

## Imprimerie Blas-Desmoutiez

### Part A. Profile of business

The Imprimerie Blas-Desmoutiez is a family-owned, artisanal business, established in Lille since 1928. The company has progressed with technological progress. Its initial activity was the typography of which she has kept her soul and several machines. Today, in the hands of the third generation, it has integrated offset and new digital technologies. Its activity is all that is printing on paper and is particularly specialized in the following techniques:

- Pantone color printing;
- Hot gilding;
- Single and multi-level embossing;
- Letter Press;
- Cut to shape;
- Scratching on surface;
- Securing documents;
- Edges painting.



The products offered are numerous and varied. It goes from everything from business cards, flyers, posters, labels, packaging, to all the printed matters used in the running of a business, its promotion and marketing. The company is therefore aimed at all types of professional sectors, with a very diversified client portfolio. The range of products and services offered has evolved over time, following the evolution of cultural practices. A sizable part of the market related to announcements of birth, marriage, death, decreased a lot. Habits have changed, and people no longer pass through a printing house for these types of services.

### Part B. The family dimension of business

The company was founded by the grandfather of Sylvie Blas, Marcel Desmoutiez, a craftsman who started the adventure from scratch, and who worked alone until his death in 1944. Sylvie Blas' father, Maurice Desmoutiez, who was not destined to do so, had to take over the business by necessity, at the age of 15 years. He who wanted to be a dentist did not have time to do it; he became a printer. It was in the midst of world war, there was an absolute necessity, it was necessary to provide for the needs. There was really no choice in this first transmission. Fortunately, he had been trained by his father because he used to go in the workshop to help.

In 1954, Maurice Desmoutiez joined forces with his brother-in-law, Emile Daams, with whom he worked until 1985, when Sylvie Blas' husband, Bernard Blas, took the place of his uncle Emile Daams. after buying back his shares. Bernard Blas worked for six years with Maurice Desmoutiez, until his departure in late 1991. It was at this moment that Sylvie Blas entered the company to take over all the administrative and commercial function with her husband. Since January 1992, it is together that Bernard and Sylvie Blas manage the company.

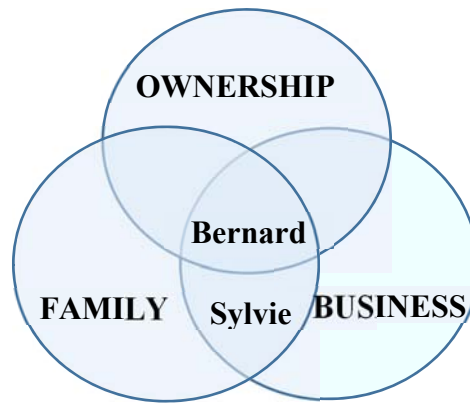


Figure 1 – Imprimerie Blas-Desmoutiez 3-circle diagram

The company is a sole proprietorship, and Mr. Bernard is the sole partner. The company belongs to him 100% and he is the director. Sylvie is a family member involved in management, but not a shareholder.

### **Part C. Challenge & opportunities of business growth & succession**

The main challenge of the profession as a whole remains the change of economic model. Printing has been in constant evolution for 25 years since the advent of computers and the Internet. It completely changed the profession. Many printing houses affected by dematerialization have disappeared, since the volume of demand is decreasing. For example, billing is done more and more over the Internet, emailing replaces paper mailing, so there is no longer any print of letterheads, envelopes, etc. The prospects were nicer before. It is a full mutation, with digitalization and the abandonment of paper models. The future of the printing house requires a deep questioning and an opening on IT. To continue to grow while working on paper, you have to know how to detect niche markets. This is what allows Sylvie and Bernard to continue to develop their business, thanks to the very specific techniques of hot foil stamping, embossing, etc., even if all that also starts to be done numerically. It is important to know that in printing, investments are often very heavy. So we must not be wrong in the choices we have to make. It is inevitably necessary to be interested in new trends, new processes, to see how to complete one's services, how to propose customization, and to make continuous technological watch.

