta is constantly seeking to keep maintaining a high level of care on the island and Casa Marija is its most recent – and ninth – home for the elderly; an independent living facility that has been converted into a private nursing home.

Looking ahead, the company will continue specialising through the development of Hila – an extension of CareMalta.

"Throughout the past 25 years we were often told by parents of children with a disability that there was a gap within the care sector. In a way, filling



this gap was a natural progression for us, and through Hila we continued specialising within the disability sector.”

The company has also signed an agreement with the government to offer short term and long-term respite at Casa Apap Bologna in Mosta and with ALS foundation for caring services at Dar Bjorn, which hosts people who suffer from neurological conditions. CareMalta is also looking into providing similar services within the mental health sector.

“Our years of experience have not only helped us maintain our status as

leaders in nursing care in Malta but also allowed us to specialise in areas where certain care services were lacking.”

What makes CareMalta an expert?

Apart from a quarter of a century worth of experience, CareMalta has gained a lot of knowledge in providing a service to more than 7,000 older people.

“I can comfortably say that there isn’t any case, from a gerontological point of view, that we haven’t dealt with. So many people have passed through our long-term care services

that I’m sure we can cater for any kind of care when it comes to older age.”

CareMalta will continue to specialise in nursing and care not only through its professional expertise, but also through its ethos for care and compassion, which ties in with its iCare vision.

“The care market has grown gradually over the past years, especially considering the continuing ageing population. From our end, we are committed to continue providing real care based on three pillars: compassion, engagement and professionalism.” ■

Alternative leadership

JONATHAN BUTTIGIEG

CEO, VASSALLO BUILDERS



It is said, that on average, successful individuals read up to 60 books per year, perhaps more. It therefore comes as no surprise when Vassallo Builders CEO Jonathan Buttigieg proffers a book from his case, saying: "I never leave the house without this."

The publication, by four time Super Bowl winning coach Bill Belichick, focuses on strategy concepts. Jonathan reveals how he has adopted the New England Patriot general manager's simple motto: "Do your job" to his own role.

Having spent the last 25 years working with the company, Jonathan was appointed CEO earlier this year, which has meant change and challenge, even in terms of leadership.

"I know how things work; I had the background... yet this is a role I still have to 'learn'." Having spent the last couple of years as deputy CEO in preparation for the job, he now involves himself with pretty much all aspects of the company.

"Mine is an overall role," he explains. And that's where Belichick's motto comes in, which effectively means and translates into every individual on his team understanding and executing their job and role. "I don't want to fall into the trap of micro management; I facilitate; I find the means to solve problems."

Wanting to encourage and assist all personnel to fully develop their careers within the Group, two years ago Vassallo Builders underwent a thorough restructuring process to introduce new roles within the company.

"We created a number of designations, and identified individuals for each of those roles. After two years, we can finally see that these people are in the right positions; roles that have been consolidated, such as that of director of cost

control, the contracts and sub-contracts managers, together with a strengthened team of quantity surveyors. Furthermore, Jonathan explains how through this process all the missing pieces of the puzzle seem to have fallen into place.

He also explains how company chairman Nazareno Vassallo continues to be so instrumental to him, as well as the entire organisation: "I've already learnt so much from him, and continue to do so. He is the business. He doesn't impose things; he merely brings together all the opportunities. I have tried to adopt elements of his strategy in my own role."

One of the ways in which 'Zaren's' influence has affected him was through the creation of four separate committees aimed at getting members from various teams and from all aspects of the company business involved in the decision-making process.



Malta International Airport



“These weekly meetings are a means for each of its members to discuss their problems, issues and concerns; it’s a space where they can get involved, where they are given a voice. Through the creation of these communicative outlets, we took the conscious decision to give more responsibility to our people by showing faith in them.”

Besides the consolidation of the various roles within the organisation, Jonathan outlines the Group’s major projects and successes over the past months.

“One of our biggest successes this year, and one which we had been bidding for, for a while, is the Sterling Chemicals Factory – this entire project is truly an example of how all our construction projects should be done. Another important project is the One One O residential development located on Gżira Strand, which should be close to completion by the end

Sterling Chemicals



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We took the conscious decision to give more responsibility to our people

of the year, and which has already been under way for at least three to four years.”

Apart from the projects nearing completion, however, Jonathan is also proud to talk about how the company has broken new ground on the new Vassallo Business Park, an extensive industrial park and office development in Burmarrad which was finally given the green light.

Other than that, the company is looking forward to working on a couple of major projects in the coming year: namely the new Campus Hub, which will see some 800 residences created together with retail and commercial outlets, as well as much needed parking facilities all in close proximity of the university campus. Another is the new car park for Malta International Airport.

With such an intense and ambitious list of projects under their helm, Jonathan confesses that his greatest motivator within this context is the work executed by his team.

“Seeing them come together, seeing projects executed within the designated timeframe and on budget, seeing them deliver... that’s what motivates me.” ■



A constant search for new investments

RUBEN VASSALLO

CEO, VASSALLO GROUP REALTY





The word construction is on everyone's lips these days. From politicians, to home owners, environmental NGOs, and developers, the construction boom is a topic most people have an opinion or prediction about.

An architect by profession, Ruben Vassallo, CEO of Vassallo Group's property arm Realty, is one person who is closely monitoring the situation.

"Nobody has witnessed such a building boom in a long time, but as a Group we're not one to rush headlong into something and just do what everyone else is doing.

"Just a few years back DVD shops were mushrooming in every corner of every village, then one day you wake up and the market has disappeared.

Prospects are good but the real supply from the bigger projects, towers and office spaces is only coming onto the market now so we have to wait to gauge the impact this will have on the market.

"These are very interesting times, especially with Malta being dubbed The Blockchain Island... but we always prefer to exercise caution and try to remain grounded, while attempting to hunt out niches that are more unique," he says.

The name Vassallo is synonymous with property development and the family has an affinity with property, often finding it difficult to let go once they secure a special building or plot of land. However, the family is also very particular about what to purchase and how to develop the project.

"We're the worst developers as mostly, we don't build to sell," he says with a laugh.

"We tend to collect and keep the buildings, while increasing our portfolio. We try to keep them where possible... We're constantly seeking new investments."

Realty has had a successful 2018, and with a turnover of €5.5 million, the company portfolio includes a diverse mix of landmark properties, farmhouses, houses of character, apartment blocks across the island, as well as The George Hotel in St Julian's and the Land's End boutique hotel in Sliema, which will open its doors in 2019.

This is over and above other commercial properties such as the Tagliaferro Business Centre in Sliema, the high-end Quantum offices in Ta' Xbiex, and the residential project in Sliema, known as OneOneO – the one with the yellow steel columns – that has entered the second phase of construction.

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We always prefer to exercise caution and try to remain grounded

Like everyone, big or small, working on any development project, Vassallo Group is also facing pressures to find workmen and the Group often has to resort to engaging foreign workers – the market is growing and this keeps the wheel of the economy going.

At the moment, however, the project on Ruben's mind is the Vassallo Business Park, which is being built on 25,000 square metres of land in Burmarrad and intended to cater for storage and distribution facilities.

"This is an entirely new concept and market for me so I'm enjoying it. The project involves massive spans and open areas and we are hoping that works will be well under way within a few weeks," he says.

Reflecting on the past year, Ruben describes 2018 as an extremely positive one where Realty experienced a healthy growth and budgets were met.

In the upcoming year, the focus will be on completing the business park, while tapping new markets, exploring exciting properties to invest in, and establishing the potential of new partnerships.

"We believe a lot in partnerships. We had our fair share of bad ones, but when you're on the same page, you have double energy and passion which makes a big difference." ■





‘Our best assets are our

Competition is rearing its head within the catering industry, registering phenomenal growth in the retail food sector, namely restaurants and cafes. The year 2018 has in fact bore witness to a significant number of local, as well as foreign, operators entering the market, especially in Valletta, Sliema and St Julian's.

Alex believes the vast choice of good quality options is straining the sector's capacity of human resources. The growth in this sector is reflected in the employment of a significant number of people who are not Maltese.

As a result of this ever-growing competitive industry, CaterEssence will tread carefully but at the same time increase its efforts when it comes to more selective and detailed recruitment processes, apart from continuous investment pumped into in-house training and development of the company's existing human resources.

“We believe our best assets are our people. We will continue promoting and encouraging career development and training among our employees, as the catering industry continues to grow and becomes more competitive and complex.”

The recently launched middle management development programme illustrates the company's commitment to invest in its people. This incentive was developed with the support of the Vassallo Group and spearheaded by the Group's CEO Pio



ALEX TRANTER

EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN, CATERESSENCE

Vassallo, who is a firm believer in the further development of employees.

Nearly all the middle management employees will be participating in the programme, set to be launched next year. Participants will have the opportunity to be mentored on a one-to-one basis to strengthen their individual skills.

But while competition is healthy, so is retention of employees over time. This is a major sectorial challenge the company is bracing itself for, as the catering sector slowly but surely faces increased customer expectations and quality offerings, and stricter food standards and practices.

“I believe quality, cost-effectiveness and attractive food offerings will become more critical as supply, in other words, the competitive environment, increases faster than demand.

