Branko Roglić, the founder and CEO of Orbico Group, has plenty of reasons to smile. In 1987, he started the Orbico venture to provide distribution services to the businesses and people of Switzerland which, over the course of three decades, has grown exponentially. Today it operates across nineteen countries and employs close to 5,000 staff. Branko has kept the company afloat despite many challenging times — including three periods of warfare — and he has maintained its family values all the way through, promoting a culture of honesty and integrity. Furthermore, he is proud to say that Orbico has hit a record turnover of US$1.7 billion this year.

“I founded Orbico in 1987 in Switzerland and as I grew the business country by country, expanding into new geographic regions, I had plenty of challenges thrown my way,” Branko recalls. “I opened Orbico in Slovenia before the Ten-Day War which led to the country’s declaration of independence in 1991. I had operations in Yugoslavia when, in the early 90s, the constituent republics split apart as a result of political upheavals and conflicts. Then there was the time Serbia attacked Croatia and another war was fought. I’ve continued to grow Orbico’s operations even despite these three wars, all of which we managed to survive. I was still doing business during these difficult times.

“My largest success is that the organisation is still growing. It is a long-term organisation and I think we will be around for many years to come. I have a...
very good relationship with my managers — we have about 150 people in management — as well as the rest of my staff. Together we are one organisation and a very strong one at that. We can beat any competition.”

Orbico is now a leading distributor of a large number of global brands, supplying a wide range of products including beauty care, food, pharmaceuticals, toys, cigarettes, and motor oil to customers like large international chains, local retailers, wholesalers, drugstores, pharmacies, B2B companies, and specialised sales channels. Distributing such an extensive range of goods to serve a highly diverse client base requires a large degree of flexibility, as well as an openness to change. According to Branko, Orbico has mastered the art of being flexible and is able to quickly adapt to the wants and needs of the markets in which it operates. Being a family-owned and -operated business also helps with this agility, as well as boasting myriad other benefits.

“I 100-per-cent own the company and this makes investing in it much easier,” Branko explains. “I am not having to pay someone else with my profits. I am reinvesting most of the volume of profits back into the needs of the company. I am very low on loans and I have no outstanding money borrowed from the banks. Decisions can be made very quickly as well because there is no need to speak to investors or stakeholders prior to making a choice.”

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Last year, Orbico's Moldova operations were also ranked in the top ten of Moldova’s Best Employers of 2015. It was the third consecutive year the team participated in the review and its third year to make the top ten.

Orbico is the largest distributor of its kind in Europe and with this size comes an impressive network of partners to make it all happen in the most effective and efficient manner. “I have the best possible partners in international companies, like Procter & Gamble, Shell, Ansell, and Mattel,” Branko notes. “I try to be loyal to them and I try to have the lowest possible cost for them. All together our aim is to put the lowest possible price for a product on the shelf, combined with the highest possible level of quality. I am the right-hand man to my supplier partners and I am responsible for everything that happens on the market. I am always building long-term relationships. That is very important. With this approach comes the power to sell more than the competition.

Partnerships are important, and we are always seeking to produce win-win situations. We must sell as much as possible and have the lowest possible costs; those are the principles we work by. So the correct partnerships help to grow the business and keep the communication lines open, so that we can produce the most value for our customers.

R&D and innovation are also important aspects of Orbico operations, and most of the innovations that the business utilises are implemented to reduce the costs of doing business. “That means IT, new organisational methods, new computers; we always have the newest and the best to allow us to reduce the costs and to find the cheapest way to distribute goods from the suppliers’ factories to our warehouses, then to the customers’ operations,” Branko says. “Having experienced people in the business is the best way to make this happen. We must always be up to date with all innovations. For example, we have started using some electric cars whereas we used to only use vehicles with gasoline. Whatever is possible, we will try to implement it.”

It’s been a successful journey for Branko and the achievements of Orbico have now set him up well to be able to appreciate the finer things in life. He has several hobbies — fishing, art, and wine — which he enjoys during his downtime. “I am out fishing on my boat, every chance I get,” he shares. “That’s how I slow down and reduce stress — I am always relaxed after I have been out fishing. Another hobby is art collecting, and I have a very large assortment of paintings that I’ve collected over the years. I am also a wine producer and every year I make about 10,000 litres of wine from the grapes on my property by the seaside. I enjoy sharing a drink with my friends and family.”