In relation to the issue of succession, it should be noted that the family business is in the 3rd generation. It experienced two intra-family transmissions and a period of intergenerational cohabitation in the company. This cohabitation was only for 6 years between Maurice Desmoutiez (representing the 2nd generation) and Bernard (representing the 3rd generation). It went rather well: Maurice Desmoutiez did not block the projects, even if he slowed down them; he was much more careful. Nevertheless, on the 6 years in common, Bernard has set up new things without great difficulties.

The first transmission was made by necessity. On the other hand, the second was chosen. Mr. Maurice Desmoutiez had three daughters and they were not predestined to take over the business, because at the time, it was not imaginable that it was a girl's job. So it was a nice surprise for him, when he learned that Bernard, the husband of his daughter, would take over the shares of his brother-in-law who was going to retire. Indeed, Bernard has always had the desire to start a business. His meeting with Sylvie, who came from an entrepreneurial family,

opened doors for him. He who was a commercial in industrial ventilation, has gradually converted to printing. He passed a typographer's diploma before taking over the shares of Sylvie's uncle in 1985. Sylvie who was a teacher will join him later in the company, in late 1991, at the time of the departure of Mr. Maurice Desmoutiez.

The third transmission will most likely be outside the family circle. Of the four children of Sylvie and Bernard, there is none that is destined to the printing profession at the moment. They all made their way outside the printing business. There were some who came during the holidays to lend a hand, but it was clear that they did not want to do that later. They did not see themselves working in the company. Sylvie and Bernard do not expect to impose anything on them either. The intra-family transmission is not an imperative for them, even if they are still attached to the survival of the company. It is really necessary that it is a buyer who chooses it, because the craft faces today many challenges. They will therefore begin to think about other modes of transmission as they are reaching the end of their career: either with the staff, or with a colleague who is looking for external growth, or any other possibility.

**Part D. The entrepreneurial dimension**

The big difficulty of the craft is that given the size of the companies, you have to be multi-caps. That means you have to be very good at management, very good at technics, very good at finance, etc. In addition to this versatility, you also have to be entrepreneurial.

<p><b>Key Partners</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Other printers</li> <li>*Communication agencies</li> </ul>	<p><b>Key Activities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*All types of flat printing</li> <li>*Hot foil stamping, embossing, letter press, edges painting</li> </ul>	<p><b>Value Proposition</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Improving the print</li> <li>*Distinguishing oneself</li> <li>*Make the print remarkable</li> <li>*Creative Papers</li> </ul>	<p><b>Customer Relationships</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Proximity</li> <li>*Advice</li> <li>*Looking for ways to think outside the box</li> </ul>	<p><b>Customer Segments</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Professionals (businesses of all sizes, hotels and restaurants, luxury industry)</li> <li>85%</li> <li>* Individuals</li> <li>15%</li> </ul>
<p><b>Cost Structure</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Workforce</li> <li>*Raw materials</li> <li>*External charges (EDF, gas, etc.)</li> <li>*Depreciation of equipment</li> </ul>		<p><b>Revenue Streams</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Printed matters</li> </ul>		

Figure 2 - Imprimerie Blas-Desmoutiez Business Model

The entrepreneurial dimension of the Imprimerie Blas-Desmoutiez could be summarized as follows: network, adaptation, niche market.

### **Network...**

In their professional union, Bernard has created a group with other printers of the same size to reflect on the evolution of the profession and issues related to small business. From there, they started to work together, to regroup to be stronger compared to bigger competitors. For Sylvie, this is one of the best initiatives they have been able to take: to discover, to be open and to work with others all the time. In this group of artisan-printers, there is a collective reflection on the challenges to be met. Rather than continuing to do the same thing, they had the wisdom to say why not offer complementary services. So, each craftsman of the group focuses on a specific market: signage, cardboard, four-color process, etc. For example, the Imprimerie Blas-Desmoutiez works often on finishing the impressions of his colleagues. In addition, it is possible for any member of the group to offer all these services, knowing that it can rely on others (with outsourcing). This allows them to expand their service offerings and to be able to respond to all requests, in other words to find an answer to the needs of their customers. That's how Sylvie and Bernard have known about three-quarters of their clients. The most beautiful markets of the Imprimerie Blas-Desmoutiez are due to this system. The company's largest current customer, for example, is in the pharmaceutical industry. His request was very specific and very complex. Through networking, research, tenacity, Bernard and Sylvie have been able to develop the product while respecting the rather heavy specifications.