“Location and logistics will also play a major influencing role in our assessment of any new future opportunities that may develop within this very dynamic sector. The future looks very exciting.”

Looking ahead at the immediate future, what are the plans for 2019?

The company is looking forward to further growth within the hospitality sector through the operation of a new hotel in Paceville, that is expected to open in the first quarter. This



people'

new venue will see CaterEssence roll out the very latest in food styles, cooking trends and innovative food concepts.

CaterEssence is also planning on further expanding its food retail activities at The Landmark in Qormi by introducing a new retail food outlet within walking distance from its Cake Box outlet.

The 2019 bucket list includes the launch of a company-wide business intelligence platform, which would allow for a deeper understanding of the customers' behavioural patterns and the company's sectorial performance.

However, one cannot move forward without looking back.

The year 2018 was in itself blessed with achievements for CaterEssence, including its key milestones, based on the strengthening and consolidation of the company's core contract catering operations.

The company has successfully managed to extend its operating agreement with its largest hotel catering client by an additional three years, as well as strengthen business with its largest healthcare client.

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The future
looks very
exciting.”

“Throughout 2018, we have also sought to consolidate and focus our catering activities in the two food retail sectors we are involved in: the first being the supply to third-party restaurants and cafes, as well as our own Cake Box outlets; and the second consisting of two restaurants we operate in Valletta (Panorama) and St Julian's (Miro).

The company also started producing its own range of ice-cream for the retail segment and has recently started forging an exclusive supply agreement with a leading Italian supplier of ingredients for gelato and desserts. So far, the market reaction has been very positive, and the sales of ice-cream extremely encouraging.

“The year 2018 has seen us work very hard, and we have not only developed new food products but we have also grown our client network.” ■



It's all about smart automation

CHRISTIAN
VASSALLO

STRATEGY DIRECTOR,
VASSALLO GROUP

After Vassallo Group's 2020 Vision was executed by July 2017, the executive team put their heads together to come up with an even more ambitious 2023 strategy termed the '5X Mission' which aims to set even higher goals.

And given that growth is now on track, the next step revolved around doing things better – a task for which one must perforce turn to technology, Vassallo Group strategic director Christian Vassallo explains.

"I was at Haqar Qim the other day, which stands testament to the fact that humankind has been inventing things since at least 5,000 years ago," he muses. "It is in our DNA to change. And this is no less the case for Vassallo Group. We view technology as an agent of change and are targeting daily operations, specifically in the administration part of the business, where we can automate."

Automation is viewed as another tool to support employees, removing mundane tasks and allowing more space for creativity and problem-solving to help move the Group forward.

The prime candidate is a particularly diligent employee in Payroll, who Christian describes as 'brilliant', yet whose job entails moving Excel sheets and checking each cell for errors.

"Why should we limit such a brilliant person to such menial tasks?" he asks.

Enter Robotic Process Automation (RPA). The Group has been busy training its staff and identifying processes that can be automated, and is now mapping the processes to be taken over by RPA. The first such project, within the Realty business, will be rolled out in the first quarter of 2019 and will act as a test bed for the entire Group.



RPA, Christian adds, is also the initial building block towards the implementation of artificial intelligence in the Group's daily decision-making.

"The Group is essentially a river of data and we are aiming to harness the power of AI to help our decision-makers make better decisions."

Maximising the use of technologies such as Revolut to add customer value is also high on the agenda. The Group is currently exploring implementing Revolut in its retail business, in conjunction with a loyalty scheme for clients. This loyalty scheme will also be automatically offered to employees within the Group.

As the world learns about blockchain technology, the Group is also actively looking at how to adopt the system to achieve its economic targets. It is currently considering using smart contracts to improve its relationship with suppliers.

"This would mean that our procurement department will be embarking on a very interesting voyage into the blockchain future, which will lead the way for the rest of the Group to embrace blockchain technology at large." ■

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It is in our DNA
to change.



A healthy humility

ALDO VELLA

DIRECTOR & LEGAL ADVISER
VASSALLO GROUP

It's hard to get Aldo Vella to talk about himself.

A lawyer by profession, the 71-year old has been legal adviser with Vassallo Group (previously Vassallo Builders Ltd) since the mid 1970s, and was later appointed a board director of the Group.

He is quick to divert questions aimed at his role and involvement in the 50-years-plus since his career kicked off. He's more intent on singing the praises of the Group's chairman, Nazzareno Vassallo, who he affectionately refers to 'Zaren', rather than list any of his own.

"Zaren has been everything for the company; he's both the brains and the motor. He made the Group what it is, through his sheer initiative, hard work and foresight.

"His vision, coupled with a strong business acumen, was such that it allowed him to spearhead the opening of several homes for the elderly. His vision is continuous, cyclical; it persists until it is fulfilled. One project merges into another; he picks up a new one just before closing the previous, to ensure a constant flow and evolution of vision."

Aldo explains how Zaren was initially his client, and how they even started a company together – A & N (Aldo and Nazzareno), that was successful but which they decided to wind down a few years ago. He also explains how a major chapter in Zaren's story was written when he sold his significant shareholding in the Island Hotels Group. Following his decision, there was a big push in the Vassallo Group, one that sparked investments such as Lidl in Qormi and the Tagliaferro Business Centre.

Aldo also traces some of the Group's milestones, as well as those which he was in some way involved with. The first significant project he mentions is the Danish Village in Għadira Bay, followed by Malta International Airport's terminal building and the Freeport.

Aldo considers Zaren to be one of his best friends – they meet socially and travel together – and quips about how, when they were younger, they would often go fishing

on a boat that was smaller than his small legal office. That has since made way for a 50-foot yacht.

"From the very day we met, we got along. We've always been mature and despite having diverse opinions on various matters, we always saw each other's point of view."

Although Aldo's role has now been 'reduced' chiefly to attending board meetings, his role as legal adviser is far more complex. He admits that he is trying to phase out all his 'jobs' and pass the baton on to his son.

"I'd like to 'close down' but I can't seem to close the door. It would be unfair of me to pass on clients to other lawyers; it would be unfair to the client as well as the lawyer who would have to take on an old case. I like finishing what I begin."

Yet aside from his relationship with Zaren and the Group, Aldo hides something of an alternative personality. In his office, there are several photos in which he can clearly be detected wearing a football kit. At the mention of sport, his whole demeanor shifts and a smile immediately breaks across his face. "It's my passion," he quickly declares.

"I used to play football at university; however, I never made the grade as it was impossible for me to train throughout the year. During the time I spent studying in Bologna, I played with an amateur team. However, I stopped after I got married.

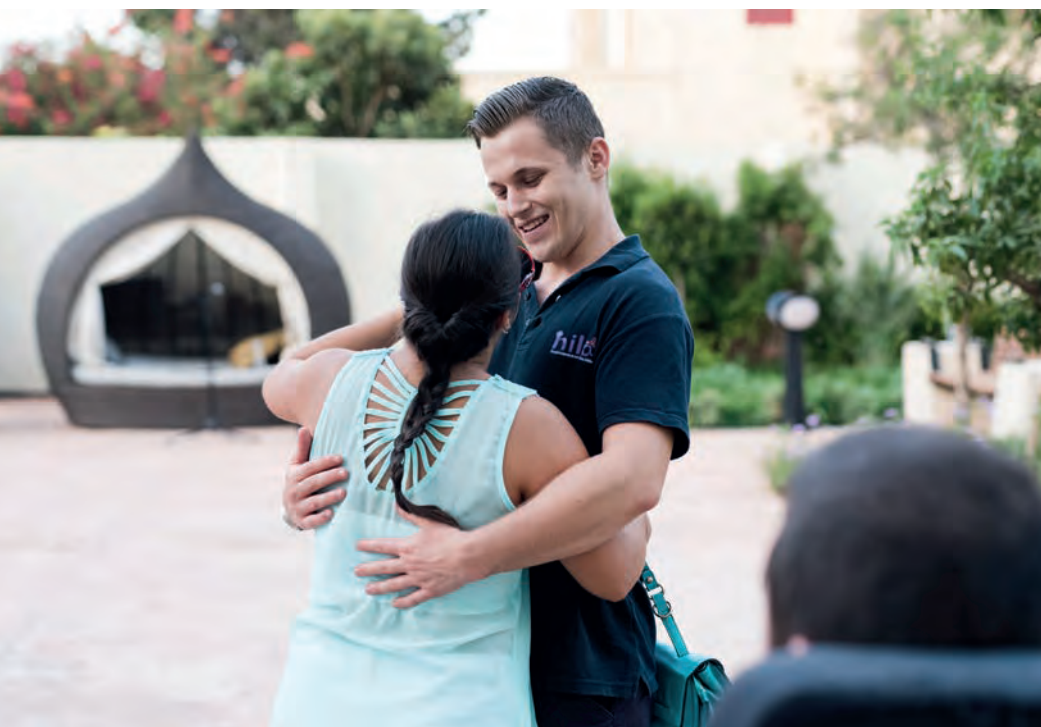
"At the age of 34, I decided to become a referee, and this time I did make the grade. I was even an assistant referee at international matches..." Consequently, Aldo played as many as 20 tournaments with Mundiavukat – the world football cup for lawyers – with whom he travelled the world.

