

# In conversation with...

**Mattia Adani**, CEO Nowal Chimica – with Tina Reading



One of the things I love most about being a magazine editor is the opportunity to meet new people and learn from them. Having the opportunity to interview global leaders in music, sport and film has been a genuine highlight for me over the years and now I find myself in the petrochemical industry, I am meeting equally celebrated individuals who are using their unique talents and skills to unify this global industry.

Today I met Mattia Adani, what a phenomenal force of nature this chap is! Grab a coffee and sit tight as I take you on the roller coaster journey that is his career to date (I say to date because having spent only an hour with this gentleman I am slightly in awe and wondering what he will do next).

Born in January in 1973, by the age of 29, Mattia had achieved two degrees in engineering (in both France and Italy) and a degree in Public Administration from Harvard! At this juncture I must mention that in-between the engineering and Boston detour, he worked for McKinsey & Co and left a highly paid role to go back to University! This is the first indication of the man I am interviewing, he does not play by the rule book of life.

Following his studies Mattia joined the Italian Government in the Treasury Department (he took a 50% pay cut from his previous paid role to take this job), are we getting the picture? Drawing on his experience from McKinsey, here he working with shareholders on the privatisation of energy companies.

In 2010, Mattia moves to the Inter-American Development Bank in Washington for 3 years representing Italy, Germany, Belgium, Switzerland, Netherlands, Israel and China in international financial trades and acquisitions. Now here we have a crunch, not a financial one but a personal one. Having spent most of his life working in different countries and

crossing more borders than most of us have holidays, Mattia made the decision for himself, and his family (wife and 3 children) that some stability was needed, and he wanted to re-adjust family life/work balance. Plus a longing to be an entrepreneur meant that he made the decision to return to the family businesses. Did we not mention they owned Nowal Chimica?

When he returned to Milan and the business, the company was not entirely family owned so he spent the first two years requisitioning shares so two years later the company was back firmly 100% in family hands. For Mattia with his dreams of being in business for himself, it was now or never, he had acquired the acumen, a proven scholar and had the energy to move this company forward.

Mattia graciously explained to this industry newbie that metalworking is the 2nd largest sector in the Italian economy, it cradles both manufacturing and chemical. For his chemical relatives it is part of sharing health and safety, collaboration in working for all. For his manufacturing family it is about maintaining their market position in a declining market as automotive transitions to EV. As he said, there will always be a need for lubricants. They might be 1-2% of your overall manufacturing cost so you don't really care, until they are not there and your factory stops production, then you notice the lubricant, then you care!'.

As the industry has faced many challenges over the past few years with supply chain strangulation, a global pandemic, a European war, a credit crunch – can any of us foresee where the industry will now go? As Mattia explains for the rest of our lives we will need lubricants. Yes the industry is making clear moves to EV, but there will still be a need as steel becomes aluminium, brass becomes carbon fibre. And what about the military or haulage? These sectors will still need our oils and greases as the required technology for these distances and weight loads is still a long time in development.

'The supply chain of old just does not exist anymore', explains Mattia. 'Long gone are the days of 'just in time' manufacture; we need to look at our operational stock, supply flow. Supplier trust is hard to build but easy to lose so now, more than ever, we must build on our relationships, open communication and collaboration and show more value in local, credible suppliers'.

I had the most fascinating hour listening to Mattia and I will leave you with two things he said that have stuck with me since the interview:

'You can be small, but be a voice that is represented in the European Association, helping to shape the industry'.

'If we go alone we go faster, if we go together, we go further'.

Fascinating man and story, we can't wait to see where his journey goes next!

<https://www.nowalchimica.it>



Expanded version of the article is available online at [lube-media.com](http://lube-media.com)