### **Adaptation...**

The company has adapted permanently. Sylvie and Bernard participated in many training programs and continuing education courses. This is where Sylvie learned everything about running the company. She was a teacher and only knew the business world as the basics (billing, VAT, etc.). As for Bernard, he already had his commercial and typographical training. So it's management courses he has followed. They opened up to networks, did a lot of technological monitoring and participated for several years in a formidable program of quality approach set up by the chamber of trades. Indeed, as Sylvie argues, the difficulty of adapting is not related to the size of companies or their structures, it is related to people. It's really a question of state of mind. You have to be willing to renew yourself, to evolve and not to cling to the same techniques. It's a philosophy, do not stay inward. When in 2005, for example, people were more and more talking about online selling, Sylvie and Bernard spontaneously said that it would be nice if they were there. It is within their group of artisan-printers that they have matured this idea of online selling. It was complex for them. They have therefore partnered with another entrepreneurial couple who is in the 4th generation in the printing industry, and have created an online sales website.

### **Niche market...**

Twenty years ago, at a time when everyone was rushing on the four-color, the production at all costs, Sylvie and Bernard considered that they had to stay on their traditional know-how, that is to say typography with printing based on very specific colors such as embossing, or hot foil stamping. It is a skill that is rare today; very few companies have them; there is no training for that. In 2006, they were awarded the "Living Heritage Company" label, which allowed them to benefit from support in terms of promotion, visibility and invitation to participate in

international exhibitions, so that this knowledge does not get lost. That's the strength of the Imprimerie Blas-Desmoutiez. It is maintained, continuously improved, to distinguish itself from others and bring a real added value in the printing industry. To develop this niche market, Sylvie and Bernard have always sought to have an idea in advance. You have to constantly question yourself: this works today, what do you propose tomorrow? They never stopped or let go. This is really the state of mind that drives them and allows them to move forward. In their market, there is still room for growth, provided they are in perpetual technological watch and ready to bounce back.

### **Part E. Family entrepreneurialism: Lessons & conclusions**

To succeed in family entrepreneurship, Sylvie and Bernard have key advice to give: get together, dare, train, be open, separate roles, take advice, trust. These tips, presented below, are drawn from their experience in the family management of the Imprimerie Blas-Desmoutiez.

**Get together.** When you are several members of the same family with the same objectives, the same involvement in the company, it is a real strength. You can discuss strategy and sensitive issues. You cannot talk about finance, taxation, strategy, with an employee. In addition, you can combine skills when you have a complementarity.

**Dare.** You must not be too cautious. You have to dare, aim for the top, look far, in order to go further.

**Train.** It is necessary to seek information and new skills, do a technological watch (professional magazines, conferences, trade shows), in order to have the market trend and to be able to make choices in a more enlightened way.

**Be open.** The networks are multiple and diverse, and allow to open up to others and to the world. There is nothing that works better than to recommend someone.

**Separate roles.** In a family business, the roles must be distinct. There must be no confusion, for example between the role of collaborating spouse and that of director. The definition of everyone's role and positioning, is where it's a little difficult sometimes.

**Take advice.** In order to survive and to grow, you have to be well advised and know how to surround yourself with good advice: a good accountant, a management consultant, legal and tax advisers, etc. These are people who help to step back, to grasp the different dimensions of management, and to integrate the evolution of the environment, of the family and of the company.

**Trust.** It is not enough to recruit good professionals or good technicians, it also requires a sense of well-being, someone who shares your values. You have to be able to work in confidence with your employees, customers and suppliers. Also, do not hesitate to talk about your difficulties during professional meetings, or to discuss your successes and failures.