A P&G MANAGER INSIDE GILLETTE

Ferdinando Frega — Nando the Scribe



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MANAGER P&G — INSIDE GILLETTE

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In the 1990s, Gillette Italy decided to strengthen the sales organization. They redesigned the country into geographic areas and introduced Area Managers to gain tighter control, optimize sales, and manage people with discipline.

When the time came to assign the territory Sardinia–Sicily–Calabria, my candidacy was rejected without explanation. I kept doing my job. Sometimes that's the only answer you get.

Gillette hired Rosario Russo, coming from P&G Sicily. A Sicilian from Ribera, in the Agrigento hinterland. Three natural gifts: ambition, creative instinct, people management. He didn't have a degree — and because of that, P&G blocked his rise. Professionally sidelined, he changed company. Gillette didn't know it yet, but they had just hired a disruptive force.

From the very first area meeting, the shift was clear. Gillette sold by pack. He arrived with the P&G mindset: carton, master, layer, pallet — and later truckload, trailer, full load. The veterans didn't like it. It was like walking into grandma's kitchen and telling her to change the oil she'd used all her life.

He smiled and said: “Everyone cooks with the oil they have.” That was his philosophy. Value first, numbers after. And the numbers exploded: double-digit growth every year, never below +30%.

He was pulled into the creation of the new sales canvasses. He eventually managed an area worth €30 million. Then, as happens in multinationals, they cut his territory — Sardinia was reassigned. He joked: “Every time they lower my turnover, I have no choice but to raise it again.” And every

two years, with smaller zones, he still brought it back to €30 million.

No one ever tried to fight him. He was too smart — degree or not. But time caught up with him. When Gillette acquired Duracell globally and optimized personnel, he received a significant package and was accompanied toward retirement.

I owe him a lot — professionally and personally. We respected each other, we cared for each other. Even if one day, already retired, in one of his Sicilian tempests, he accused me of having taken advantage of him. He was brilliant with numbers, forecasts, budgets, targets. But he never learned to measure intelligence, and that was his blind spot.

Honor to a man who made companies grow — and even more, made men grow. Many of them today are CEOs.

Ciao Rosario.

Ferdinando Frega

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