

Geico celebrating a hat-trick of awards

By: Jon Knox

Italian paint technology specialist company Geico is celebrating the receipt of a number of major accolades in the first half of 2014.

The first award was given during the international Surcar Congress in Shanghai in April, where customers and suppliers in the automotive industry met to examine the trends and the innovative technologies of the body painting process. During this annual conference representatives of different companies are chosen to make a presentation of their ideas for the future of automotive industry to many of the top decision-making managers in the industry.

A jury – made up of members of the International Committee – selects the presentations which best stand out in terms of innovation, content and technical research criteria in their own area of expertise. Following the two days of conferences, the jury meets and selects the winners of the award for Innovation, the award for Technique and the Jury's Award.

Geico won the award in the Technology category for its paint shop project with Chinese OEM Qoros.

A second place was awarded in the Innovation category, after Henkel. The third award, which is the most important as it is made by a jury consisting of car makers and independent experts in automotive development and manufacturing, went to Geico. The company was ranked the best among the winners.

Two months later, Geico received another important recognition – this time from its top Chinese customer Qoros – and that is the Qoros Supplier Award 2013. The award follows the successful installation of the paint shop at the Qoros Plant, in Suzhou. This

fully automated plant is one of the most modern in the world. It delivers a 33% saving in energy consumption and CO₂ emissions. It has an annual capacity of 200,000 cars, which will be extended to 350,000 in two years. Geico was responsible of the entire project, both in terms of engineering and project management. It has incorporated some of Geico's most advanced technologies such as J-Flex, the dipping rotating system for pre-treatment and cathoporesis, and Dryspin, a dry scrubber.

"It certainly was a pleasure awarding you with the 'Qoros Supplier Award 2013'. We are unanimously convinced that you deserve it. It was and still is a good partnership between our two companies and we should do everything to maintain it. I am convinced that our teams jointly did a great job to achieve what we achieved," says Volker Steinwascher, Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Qoros Automotive.

Without doubt this represents the most important success for Geico whose main objective is satisfying its customers and their critical expectations towards a deep commitment towards innovation and continuous improvement, says Ali Reza Arabnia, Group Chairman, President & CEO of Geico Spa. Geico's positioning as a technology leader is attributed by him to the concept of spreading the culture of innovation throughout the entire organization. For Geico, cultural innovation is the essence of doing business, he says.

Following this approach Geico's strategy has mainly been to



Laura's Garden of Thoughts.

create added value and technological innovation in every process phase and every product segment. In the market, these aspects have always been the measure of the recognition of Geico's technological leadership, to the point where in many circumstances customers choose the Italian company, even if prices are higher than those of the competition. They choose Geico chiefly for the service offered, the quality of the products, the capacity to listen to their critical issues and the ability to overcome them, he says.

The Pardis Innovation Centre (in Cinisello Balsamo, on the outskirts of Milan) – seen by Geico as the world's most important research and development center in the sector of painting for vehicle bodies - is a tangible result of the company's philosophy. In this center, everybody (employees, partners, customers, suppliers, banks, authorities) can see for themselves the results of the research activities. It is the "perfect union" of cultural and technological innovation, the keystones of Geico's philosophy, according to Arabnia.

Inaugurated in May 2013, the new 3 500m² center is more than twice the size of the previous one. This is the embodiment of Geico's rounded concept of innovation, which allowed the company to maintain the Geico Taikisha Global Technology Centre in Italy through a strategic alliance with the major Japanese company Taikisha.

If, therefore, innovation in its broadest sense is not just technological but (most importantly) cultural as well, Geico

could not avoid giving form and substance to its philosophy. The main building, which houses Geico's engineering offices, provides access to the soul of the company- the Giardino dei Pensieri di Laura [Laura's Garden of Thoughts], an area Arabnia dedicated to his wife Laura and – in accordance with his philosophy – to all his extended family, consisting of Geico's employees.

Here there is room for human creativity, passing through a meditation area (a real Zen garden) for physical well-being, the company gym, a cultural and entertainment area (which consists in an amphitheater and a cultural gallery) and a bistro area, where employees can enjoy Italian dishes. Laura's Garden of Thoughts is a place for rest, a relaxation area where employees can isolate for daily work and open their mind to other perspectives: human resources are the company's most important asset.

"Too often people, entrepreneurs in particular, reason with the left part of their brain, the side that makes us behave highly rationally. The difference between an entrepreneur who believes in quick profits and one that believes in the future is right there, in the right side of the brain - heart, affection, love and imagination. It is a qualitative attribute, a sense of responsibility for the future," says Arabnia. He puts this entrepreneurial and life philosophy into practice in everything he does, and the success of Geico is seen as the tangible result, according to the company. **AI**