At the age of 45, Aldo retired from competitive refereeing, and instead took up long distance running. "I did half marathons and 10Ks for a number of years. And when I stopped that I took up cycling. I stopped cycling 10 years ago but still went to the gym. I take care of my health, visit my doctor every six months and follow a healthy diet.

Aldo is also a grandfather of four – "and that too is a sport", he jests. ■

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I'd like to 'close down' but I can't seem to close the door



‘Caring is a meaningful relationship’



JANET SILVIO

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, HILA

In the relatively short span of time in which HILA executive director Janet Silvio has been working in the disability sector, she has come to the realisation that she must constantly look forward: “I could never go back

to the elderly sector,” she says matter-of-factly.

HILA – the Home to Independence and Limitless Abilities – is a very young company in the CareMalta Group, which was only set up three

years ago, and operates from within Casa Apap Bologna in Mosta.

Janet, who previously worked as business development manager at CareMalta, explains how, in the interim period, she spent considerable



time conducting all the necessary research and networking with key individuals and organisations in the sector – in Malta as well as abroad – in preparation for her new role.

Having a firm background in public accounting and auditing, she worked in the service industry before deciding to take a career break and tour the world. Having been deeply affected by the people, cultures and contexts she encountered during her travels, upon returning home she decided on a complete career change.

Janet explains how the sector in which she now works is very much dominated by Church and State rather the private sector, and how, in this respect, CareMalta, through the Vassallo Group is both leading and paving the way for others.

She explains how she came up with the HILA concept, and how at a very early stage she had to ask herself – where do we go from here? “I wanted to create something in the community where one could find all amenities relating to the disability and mental health sectors.”

When CareMalta was launched, it operated from a space within the Vassallo Group in Mosta, where it is still housed, and which is why Casa Apap Bologna – HILA’s flagship space – made so much sense when they first walked through the front door.

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The unconditional love you receive in return is amazing

The high-ceilinged building, full of natural light, may be found on what is probably the busiest street of the town, yet behind the front door it feels very much like a safe haven. Janet explains how they opted to introduce a new concept: “We wanted to create a completely relaxing environment; even when it came to the design of the interior – it’s all about achieving a sense of calm and peace.”

She also explains how, in the run-up to the launch, they even organised weekend live-ins to test the ground. Positive feedback allowed them to move forward confidently with this unprecedented project. In fact, there was only one respite home in Malta before Casa Apap Bologna opened its doors.

Janet stresses there is a fine line between implementing a project of this nature and making it accessible, while at the same time ensuring it makes business sense. However, in the short time since it has been open, those who have experienced the

space and its facilities have felt the difference.

Casa Apap Bologna accommodates long- and short-term respite clients, up to a maximum capacity of 45 beds, with as many as 25 members of staff. It is also the very first facility to have introduced the services of a full-time, in-house nurse on the premises and not just a team of support workers, as is generally the case.

“Having a nurse in-house, helps the clients,” Janet says, “as certain aspects of clients’ well-being can now be dealt with directly without them having to be moved back and forth to the hospital. This initiative was also introduced to give clients a holistic experience.”

Janet describes how working in this sector is both harder and yet more rewarding than her previous role.

“Having fewer clients, who are intellectually and mentally more challenging, can be draining; however, once you have the clients’ trust, the unconditional love you receive in return is amazing. I feel that this is where I am meant to be.”

She also describes the extent of the meaningful relationships formed with many of their clients, and the purpose they continue to give her, with a simple action, such as smiling through tough periods. ■



Roseville

Inheriting the Vassallos' passion and love for historic buildings

RUBEN VASSALLO

CEO, VASSALLO GROUP REALTY

Setting foot inside Ruben Vassallo's office it's easy to deduce that the man behind the desk is passionate about architecture in a way that seamlessly marries the old with the modern.

Steel, concrete and wood all play a role in the design of his office, which includes an aquarium, an old five-foot radio, and a rocking cot made out of olive wood which he designed for his first born that takes pride of place in the centre of the office.

Whenever his eldest daughter turns up at his office, the cot doubles up as a rocking horse that keeps her amused while he can focus on his work.

It is this connection between work and family that weaves through the lives of the different generations of the Vassallo family that sowed the passion for architecture in Ruben.

He smiles as he recalls how as a young boy he would tag along with his father, Nazzareno, whenever he went to inspect a project or check out a building he had his eyes on.

"I grew up running around the sites on Saturday mornings with my father.

Unwittingly, these were my first architectural classes, but they were so much fun that it took me a while to realise this was work," he says with a laugh.

Now 34 and a qualified architect heading Vassallo Group's Realty, Ruben has lost none of his childhood passion and he possesses his father's love for buildings, especially those which played a part in the island's history or a locality's social fabric.

"As a family we have a passion for buildings... but we especially have a soft spot for historical buildings," he says.



Casa Apap Bologna



Villa Messina

One of the first restoration projects, which he oversaw from beginning to end, is Roseville in Attard, one of Malta's only examples of art nouveau architecture. The Vassallo Group team paid painstaking attention to the building's original features and restored everything from the wooden blinds to the intricate facade details, conducting a study into the original colours used to match these as closely as possible.

This unique architectural gem with its floral sculpted window-surrounds and painted motifs in St Anthony Street, opposite Villa Bologna, was converted into a welcoming stately home for the elderly.

Ruben admits that it would have been much easier and more economical to skip the attention to

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I grew up running
around the sites on
Saturday mornings
with my father.

detail, but this is where he is his father's son – Ruben has inherited a strict code of respect towards heritage.

“While seeking to tap a business opportunity we always sought to respect the building and incorporate it into the Group's portfolio. I fear it's become too easy to demolish buildings,” he adds.

“With Casa Apap Bologna we could have easily demolished it as the building is not scheduled but the place is an important landmark in Mosta's social heritage so we restored it and made sure we didn't lose any of its architectural language.”

He encourages more architects to invest in safeguarding buildings that hold a meaning for a particular locality or play a part in the island's heritage as it was tragic to witness the destruction of so many historic landmarks.

Villa Messina, in the heart of Rabat, was another restoration project that was realised earlier this year with a full refurbishment that cost €4 million, and comes two decades after the home first opened its doors to elderly residents.

Ruben is happy with the outcome, especially since the stately feeling of a palazzo previously stopped with the façade as the interior was clogged with gypsum partitions and ceilings.

The restoration uncovered centuries-old frescoes buried beneath layers of gypsum and this, coupled with the reorientation of its interior, has bestowed Villa Messina with the stateliness it deserves.

Ruben has already moved on to another restoration project – Il-Palazz tal-Hlas, located between Zebbug and Qormi – which was purchased by the Group three years ago.

To get to it you have to drive through the busy industrial garages before you eventually stumble upon the palace and il-Kappella tal-Hlas, where women would make their vows with the miraculous Madonna, praying for a smooth childbirth.

The humble, unassuming facade of the palace belie the massive grounds at the back, which are being beautifully restored by Ruben's team. The property dates back to the Knights of the Order of St John, but it seems the project was never completed – the piano nobile is missing – as the Knight who owned it died during a seafaring voyage.

The plan is to finish where the Knight left off. Letting it go from the Group's portfolio, like any of the historic buildings purchased over the years, is unlikely to ever happen. ■

Breaking the barriers

Four women in management positions within the Group speak about the challenges they face and the lessons learnt on the job.



Audrey Galea

Position: Manager Group CEO's Office.

Number of years in this role: I have been with the Vassallo Group for 25 years in various roles. I had started out in 1993 as secretary to the director of operations and director of commercial affairs, then in 2006 I was appointed executive secretary to the CEO and commercial director. In 2011, I was promoted as PA to the CEO Pio Vassallo and I'm now office manager.

What are the challenges you face as a woman in your position? Sometimes, I tend to feel challenged when it comes to dealing with technical construction-related matters but I try to understand and learn by asking about the terminology being used etc.

What's one leadership lesson you've learned in your career? The power of applying positive reinforcement to motivate and help bring out the best in people.

Who is your role model? I have always admired CNN journalist Christiane Amanpour mainly for her fearlessness, her ability to remain calm in perilous situations and her compassion as a war correspondent. She not only broke barriers but proved that through hard work and tenacity a woman could be anything she wants to be.

