

CASE STUDY

Described for the project: "The Hexagonal Leader"

Name of the organization

QUALICA RD

Website of the organization

<https://www.qualicard.eu>

Logotype of the organization



Type of organization

- Business organization
 Public administration
 NGO's
 Others (what kind?)

Size of the organization

- Small
 Medium
 Large

Economic sector

Technology

Brief description of the organization



Qualica-RD is a company dedicated to the identification and time and access control of workers. It was founded in July 2012 in Cordoba by Javier Gómez and Alejandro Gómez, a law graduate and an agricultural engineer, who decided to combine their experience in the automatic identification sector to focus on a vocational project. They are currently wholesalers in automatic identification systems using plastic cards, tags and biometrics, with an innovative business model based on the development of customised software and hardware and aimed directly at distributors, allowing them to be present in thirteen countries. In this way they have managed to secure not only the plastic card printer business but also the consumable business.

Case study description (situation / the problem they are facing) [max 2000 characters]

In June 2012, Francisco Javier Gómez and his brother Alejandro, found the letter of dismissal on the table. "They used us to get a big client, and then they fired us. Sometimes, when you get the numbers you get thrown out. We had a hard time because we were fired at the worst possible time", Francisco Javier remembers today. In fact, it wasn't the best time, nor were the forms supposed to be very elegant, but they didn't give it much thought either, they went to the unemployment office to find out how much they were entitled to, they both asked for the respective 15.000 euros of unemployment benefit in a single payment and went home.

"We had nothing. We had been working for years in the field of personal identification card printing, access control and timekeeping systems and had been left on the streets. So the crisis was the door that was opened for us to fly solo. To take one more leap and become a manufacturer", adds Alejandro Gómez.

This was in June 2012, at the worst moment of the economic crisis of the past decade. This recession particularly affected Spain and was devastating for the creation of new companies. In July of the same year, Qualica R-D was born, an automatic identification system using plastic card printing to which biometric features and developments were added.

They launched the company in July 2012. A month later they started to make, literally, their August. They started exporting to Nigeria, Sweden, Portugal and Russia. As for the acquisition of contracts, also in the summer month they were entrusted with the implementation of the identification cards for the Paralympic Games in London 2012 and the America's Cup. And as if that were not enough, they were

able to achieve the project for the installation of the high security card printing systems for the Ibero-American Summit.

One year after it was launched on the market, it had a turnover of 1.2 million euros and was selling in 12 countries, now in 43 from four continents, with customers the size of Ikea.

Suggested solutions (added pros and cons)

The solution was to introduce from the beginning a change in the market vision, discarding from the beginning a growth based on the national market and focusing on the development of a quality product in the international market. Today the trend has been reversed and most of its business is in Spain, but the balance has gradually shifted from an initial starting point marked by economic circumstances.

Another solution needed in a sector as active as technology was innovation, not only in the market perspective, but also in the product itself. To do so, they researched the needs of their clients and even developed their readers based on the requests of some of them, thinking from the particulars of a specific case to the general as a business idea. Thus was born "a biometric device, with a fingerprint reader and autonomous. There is nothing like it on the market, because it incorporates a fingerprint reader with memory, a battery that allows it to be autonomous and a USB connection".

In this line, for a company to be successful, one concept is basic: to be different from the rest. For Francisco Javier Gómez, his strong point is the business model, based fundamentally on the large projects that require the services of these printers, their cards and the company's software. "That's where we are very good, because we are able to adapt to almost any market need", they say from the company, because "we adapt to the needs offered by traditional printer manufacturers, because they don't dominate it".

Chosen solution

To have an open mind and an international vision to look for places where the economic crisis would have less profound effects than in Spain. To this was added the search for a product that had a clear added value in the international market, leaving in the background not only the nearest market but also the national one.

The second solution was to have a growth mentality and be open at all times to the development of new products and business lines.

From that point, there were two ways for Qualica-RD to make its dream come true. Either by becoming a manufacturer of the necessary hardware - a card printer - or by having others manufacture the devices for them. "We opted for the second option, which was the most economical. We looked for the right suppliers and they made us a tailor-made machine", stresses Francisco Javier.

The company differs from the rest by its range of applications and by a commercial policy that protects prices and guarantees market share and economic benefits. In line with this strategy, at national level, Qualica-RD works with distributors and wholesalers, selecting prices very carefully and protecting them from market fluctuations. For example, the elimination of discounts on Internet sales. Similarly, in the international market, the company has sought a single distributor per country. "We go to the biggest wholesalers and stay with them. Thus, when a project arises it only has two options: opting for the usual product with five other companies offering the same at a lower price or working with our exclusive product in which the entire market for our printer and cards is reserved", he adds.

"We anticipate what the market will do and where it will go and it also allows us to live from our work without investment from third parties as we have learned to exploit that vision and that ability to create products that make sense and are useful," stresses Alejandro.

