

## A vision of the future

This specialist in synthetic foam products is keen to meet customers' most demanding requirements.

All the company's employees are involved in a process of continuous innovation.

As an international leader in developing, producing and marketing synthetic foam products, NMC is keen to respond to the most demanding requirements from manufacturing, the interior and exterior decoration sectors, the fields of insulation and wrapping, as well as sports and leisure. The company has twenty sites across the European Union, with eleven production units, including in Belgium, Germany, Poland, Russia, the United Kingdom and the Scandinavian countries. NMC employs some twelve hundred people, of whom around four hundred at its main site at Eynatten.

### The first good idea

The taste for innovation which drives every single person in the company, finds its roots in the personality of its founder, Gert Noël, who used to say "If you want to get things to move, you'd better move yourself". After his apprenticeship in Liège, he had the idea of making life easier for housewives. He purchased polyurethane foam which he cut into little blocks in his kitchen converted into a workshop, which he then sold on to drugstores. Artificial pumice stone was born in this way. This was the young Gert's first good idea, implemented in tandem: while his wife Odette, who would go on to have four children, looked after the finances, husband Gert took care of sales.

In 1950, after finding the necessary investor in Marquet, Gert Noël founded Noël, Marquet & Cie which would, over the years, expand to what it is today, in line with its founder's philosophy: rapid growth, satisfied customers, proud employees.

### Great strength of conviction

A natural creator, Gert Noël possessed, according to his wife, a particular talent for inventing new products. And once he had clearly worked them out, he moved into action with great strength of conviction. In 1982, Gert Noël retired from the business, leaving the reins to his oldest son Yves. All this did not prevent the patriarch, now chairman of the board, from continuing his research and giving it concrete shape. These include the synthetic cork which he patented in the early 1990s. This revolutionary product makes it possible to prevent the

wastage of wines which have taken on this highly disagreeable cork taste.

The company deriving from this ingenious idea, Nomacorc (also mentioned by the Schumpeter Group among the 25 innovative companies), was subsequently sold to a U.S. group. Gert Noël disappeared in 1998, leaving behind him, as was his ambition, an exceptional undertaking, still impregnated with his vision of the future. More than forty highly qualified researchers today work in the Research and Development department at Eynatten. Faithful to the founder's impulse, they work full-time on developing solutions for the future which are respectful of the environment and offer ideal responses to customers' needs. This can involve protecting goods during transportation, in the automotive or construction industries, or works of art, or achieving the most harmonious matching between decorative mouldings and rosettes, or giving terrace floors a wood appearance without all the inconvenience of this material and with a positive ecological effect.

## New challenges

In every case, the key thing is to provide responses tailored to customers' varying requirements. New avenues are being constantly explored, such as innovative nanotechnology, leading to new challenges to be met. Each of the company's employees is involved in a process of permanent innovation. "One key principle at NMC has always been to allow competent persons to collaborate freely, so that exceptional things." And no matter the occasional failure. Indeed the NMC charter states "*We will succeed together.*" The company's international development led Yves Noël, as an enlightened entrepreneur worthy of his father, to declare that in the future another type of manager would be required. In 1998 he entrusted MNC's management to Hubert Bosten, a figure from outside the family, but well known in the region as the 'Bostens' have for several generations managed the famous hotel in Eupen.

Yves Noël, now chairman of the board, continues to promote the values dear to the founder: the desire to innovate, a concern to grow sustainably, and respect for employees and the environment. No surprise that the drive leading to the company's Eynatten headquarters was officially named Gert-Noël-Strasse" in 2007, and that King Albert II knighted Yves Noël in 2008, in recognition of the 'Noël model'.



Yves Noel and Hubert Bosten – Innovation promoters