Adriana Cortis

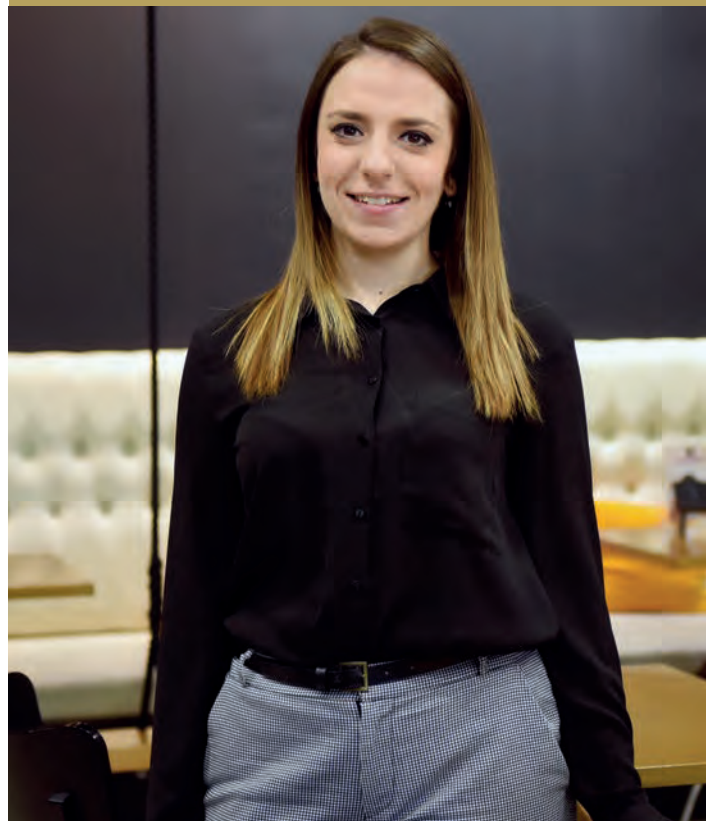
Position: Retail Operations Executive.

Number of years in this role: four months.

What are the challenges you face as a woman in your position? I think the biggest challenge is that sometimes women tend to have a softer, more empathic approach to handling situations, which can be misunderstood. Both men and women bring different strengths to the table and sometimes I feel our strengths are undervalued and we have to work harder to prove ourselves, particularly when in the minority.

What's one leadership lesson you've learned in your career? You're only as strong as your weakest link. Each and every member of your team has their own strengths and weaknesses and we need to work closely to help develop their strengths further and to support them when they are struggling.

Who is your role model? I'd have to say my general manager. I learn something new from him every single day and I believe he's an exemplary leader to his whole team by offering consistent support to all our operations and who isn't afraid to get his hands dirty to help us all succeed.



in management



Jacqueline Abela DeGiovanni

Position: CEO and Board Certified Behaviour Analyst (BCBA) at Hand in Hand Ltd.

Number of years in this role: I have been in a managerial role since 2004. I worked as a manager in a Child Development Centre in Ireland, and in a centre for persons with acquired brain injury in Ireland, before I relocated to Malta in 2008 where I have been a director with Hand in Hand since.

What are the challenges you face as a woman in your position? I don't feel I face that many challenges simply because I'm a woman. A challenge I would say women in management face is trying to juggle work with family. Luckily, I have a very supportive husband and we share responsibilities. My advice to women leaders everywhere is to follow their dream career and never give up.

What's one leadership lesson you've learned in your career? I guess the biggest lesson I learnt is to believe in yourself and to be confident. Experience in this role has taught me to work my way through, regardless of the odds we encounter. Confidence comes with experience and ambition helps you achieve your goals.

Who is your role model? I don't have a particular role model. I do, however, acknowledge that I have worked with a number of people who have taught me so much and guided me to become the person I am today. I am also motivated to be a role model to others to persuade parents and teens that women can run things, and to dream big. I am a strong believer in changing perceptions.

Jackie Cordina

Position: Executive Director, Vassallo Group Realty.

Number of years in this role: I joined Vassallo Builders Group Ltd in January 2014 as property administrator and was promoted to the position of executive director in January 2017.

What are the challenges you face as a woman in your position? One of the biggest challenges I had to face in my role as a director was building confidence in myself and overcoming the negative thoughts that used to creep into my mind, questioning whether I will succeed or not. Today, I have overcome these thoughts and in the last two years I have built my confidence by learning and gaining more knowledge.

What's one leadership lesson you've learned in your career? I've learned a lot of things which made me who I am today. However, experience has taught me that leaders can never succeed on their own; it's all about having a good team, communicating and seeking advice.

Who is your role model? I don't have anyone as a role model, because nobody is perfect in everything but everyone is good at something. So whenever I see a good trait in a person I try to adopt this quality in my everyday life and in my profession. Having said that, in my 25-year career I always looked to my employers for guidance and I always followed their good examples on how best to achieve my goals. They were, and still are, my mentors. I thank them, especially my chairman, Nazzareno Vassallo, who thanks to the trust he put in me, I now hold this challenging position within Vassallo Group Realty.





Big challenge, double satisfaction

CARLO AQUILINA

CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER,
VASSALLO GROUP

One of Carlo's first tasks when he joined the Vassallo Group three years ago was to perform an 'open-heart surgery'. Carlo is not a heart surgeon, but his patient survived and is thriving.

"I had to start from scratch when it comes to the IT side of things. We updated the technology of anything that comes to mind when you mention IT, focusing mainly on cloud storage. This required looking into each and every computer used by employees, widening bandwidths, etc... we dealt with the issue from the users' perspective, trying to make their experience a bit friendlier."

He compared the task to that of an open-heart surgery: keeping downtime to a minimum and migrating to new technologies while people were still working on their computers.

Three years down the line, together with his team, Carlo is now focusing on how IT can help the business move forward.

His team is made up of four people, including himself. One of his colleagues focuses on support services, another takes care of the infrastructure's maintenance and the fourth team member is a business analyst.

To improve efficacy and reduce downtime, the team tries – whenever possible – to support the staff remotely.

Their hard work has not gone

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Although the challenge is bigger, so is the satisfaction.

unnoticed. Last year, Carlo's team received the company's Customer Focus Award.

Asked how important IT was for the company, Carlo replies with a question: "Can you imagine working without IT? No matter where you are, whenever a system is down, or the power goes out, people have two options: they either wait it out and chat with their peers, or resort to manual filing... which is not as productive."

What are the main challenges in his current role?

"In the past, when I worked outside of this company, I had a European or US corporate who provided me with instructions and a set of goals I had to achieve.

"Over here, I have to set the goals myself, while the research of the best IT procurement, support and infrastructure is in my team's hands. Although the challenge is bigger, so is the satisfaction." ■

THE WORK AND LIFE BALANCING ACT

CHARLO BONNICI

HR & COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR

Life outside the workplace is important. For Vassallo Group, ensuring that employees are able to enjoy their free time with family and friends is of great significance.

The company has therefore made it a point to roll out initiatives to create a family-friendly workplace to help employees achieve a better work-life balance. These include extra parental leave, flexitime, teleworking (where applicable) and job sharing.

The Group is also proud to hold the Equality Mark Award from the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality. It firmly holds that excellence has no race, gender, sex, sexual orientation or physical and mental ability.

Despite these measures and policies, HR and Communications Director Charlo Bonnici explains that the department is constantly analysing its employees' needs and working on initiatives to meet them.

The Employee Voice Survey helps provide feedback on this, as well as offer an insight into how engaged and satisfied employees are. The results of the last survey revealed that although a good percentage of employees turned out to be engaged and satisfied, there was still room for improvement.

The importance of mental health and wellbeing vis-à-vis stress at the workplace was accentuated, which in turn prompted a seminar on the subject that was held in October for a cross section of employees. They were addressed by a foreign expert and the Richmond Foundation, and were offered an insight into potential causes of stress – which ranged from technology and e-mails to one's tone of voice and time management.



This year's 'Bring your child to work day'

The survey, Charlo explains, also focused on foreign employees – a particularly salient point given that 40 per cent of the workforce is not Maltese.

Causes of stress here may differ. Important issues that emerge are concerns in relation to accommodation, commuting, the need to visit their families and the time available to do so.

"We always need to be on the ball. It is imperative that we keep abreast of trends to retain talent. Needs evolve and change – for instance, for millennials, feedback is important and must be continuous. An appraisal once a year is simply not enough. The same applies for salaries and packages; one must need to look at what the market is offering.

"Remaining competitive is absolutely key." ■

“

We always need to be on the ball. Needs evolve and change



Wise spending leads to happy employees

JAMES SCIRIHA

FINANCE AND OPERATIONS
DIRECTOR, CAREMALTA

James will always remember his first day of work with CareMalta in June 2010. He clocked in as financial controller on the eve of Vassallo Group's anniversary, which coincidentally was also the first day of Roseville's operations.

His first project was Zammit Clapp in 2012. There was never a dull moment, and a series of projects followed until some 18 months ago he was promoted to the post of Director of Finance, and eventually started taking on the role of acting-CEO.

James's new role to wed operations and finances proved challenging, yet hugely satisfying considering how dynamic the former is.

"When it comes to operations, every day is a different one. It all revolves around people and in the same way that service providers within the care sector can make a very big difference – positive or negative – in people's lives, so can we.

"While my financial background allows me to understand situations a bit better, I'm also very aware of the operational impact of the smallest financial decision.

"So from my finance seat, I would consider the purchase of a trolley as an expense, but if I wear my operations' glasses, I know it will help employees transport items around. This would make them feel better, and as a result they would transmit that positivity to our clients."

During the past eight years James has seen the company grow, doubling its clients, employees and revenue. When he first joined there were around 700 clients, while these days



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I have seen a great difference in my work since I took up sports

CareMalta provides services to at least 1,400 residents.

He believes he too has grown over the past few years, with sports remaining one of his main drivers.

