

## **Expansion Through Cooperation and Innovation, The Warsaw Voice**

**Bartosz Boćko, President of Toorank Polska SA, talks to Bożenna Osucha.**

### **What is building a competitive edge about?**

It is about thinking and acting long term. Creating a business from scratch is an art. Developing a new organization—in any sector, including the non-profit one—is an activity which takes many years. Although the future is uncertain, we should have a long-term plan. In Polish businesses, there is a significant turnover of staff while undertakings last some three to five years, as indicated by numerous surveys. But we have to answer the question: What would we like our organization to be like relative to its environment in 10 years? This is the time frame that enables building stable foundations for new undertakings, with the right choice of a) technology and techniques, b) products, c) method of placing the product on the market, d) partners and e) staff, who will be building a competitive edge with us (see: Toorank Polska SA and the Miodula product, [www.miodula.pl](http://www.miodula.pl)).

### **Is it possible for a company to stand out in producing goods for the mass market?**

It is—through well-chosen partners, thanks to whom we shape our image and create an opportunity for the organization to expand. Our prospective and existing clients, as well as our rivals, see us through the prism of our relationships. Thanks to well-chosen agreements we are able to manage resources better. This includes better knowledge management, which involves acquiring, developing, codifying, transferring and using knowledge about our mass-consumer product, which requires a special approach if we are to win the battle for customers.

### **What about cooperating with the competition? Does a company need to have a strategic plan?**

In Poland, we are learning how to cooperate, while in developed countries it is something that is already well known. In Poland, we still have a “lone wolf” strategy. Polish businesses are still learning not only how to cooperate with the competition— something known as “coopetition”—but above all how to cooperate in general.

### **Do Polish products have a chance for international expansion?**

Of course, we have a chance to make products on an international scale, although investment in new solutions and innovation is a big problem. Investment in research and development accounts for a mere 0.2 percent of Poland's GDP, which means we rank near the bottom among European Union countries (see [www.zarzadzanie.net.pl](http://www.zarzadzanie.net.pl)). In order to stand out we have to properly invest our financial resources in innovative solutions and remember about the need to work together.

### **Have you succeeded in doing so yourselves?**

We have and this is reflected in the figures. In 1999, when we started to restructure the firm, which had already been operating in Poland for three years, we had average annual sales of around 800,000 euros. Now, our sales have reached 10 million euros. We have accomplished the task.