

THE HENOKIENS

FAMILY BUSINESS HISTORY

Have you ever heard about the Henokiens ? A very strange name for a family business association, with only 32 members in the whole world.

The name was an idea by Gérard Glotin, manager of Marie Brizard, who in the early 1980's decided to create an association of bicentenary companies still managed by the founders' descendants. It took one year of research, the help of 164 chambers of commerce and 25 embassy commercial attachés to get in touch with 174 companies. Of these, however, only a few were able to meet the four difficult criteria to become a member: the company must have a minimum of 200 years of age, the present manager must be a descendant of the founder, the family must still be owning the majority of the capital and the company must be in good financial health.

For Gérard Glotin, the name Henok, a patriarch in the Bible who lived for 365 years and then was taken up into heaven without dying, was a perfect symbol of longevity and continuity for a business association of ancient family companies.

Now, 22 years later, all of the 32 companies from seven different countries are proud to be Henokien members. The Association, whose president today is Pina Amarelli, is not a brotherhood, and the sectors in which the members carry out their activities are very diversified (craft, service, edition, and industry). It is not a business club either, because the members are not exchanging services but only ideas. All together, these companies represent more than 86 centuries of business activity! Should you like to discover their stories, you can look up the Internet site of the Henokiens Association, which has just been revised (www.henokiens.com).

The main reasons for creating this association were to share experience between managers of family companies and to transmit to the public, particularly the media, the academic world and the young generations, the idea that it is possible to combine efficiency and dynamism with tradition. The Henokiens members participate in conferences and family business events and seek to identify outstanding family companies by rewarding them with a special Prize. Two specific points in the functioning of the Association are its yearly general meeting, hosted by one of the members, and each year the Henokiens organize a day of information in partnership with a business school or a university, in which the next generations are particularly invited to participate.

For the future, the Association's ambitions are first of all to continue showing the adaptability of some of the oldest companies in the world, secondly to create with other ancient family enterprises the first European Historical Companies Itinerary, to allow the public to discover them while visiting a region and, of course, to grow by recruiting two or three new members per year.

Gérard Lipovitch
The Henokiens, Association of
Bicentenary Family Companies

Source : *F.B.N. (The Family Business Network)*
NEWSLETTER N° 36 November 2003