James keeps very active outside the office, training in athletics and participating in half-marathons. The sense of discipline and commitment that sports introduced in his life around five years ago allows him to maintain a healthy work-life balance.

"Sometimes, when you kick off the day's training regiment, you realise it's not going to be a good day, but you still do your utmost. I do the same at work. I have seen a great difference in my work since I took up sports, especially in the manner I tackle pressure and take decisions." ■

‘You are an Ironman’

The Ironman Triathlon is widely regarded to be one of the most challenging and physically gruelling sporting events in the world – yet it only took Pio Vassallo a matter of minutes before he decided to set his sights on it.

It was a simple conversation with a friend – who had turned his life around from one packed with long working hours, smoking and drinking, to a life almost wholly dedicated to sport – which convinced Pio to try his hand at the Ironman.

Sport had always been close to his heart – he had started off as a footballer with Mosta FC until he retired at the age of 35, which he followed up with cycling the Lifecycle Challenge, as well as running the Malta Half Marathon. All in themselves noble feats. But swimming for 3.86km, cycling for another 180km and running a further 42km, in that order and without a break, is a whole new ball game altogether.

In the beginning, attempting to run after a long bike ride can be uncomfortable. But with time, training and powering through the burn, the body adjusts, Pio explains.

One of the most challenging issues a cyclist in Malta faces is the roads: they are extremely dangerous. Because of this, compounded with his hectic work schedule, Pio decided to train for this discipline indoors.

“It was not a strange occurrence to see me cycling at around 10pm while following a lecture on my computer, since at the time I was also studying for my Masters,” he muses.

In effect, the biggest challenge, Pio maintains, was time. It was hard to strike a balance between work, family, training and retaining a semblance of a social life. He conducted thorough research to locate a training programme which fitted into the limited time he had available. As a result, he trained for shorter periods of time but more intensively.

In April 2018, he was on a plane to Port Elizabeth for the Ironman South Africa. It was packed with other athletes so it was easy to get into the spirit of it, Pio recalls.

On the day of the race, they rose at 4am to breakfast together and then walked to the bay from where the race was scheduled to start. At the break of dawn, the cannon was fired and the first athletes descended into the sea.

“Full of energy and enthusiasm, I threw myself into the water – and, not at any



point did it cross my mind that we were swimming in the Indian Ocean, which is known to be teeming with sharks,” he quipped.

Upon emerging from the sea and mounting his bicycle, Pio realised that his toughest obstacles were the increasingly strong winds and managing to make it without any damage befalling his bicycle.

“After over six hours, I was feeling tired and couldn’t believe that I still had another five hours of running ahead of me. But as soon as I removed my cycling shoes and put on my running trainers, all I could think about was that red carpet at the finish line.

“The spectators’ enthusiasm along the road really helps, especially when you’re so exhausted.”

At the end of the race, his father handed him the Maltese flag and Pio proudly walked up the red carpet until a voice boomed out those infamous words: “You are an Ironman,” signalling the end of an unforgettable journey. ■

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All I could think
about was that red
carpet



CAREMALTA DIRECTORS 25 YEAR AWARD



GROUP CHAIRMAN PRESENTED WITH A TROPHY MARKING HIS 50 YEARS LEADING THE GROUP



BEST MANAGER AWARD

DAMIEN PELOW AND NICOLETTE SANT



BEST EMPLOYEE AWARD

KEVIN PACE



BRAND AMBASSADOR AWARD

GARY FALZON AND CARLOS BUTTIGIEG



BEST MANAGED PROJECT AWARD

THE RIVIERA HOTEL PROJECT



CUSTOMER FOCUS AWARD

JACQUELINE AL YASIN



CUSTOMER FOCUS AWARD

KAMILLA OLASZY



BEST SUPERVISOR AWARD

ROMINA APAP



SERVICE QUALITY AWARD

CLINT CAMILLERI, NOVICA KNEZEVIC AND MICHAEL VELLA



GREEN INITIATIVES AWARD

MARY BONELLO



DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION AWARD

VARINDER SINGH AND KYLIE MANGION



THE CHAIRMAN'S AWARD FOR AN EXTRAORDINARY EFFORT

FIONA SPITERI AND EDISON SCICLUNA



HEALTH AND SAFETY AWARD

EVELYN PISANI



THE CHAIRMAN'S AWARD

CAROL CASSAR



TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT AWARD

LENY AUGUSTIN



THE CHAIRMAN'S SHINING EXAMPLE AWARD

EDIJS STRAZDINS, KRISTAPS KAROL AND OTI KEKEMA



EXTRA MILE AWARD

AHMED ISMAEIL, JOANNA FARRUGIA AND MONDAY OMORUYI



ICARE AWARD

CASA ARKATI



ICARE AWARD

CASA MARIJA



ICARE AWARD

CASA SAN PAOLO



ICARE AWARD

COSPICUA HOME



ICARE AWARD

HEAD OFFICE



ICARE AWARD

HILA HOMES LTD



ICARE AWARD

MELLIEHA HOME



ICARE AWARD

ROSEVILLE



ICARE AWARD

VILLA MESSINA



ICARE AWARD

ZAMMIT CLAPP



ICARE AWARD

ZEJTUN HOME

VASSALLO BUILDERS

Novica Knezevic Civil Works Foreman
Varinder Singh Civil Works Foreman
Frederick Mallia Civil Works Foreman
John Farrugia Civil Works Foreman
Ton Silvio Civil Works Foreman
Ann Marie Chircop HR Clerk (Administration)
Leanne D'Anastasi HR Clerk (Health & Safety)
Jurian Refalo Works Manager
Caroline Borg Accountant
Salvatore Leone Quantity Surveyor

Mario Abela Stock And Inventory Controller
Alexios Travanis Quantity Surveyor
Adrian Farrugia Works Manager
Andrea Scaramuzza Works Manager
Pompilio De Santis Quantity Surveyor
Liam Shaw Quantity Surveyor
Mark Ciantar Senior Sales Executive
Roberta Debono Digital Marketing Executive
James Jithin IT Business Analyst
John Grima Store Keeper

CAREMALTA

Christopher Gauci Financial Controller
Mario Debattista Senior Services Manager
Paul Pace I Care Manager
Anthony Caruana Assistant Facility Manager
 (Casa Marija)
Josiann Sammut Facility Manager (Casa Marija)
Tonio Pace Nursing Manager (HILA)
Amanda Tonna Service Manager (Mellieħa)
James Buttigieg Project Manager
Maria Xuereb Facility Manager (Bormla Home)
Noel Gaffiero Maintenance Manager

Sarah Aquilina Head Office Executive
Brenda Mizzi Lead Nurse (Roseville)
Christabelle Tabone Executive Administrator
Darren Gregory Asssitant Financial Controller
Vladimir Sucurovic Team Leader (HILA)
Paula Sultana Cook (Casa San Paolo)
Anna Curmi Housekeeper (Casa Marija)
Raia Kostadinova Georgieva Housekeeper (Casa Arkati)
Sanja Tripkovic Lead Care Assistant (Zammit Clapp)
Marija Cekic Lead Care Assistant (Casa Arkati)

CATERESSENCE

Carola Costantino Assistant HACCP Coordinator
Malcolm De Conti Manduca General Manager Cost
 Control & Purchasing
Martinetto Cecilia Internal HACCP Coordinator
Cyana Carla Seychell Marketing Executive
Nakita Aquilina Jr Sous Chef (Pastry)
Maria Duca Restaurant Manager (MIRO)
Keith Mangion Restaurant Manager (Hotels Division)
Mark Bone Sous Chef (Hotels Divison)
Ruth Micallef Restaurant Manager (Panorama)
Clayton Camilleri Financial Controller
Mark Scerri Acting Head Chef (Hotels Division)
Gabriela Rucinska Assistant Outlet Manager
 (The Cake Box)

Michael Angelo Zerafa Corporate Head Chef
 (Hotels Division)
Massimiliano Marino Executive Head Chef
 (Reastaurants Divison)
Albert Kojo Adjei Head Baker (Pastry)
Joseph Fardell Sr Sous Chef (Pastry)
Emanuele Valerio Sr Sous Chef (Panorama)
Michela Bianchi Sous Chef (CPU Kitchen)
Daniel Caruana Sous Chef (MIRO)
Matthew Mallia Operations Manager
 (Restaurants Divison)
Adriana Cortis Retail Operations Executive
Maria Azzopardi HR Executive

Vassallo Builders

5 YEARS OF SERVICE

James Cristina
Kevin Drew
Carmel Pavia
Roderick Spiteri
Malcolm Zarb



10 YEARS OF SERVICE

Emanuel Bellizzi
Charlo Bonnici
Joseph Borg
Saviour Fenech
Edwin Gatt
Ivan Milivojevic
Boban Spasic
Ruben Vassallo