Rationale of the decision taken

"From the first minute we set up the company we knew we were not at the best time or in the best place to set it up. It wasn't the right time and the market wasn't in the best situation," says Francisco Gómez, "so we looked for another market with a product that was suitable for those countries. "At that time, that product was not for Spain, so we decided not to waste time even though it was our country," adds the founder of Qualica RD. "Today Spain is our main client, but then we had to look for others outside, and thanks to that we are in 43 countries in Europe, Asia, America and Africa".

Solution implemented in practice

"The great solution we implemented was to be clear that we had to grow, because what we had at the beginning was not enough. We introduced meaningful verticals and new products that had to do with our original segment in one way or another," says Francisco Gómez, one of the company's founders.

Another solution has been the permanent adaptation of our products to the needs of the market, developing ideas adapted to the moment. Thus, in recent months the company has developed COVID temperature readers for access control, handheld terminals to measure temperature and, in the end, open up new business avenues. "We soon understood that although our company was dedicated to the production and development of identification cards, we had to diversify and not just stay there, but extend it to card production machines, consumables, terminals and many more products", says Gómez.

In fact, the business model itself is one of the great hallmarks of Qualica RD and probably the best decision they made since their first steps. In fact, and after doing an in-depth market study, this solution was one of the factors that the experts highlighted when the Gómez brothers presented their company at the University of Cambridge. "As wholesalers, we had suffered a lot from manufacturers' commercial policies, which are terrible. They give free rein to many distributors per country and they end up burning each other out, driving down prices and leaving them with very little profit margin. Our idea was to go against the tide and have our own product; in this case, our own printer and create a different distribution policy that is very protective of the distribution channel and of the product itself, so that neither of us is burnt out," explains Francisco Javier.

Lesson learned

The need to take risks and have a clear vision of what you want your business to be and how to develop an idea. Without risk or vision it is impossible to grow. "The great lesson we learned was to have faith in a vision even though the idea may seem silly," says Francisco Gómez, founder of the company along with his brother Alejandro. "That has nothing to do with being obsessed with an idea that doesn't succeed, because if it doesn't work, it's not worth insisting, because it's not going to work. But if it has worked once, it can work several times," he insists, "because you have to know how to smell what can work or not, try it, test it and obtain a result that will help you take the next steps.

From another point of view, and prior to the launch of the business, one of the main lessons learned by the founders of Qualica RD was the need to properly manage emotions when facing negative and even unpleasant situations, as in their case was the dismissal suffered by a company where they worked for

direct relatives. "We knew we were good at what we do," they continue to say today, recalling a key moment in their lives and professional careers, the same day that instead of going home to lament their situation they decided to start up and run their own company. "The stronger they hit you, the stronger you get up. If they don't eliminate you, all the negative experience you've had helps you start over with more desire than ever. In those moments there is no stopping you", say the founders of the company.

And another of the lessons learnt has to do with the mentality and the fact of coming from Cordoba, a small city with little entrepreneurial vocation and a certain reputation for conformity. "The Cordoba mentality is very peculiar, as it tends to think that what is made in Cordoba is not good and it trusts more than what is made outside", the company points out, although its international experience has allowed it to participate in international meetings. In one of them, with technological entrepreneurs from Silicon Valley, they were able to show off their talent and their products, coming to the conclusion that "they are neither better nor worse than us in terms of ideas or companies, but they do have the advantage of having a dynamic society".

As for the human factor, one of the most important lessons developed by the company has been the investment in equipment and the value given to people. From its founding by the Gómez brothers to the present day, Qualica RD is especially proud of the fact that it has never fired anyone, choosing its staff both for their confidence and for their talent, which has ensured that the workforce is maintained and grows as the company increases in size.

Connection to the six skills depicted in the project

The case study depicted is aligned with some of the six basic skills described in The Hexagonal Leader project. Here are some of the most relevant ones:

- **Emotional intelligence.** Although emotional management is something that can be considered quite distant from the technological field, emotional management has been present in Qualica RD since its foundation, when the Gómez brothers had to overcome the tough personal and professional situation of being fired by a family business to get back on their feet and found their own company. At the same time, the founders have been able to transfer the importance of interpersonal relationships both with their own staff and with clients and suppliers, which has opened doors for them due to their enormous quality and professionalism, but also simplicity and close treatment.
- **Decision making.** The strategic decisions made by the managers have always been aligned with values of contribution to society and constant growth, diversifying its production, expanding its audience, seeking new markets abroad under an international commercial strategy and accepting challenges that represent the commercial and human development of the company.

- Qualica RD is a clear example of **Growth mindset**. From their beginnings, they have tried new things, experimented, made mistakes and corrected them along the way, rejecting what didn't work after trying to see what might.