15 YEARS OF SERVICE

Andrew Cauchi
Saviour Cauchi
Victor Psaila
John Schembri
Francis Tanti



20 YEARS OF SERVICE

Leo Galea

25 YEARS OF SERVICE

Jonathan Buttigieg
Mario Cassar
Audrey Galea
Lawrence Galea
Piero Laudizio

30 YEARS OF SERVICE

Emanuel Tonna
Joseph Tonna

40 YEARS OF SERVICE

John Sammut

CaterEssence

5 YEARS OF SERVICE

Rita Azzopardi
Jessica Bonavia
Ayrton Borg
Charlie Camilleri
Dylan Caruana
Gabriel Ekpe
Gianluca Fenech
Josef Grech
Henry John
Richard Littlejohn
Jacqueline Littlejohn



Randolf Micallef
Sha Md Nizam Uddin
Nizam Uddin
Paul Saliba
Daniel Schembri



10 YEARS OF SERVICE

Chris Cutajar
Angelo Grima

25 YEARS OF SERVICE

Alex Tranter

CareMalta



5 YEARS OF SERVICE

Mark Abela
Karen Abela
Jonathan Aguis
Laetitia Alessandro
Rita Aquilina
Mary Carmen Azzopardi
Christopher Bellia
Christian Borg
Josephine Borg
Josef Buhagiar
Micheline Busuttil
Ryan Stephen Raymond
Canson
Rita Cauchi
Henriette Cini
Karen Cordeiro
Tanya Deguara
Rita Demicoli
Nathalie Dimech
David Farnworth
Isabelle Farrugia
Maria Farrugia

Stephanie Farrugia
Kathleen Fenech
Josephine Formosa
Estelito Garcia
Josephine Gauci Borda
Charmaine Grech
Paulanne Grioli
Yolanda Grixti
Ingrid Holder
Jane Rosemary Hudson
Rita Magro
Honeylette Matugas
Anna Montebello
Ibrahim Musa Marku
Vanessa Orsini Mercieca
Kimberly Pace
Josephine Pace
Tonio Pace
Kelly Pulis
Yasmine Seguna
Vivianne Seguna
Robins Sunny
Rexana Tanti
Sharon Tanti
Carmen Tonna
Rinsy Varghese
Silvana Wannous
Doreen Xuereb
Nicholas Zampa



10 YEARS OF SERVICE

Jason Agius
Jacqueline Al Yasin
Carmen Borg
Roslyn Brincat
Christiana Curmi Bonanno
Lorraine Damato
Isabelle Facchetti
Benigna Fava
Shirley Fenech

Catherine Galea
Marthese Gerada
Rose Mallia
Joyce Muscat
Paul Pace
Maria Dolores Sammut
Nancy Schembri
Mary Sciberras
Maria Sultana
Claudia Tanti
Amanda Tonna
Clayton Turner
Eddie Vella
Karen Vella
Gilvania Xuereb

15 YEARS OF SERVICE

Maria Borg
Simone Borg
Anna Bugeja
Doris Chircop
Josephine Grech
Rita Lia
Rita Micallef
Anna Vella
Michael Zerafa



20 YEARS OF SERVICE

James Buttigieg
Anabel Ciappara
Maria Anna Farrugia
Miriam Scerri
Irene Simiana



25 YEARS OF SERVICE

Dorothy Inganez

Vassallo Group



10 YEARS OF SERVICE

Perit Ruben Vassallo
Charlo Bonnici



25 YEARS OF SERVICE

Ing. Alexander Tranter

Being a team player

How to be a Team Player was the subject of Vassallo Builders' annual seminar held at the Salini Resort. Group chairman Nazzareno Vassallo, Group CEO Pio Vassallo and Vassallo Builders CEO Jonathan Buttigieg all delivered speeches, while psychologist Patrick J. Psaila led the session.



Hand in Hand gets new premises

An agreement was signed between Vassallo Group Realty and Hand in Hand Ltd for the use of Palazzo Zondadari in Rabat to serve as Hand in Hand's new premises.

Vassallo Group dress-down raises €10,000 for Puttinu

Vassallo Group CEO Pio Vassallo presented €10,000 collected through the Group's annual dress-down day to Dr Victor Calvagna on behalf of Puttinu Cares.

Vassallo Group takes pride in organising events to help out the community as part of its corporate social responsibility. Through this initiative managers and employees were invited to donate hours or days of leave to help in raising an attractive sum.

Director of HR & Communications Charlo Bonnici, as well as HR representatives from Vassallo Builders, CareMalta, CaterEssence and Vassallo Group attended the presentation held at Mater Dei Hospital.



Dementia on the agenda

Dementia was the topic of this year's CareMalta Forum where Active Ageing Parliamentary Secretary Anthony Agius Decelis, Prof. Charles Xerri and Rosette Farrugia Bonello discussed the facts and the rights of persons with dementia.



Group seminars

Vassallo Group organised various seminars this all covering different aspects. These included one on The Customer is God, where the importance of the relationships built with customers and securing customer retention was discussed by Think Talent. Another seminar held on the GDPR new data protection law was delivered by Fenech and Fenech Associates; Wasteserv gave a seminar titled Don't Waste Waste to raise awareness on the importance of recycling and waste management; employees' wellbeing at work was discussed with speakers from Maravilhosa in Cyprus and representatives from the Richmond Foundation.

Richard Clough

It is with great sorrow that we announce the passing of our friend and colleague Mr. Richard Clough. Mr Clough was a board member of CareMalta for 21 years before his retirement and was a great contributor to the company's history while also reinforcing the importance of high standards and quality of care. Our sincerest condolences go to his loved ones.



New-look boardroom

Vassallo Group inaugurated its main boardroom in January following a revamp that maintained a touch of tradition and history, that represents the Group's identity. Group chairman Nazzareno Vassallo was pleasantly surprised when he unveiled a painting of himself during the ceremony.



Chairman's Lunch

The annual Chairman's Lunch, organised by Vassallo Group, was held at the Phoenicia Hotel. Group Chairman Nazzareno Vassallo, who hosted this special event, spoke about the Group's accomplishments during the year and future projects. Around 150 guests, including major stakeholders, directors and employees within the Group attended and were presented with a book as well as a yearly publication of *Arkati Magazine*.



Elderly leave a mark with the Pope

A number of personalised cards containing more than 1,500 fingerprints from every resident of CareMalta's homes were presented to Pope Francis on the occasion of CareMalta's 25th anniversary.

Vassallo Group chairman Nazzareno Vassallo, accompanied by CareMalta CEO Natalie Briffa Farrugia and the company's management team, presented this special gift to His Holiness, following a teambuilding exercise in Rome.

Casa Marija – CareMalta's new nursing home

Casa Marija, which is located in the heart of Sliema, in Manuel Dimech Street, opened its doors this summer. This is CareMalta's ninth home for the elderly and is run by Josiann Sammut, who was promoted as Facility Manager following her role as Deputy Nursing Manager at Casa Arkati.

Josiann has been working with CareMalta since 2001, where she started her employment as a care assistant at Casa Arkati. Ms Sammut has a BSc in Health Sciences with University of Malta and an MSc in tissue viability from the University of Hertfordshire, UK.



I Care – the language of care

CareMalta, which this year celebrated its 25th anniversary, launched an ambitious service excellence training programme for all its employees called *I Care*. Developed together with the company's training partners, Think Talent, *I Care* takes the quality of service offered by the company to the next level.

Three one-hour events, hosted by actor and presenter Malcolm Galea, were delivered in one day to reach over 1,000 employees. The launch included special messages by former international footballer Carmel Busuttil, TV personality Claire Agius and President Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca who spoke about professionalism, engagement and compassion – the three pillars of the *I Care* Programme.

CareMalta's CEO Natalie Briffa Farrugia said: "*I Care* is not a set of instructions, policies or procedures. We want *I Care* to become our common language; a language each one of us speaks no matter their job and circumstance."





Casa Arkati celebrates 25th anniversary

Casa Arkati, the first purposely built private owned home for the elderly, celebrated its 25th anniversary on August 1 with a Mass celebrated by Fr Joe Cilia and Fr Nazzareno Saliba.

Located in Mosta, overlooking the evergreen Wied il-Għasel, Casa Arkati is built on the values of integrity, quality and care.

Vassallo Group chairman Nazzareno Vassallo and CareMalta CEO Natalie Briffa Farrugia gave a speech to mark this milestone, and afterwards, guests and residents could enjoy a special lunch and entertainment provided by singer Joe Cutajar. The cake was provided by CaterEssence, the Vassallo Group's catering arm.



CareMalta team goes the extra mile to mark silver anniversary

A team of 66 employees and professionals from CareMalta celebrated the company's silver anniversary by taking part in the Vodafone Malta Half Marathon/Walkathon in February to promote a healthy lifestyle.

The team, which included Group chairman Nazzareno Vassallo, Group CEO Pio Vassallo and CareMalta CEO Natalie Briffa Farrugia, took part in the aptly named challenge #zerototwentyfive to mark the company's 25-year journey in the health sector.

CareMalta CEO Natalie Briffa Farrugia said: "The aim of this challenge was not solely to promote physical activity, but we also wanted to mark CareMalta's 25 years in the elderly sector.

"Experience has shown that we can only reach our goals through resilience, dedication, ambition and teamwork."

Christmas at CareMalta

CareMalta gathered residents from all its homes for a special event at the Eden Lodge in Zurrieq last December, with Mass and a special lunch to celebrate Christmas together. President Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca attended this event and shared her thoughts with the elderly. A cheque was also presented to the Malta Community Chest Fund after staff raised money during a dress-down day at Vassallo Group.



CareMalta invests in the latest emergency evacuation mobility equipment

CareMalta has equipped all its homes with the latest state-of-the-art fireproof equipment to ensure the safety of all residents and staff in the case of an emergency.

Following discussions with Escape Mobility International BV, all homes are now equipped with evacuation sheets and chairs to help transport bedridden and wheelchair-bound residents through emergency staircases.

A company representative visited Malta for a week-long training programme to cover all aspects of an emergency evacuation process. In-house trainers were also appointed to become fully qualified representatives and they will in turn continue training each and every employee internally.



A revamped Villa Messina opens its doors

Villa Messina, which underwent an extensive two-year refurbishment, was inaugurated by Prime Minister Joseph Muscat in April.

The refurbishment of the Rabat home, which had been running successfully for 20 years, included an upgrade of all the bedrooms and bathrooms, the installation of dementia-friendly measures, and an upgrade of the beds to encourage further independence and comfort.

The new design provides an environment where residents can enjoy a modern atmosphere, and includes a new multipurpose room, a chapel and a wellness centre in line with the organisation's active ageing philosophy.

CareMalta CEO Natalie Briffa Farrugia gave an introductory message that was followed by a speech from



Vassallo Group chairman Nazzareno Vassallo. Dr Muscat then unveiled a commemorative plaque.

Villa Messina first opened its doors on August 31, 1996, and was the third home to be operated by CareMalta following Casa Arkati and the Zejtun Home. The units within this complex will be available during the first quarter of 2020.



97-year-old wins Nazzareno Vassallo Award

Joseph Borg Bonello, a 97-year-old resident at Zammit Clapp Home for the Elderly, was awarded this year's Nazzareno Vassallo Award for his untiring contribution in various sectors of society.

Joseph is still active as president of the Anglo Maltese League, the Malta Billiards and Snookers Association and the Zammit Clapp residents' committee, as well as chairman of the Friends of Mount Carmel Hospital committee.

The selection board was chaired by former Prime

Minister Lawrence Gonzi and included PR strategist Ariadne Massa, university lecturer Holger Saliba and gerontology expert Rosette Farrugia Bonello.

During the same event former minister Joseph Micallef Stafrace was awarded for his long contribution to the political and legal sectors. The board also noted how he remained prolific as a writer following the publication of his latest book *Mill-ħażna ta' tifikritet*.

This was the 20th anniversary since this award started being given by CareMalta.

Mellieha home celebrates 10th anniversary

Dar il-Madonna tal-Mellieha celebrated its 10th anniversary by inviting President Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca to a special event that started off with Mass, followed by a reception to celebrate this occasion with the home's residents.



CareMalta's first Table Tennis Tournament

CareMalta's management organised its first Table Tennis Tournament by gathering residents from all its facilities to converge at Casa San Paolo in Bugibba last March. The event, organised together with the Table Tennis Association of Malta, included friendly competitive rallies between residents, management and staff. All participants were presented with a medal, each home received a glass trophy as a token, while the winner was presented with a special trophy.



Works on Vassallo Business Park project kick off

Construction work on the Vassallo Business Park, another project which forms part of Vassallo Group's extensive portfolio, started earlier this year.

Spread over 28,000 square metres, this area is being developed into a state-of-the-art complex spread over two levels to offer businesses the maximum flexibility.

The property will feature a 30-metre buffer zone between the development and the valley to create 6,000 square metres of landscaping. In addition, each unit will have its own mezzanine and office administration area.

The units within this complex will be available during the first quarter of 2020.

New terrace for MIRO

Set in the heart of Paceville, next door to The George Hotel, MIRO this summer inaugurated its ground restaurant and terrace.

Inspired by the world-renowned Spanish painter, sculptor and ceramicist Joan Miro, the restaurant seeks to explore new ways of dismantling traditional perceptions of food and bringing experiential dining to the table for their customers.

The official opening was led by Group chairman Nazzareno Vassallo and CaterEssence executive chairman Alex Tranter.



Vassallo Group marks International Women's Day

Vassallo Group kept its long-standing tradition to mark International Women's Day with a special lunch where more than 100 women – directors, managers and employees from across the Group – came together to celebrate.

Group chairman Nazzareno Vassallo said that 60 per cent of the workforce and 33 per cent of the Group's directors were women. The Group's intention, he said, was to keep improving on its family-friendly measures to ensure employees could successfully balance their family life with their career.



Celebrating summer

CareMalta held its summer staff party held at the Amazonia Beach Club in August.



Teambuilding goes up a notch

Vassallo Group CEO Pio Vassallo took teambuilding up a notch this year by involving more than 100 employees from all the companies within the Group. Teambuilding specialists Outdoor Living took care of the games' organisation that ranged from dance competitions to dodge ball, wrestling rounds, water games and a canoe race called War of the Dragons. The team The Invincibles lived up to their name and proved they were too powerful to be defeated. Vassallo Group believes in enhancing the work environment, values hard work, rewards loyalty and has confidence in teambuilding events like these to continue its mission of Building a Future Together.



Cultural diversity key to Group's success

A cultural diversity day was organised by Vassallo Group for the second consecutive year to celebrate the diverse working force that comes from 50 different countries across all continents. Group HR director Charlo Bonnici said: "Our success is owed to the cultural variety and the creative drive that comes from working with a diverse team. Vassallo Group believes that innovation and inspiration are further increased due to this cultural diversity."





Celebrating Christmas

The staff's Christmas party was held at the Xara Lodge in Rabat last December, where the Vassallo family ended the evening by cutting an elaborate cake designed by CaterEssence to celebrate the chairman's 50th anniversary of leading the Vassallo Group – Vassallo Builders, CareMalta, CaterEssence and Vassallo Group Realty.

CaterEssence mark end of summer

The annual CaterEssence summer staff party was held in September at Madliena Lodge.



Making up fun

This year Vassallo Group organised an alternative course for women working in different departments and companies. Make-up artists at the Inglot Mosta outlet gave their expert advice and tips about skin types, products and make-up application workshops.



Football tournament in aid of Arkati Foundation

8 teams participated in this year's Vassallo Group football tournament in aid of Arkati Foundation which was held in October. The IT Team and Ilaria DHW made it to the final match with the IT Team proving to be the stronger team as they won the tournament.





Vassallo Group gives Dar tal-Kleru a helping hand

Vassallo Group employees rolled up their sleeves in October to carry out construction jobs and alteration works at Dar tal-Kleru, a retirement and care home for priests in Birkirkara. A training session in customer care was also provided to the residence's members of staff. Group chairman Nazzareno Vassallo was present for the entire morning, supporting this event and showing his appreciation to each and every volunteer. CaterEssence also provided a variety of food items to all participants.

Showing love through blood donations

Vassallo Group supported the Blood Bank to raise awareness about the need for blood donations and employees from across the Group all turned up to take part in this noble cause on Valentine's Day. A few days later the Group also organised a seminar to educate staff about organ donation, which led to an attractive number of new registrations.



Arkati Foundation Day

This year Arkati Foundation Day was held in February to raise awareness about the Group's solidarity fund which helps employees in need. Its chairman Joe Saliba, together with other Group employees, spent a day visiting offices, CareMalta homes, Vassallo Builders sites and CaterEssence outlets.



Bring your children to work

Vassallo Group organised a Bring Your Child to Work Day in November when the children had their mid-term holidays. The children enjoyed a fun-filled morning of games, cooking and baking, treasure hunts and lunch at their parents' workplace.



Summer nights

The Vassallo Builders summer staff party was held in August where a BBQ buffet was organised, including an open bar and plenty of fun, including karaoke songs for the staff to sing the night away.

Standing out from the crowd

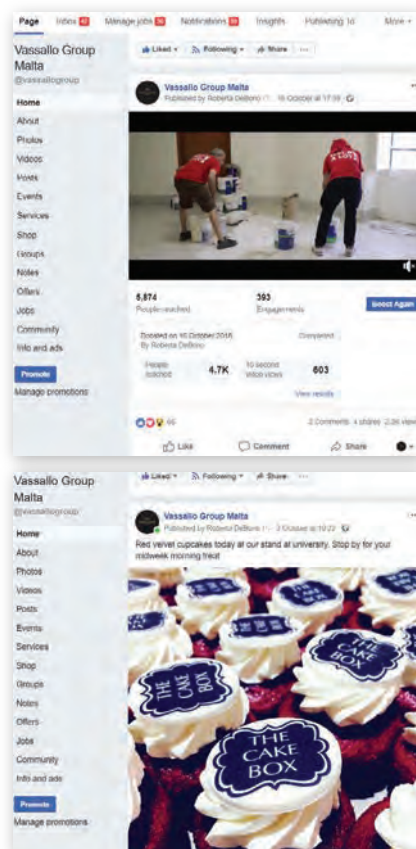
What do Casa Arkati resident Grace Galea, Vassallo Group CEO Pio Vassallo and Femia, a Filipino carer at Villa Messina, have in common?

At a glance – with their varying ages, occupations and nationalities – very little. Yet through their connection to Vassallo Group, they have all had a snapshot of their diverse lives featured as a vlog on the Vassallo Group Facebook page.

Vlogs are just one form of interesting content that populate the Vassallo Group's social media page. HR and Communications director Charlo Bonnici explains that throughout 2018, the Group focused on strengthening the presence of the Group itself and its various brands on the web and across social media platforms.

For this to be properly carried out, the marketing department was split into two sections: traditional marketing (working with media such as print, radio and TV) and digital marketing, which focuses on strengthening social media platforms currently in use and keeping a keen eye on emerging platforms.

In the frenetic race to attract talent, the creation and sharing of attractive and interesting content has been proven



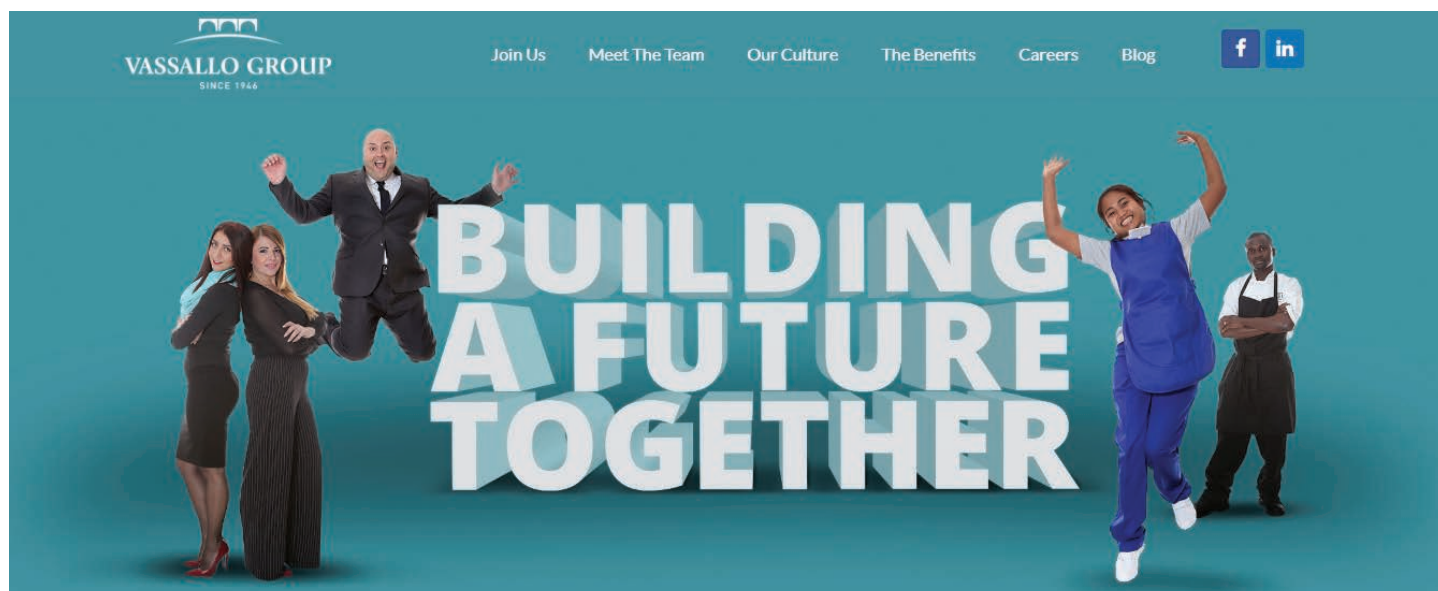
to be crucial, Charlo notes. In fact, the past year also saw an increase in the Group's use of platforms such as LinkedIn, Twitter and Instagram.

For recruitment purposes, the microsite lifeatvassallogroup.com was created. It lists any vacancies available but also offers a snapshot of the different activities organised throughout the year and what it means to work at Vassallo Group.

Charlo acknowledges that in today's burgeoning job market, offering an attractive salary is not enough. A company must differentiate itself and offer added value attract the right talent and solidify the business.

As part of its employer value proposition, the site lists 10 reasons why a person should work for the Group, including rewarding hard work and loyalty through performance bonuses and the retirement bonus scheme, as well as offering family-friendly alternatives to help structure one's work-life balance.

"We invite all those interested in joining us to visit the site to get a taste of what life at Vassallo Group looks like. In a nutshell, if you want to hop on board, this is what you get." 🍌



Talkin' 'bout my generation

MEET **JULIA CIPRIOTT**
AND **JIMMY BORG**,
THE YOUNGEST AND
ELDEST EMPLOYEES
AT VASSALLO GROUP.

There is a 57-year gap between the youngest and eldest company employees, but they have one thing in common: they both work for CaterEssence.

Julia has held the role of café assistant at Cake Box's Mosta outlet since July. This is her very first job, and while many opt to quit their 'summer job' with the onset of the academic year, the 17-year-old has found great support in a flexible roster that is tailored around her school hours.

Apart from the practical café server skills she acquired over the past few months, Julia has also gained some handy communication skills during her day-to-day dealings with clients.

She believes the bond among employees and the respect she receives from her colleagues fuels her



motivation at work: "No matter how old they are, how long they have been in this job or their seniority, my colleagues treat each other as equals."

Jimmy Borg, 74, is one of these employees who although having been employed with Cater Essence for four years is very much part of the family.

He inherited the butcher's skills from his grandparents, starting his

own career at 15. Back then he was taught the 'old-school' style, using just knives to carve the meat.

"The job of a butcher requires knowledge of dissecting a whole animal, choosing its various parts for different cuts and delicacies, and then developing cooking or curing methods for each cut... all the time making sure you don't waste any part of the animal," he says proudly.

Jimmy acquired the skill of smoking meat by practising different cooking methods in an oven he built himself. His ways have developed in accordance with emerging trends, as he learnt to adapt to clients' demands, such as preparing meat for the first Chinese food caterer in Malta, and accommodating requests for spare ribs by Americans who stopped by the island in the 1970s.

Sadly he has no one to pass the skills on to, and after closing his Mosta butcher shop, he started working for a company that specialised in meat, before moving to CaterEssence, where he too has found a second family. ■





Making Learning Work

What started off as a training centre for present and prospective employees has been transformed into a full-blown academy that has now set its sights on providing online and remote training.

CareMalta has always trained its own employees, and around eight years ago the company started providing accredited courses, in collaboration with the City and Guilds.

In 2013, the CareMalta Academy was officially set up, and five years down the line it is getting a facelift. The rebranding provides a fresh identity to the academy, which has branched away from CareMalta and now has its own website.

Backed by 25 years of experience in the care sector, there has been a shift from training in-house employees to people who work outside of the company, with students hailing from around the globe, including North Africa and Asia. Over the past five years, more than 1,200 students received a qualification from the academy.

As it continued to grow, the academy started providing homegrown courses, debuting with a course in leadership and management. This Level Four Award in Leadership and Management targets aspiring middle

managers who wish to nurture skills such as problem solving and decision-making, performance management, delegation and motivation.

And while the academy already provides a Level Three qualification in healthcare in collaboration with City and Guilds, it is also planning on providing a Level Four homegrown course based on CareMalta's 25 years of experience.

The knowledge the company attained over the years allows the academy to be sensitive to growing issues such as the prevalence of dementia in our ageing population. The academy's curriculum in fact includes a Level Four Award in Dementia Care provided in collaboration with Mcast.

"We are always looking at increasing the level of our

“

We are always looking at increasing the level of our qualifications



qualifications so that employees can continue to develop professionally. One of our biggest satisfactions is that there are a large number of qualified CareMalta employees who had no qualifications under their belt when they first joined," Charlo Bonnici, Director of the CareMalta Academy explained.

The courses are varied, and new ventures include qualifications in professional service within the hospitality, food and beverage sectors. ■

The Arkati Foundation

Financial Statements

30 November 2017

Income and Expenditure Account

Year ended 30 November 2017


	Note	2017 €	2016 €
Revenue			
Investment income		11,038	10,767
Donations		34,140	31,633
Fees and charges		(67)	(18)
Tax at source		(1,503)	(1,425)
		43,608	40,957
Less loss on redemption of financial assets			(931)
Excess of income over expenditure		43,608	40,026
Allocated to:			
Accumulated funds		21,804	20,013
Distributable fund 2015/16	4	21,804	20,013
		43,608	40,026

Statement of Affairs

30 November 2017

	Note	2017 €	2016 €
ASSETS AND LIABILITIES			
Non-current assets			
Financial assets	5	261,493	228,032
Current assets			
Other receivables		3,461	2,093
Cash and cash equivalents	6	50,196	46,142
		53,657	48,234
Total assets		315,150	276,266
Current liabilities			
Distributable income		38,451	33,293
Net assets		276,699	242,973
Represented by:-			
Capital Fund	7	11,647	11,647
Distributable fund	4	38,451	33,293
Accumulated fund	8	226,601	198,033
		276,699	242,973

These financial statements were approved by the board members, authorised for issue on 30 July 2018 and signed on its behalf by:


President


Member



WWW.CAREMALTA.COM





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