



QUBICA AT 25

How 3 Software Engineers Changed the Face of Bowling

L-R: Company Founders Roberto Vaioli, Luca Drusiani and Emanuele Govoni



Qubica at 25

The story of a company founded on the vision that bowling is not only a sport, but entertainment.



Pat Ciniello helped bring the Qubica scoring system to America. Today, he's the company's Chairman of the Board.

APPLE RELEASES THE NEWTON, a handheld computer that the company describes as a "personal data assistant."

Using animatronics and cutting-edge computer animation, Steven Spielberg's team creates realistic-looking dinosaurs that help make "Jurassic Park" the highest-grossing movie to date.

Intel releases the Pentium processor, which makes computer programs run faster, executes several instructions at the same time, and provides support for music and graphics.

And in Bologna, Italy, three men — ages 23, 24 and 27 — decide to leave a small bowling scoring-system company called Micronica and strike out on their own.

The three men were Roberto Vaioli and Emanuele Govoni, who had developed the Micronica system, and Luca Drusiani, who oversaw production and technical services. As they were developing the Micronica system, they learned a lot about the bowling business and developed what some would say was a revolutionary thought

for the time: that bowling was not just a sport, but also a form of entertainment. That led to the revelation that scoring systems should not just keep score, but also entertain guests.

So, with the assistance of an Italian bowling distributor, Guido Sorba, who provided half of the \$40,000 in start-up funding, Qubica was incorporated. The date was March 17, 1993.

That September, the first Qubica scoring system was installed at a center in Saint Etienne, Lyon, France (where it's still being utilized today). Within 15 months, the system was providing scoring and entertainment for 500 lanes on three continents — which made the start-up impossible to ignore.

From the beginning, the Qubica team made a habit of listening to its customers (and potential customers), and incorporating desired features into their system. These included frequency marketing and loyalty pro-



QubicaAMF's headquarters in Bologna, Italy

grams to motivate repeat visits, and the integration of point-of-sale and bookkeeping functions. For the bowling center guest, the system provided 30 character animations and alternate bowling games with sound.

As the end of the millennium beckoned, Qubica systems were installed on 14,000 lanes in 25 countries, and any doubts about the company's survival had been erased.

There were other seminal occurrences along the way. American proprietor and scoring system reseller Pat Ciniello brought the Qubica system to the States. Australia proprietor and distributor Frank Mascadri introduced the system to his home country and Asia. Sorba worked with other distributors to spread the system across Europe.

Even as the industry was contracting in some markets, Qubica continued to expand. By the end of 2002, its system was installed on 26,685 lanes in 45 countries.

Earlier that year, Qubica purchased the assets of Canada-based Mendes, beginning a series of acquisitions and mergers that would redefine the company as a full-line capital equipment provider. In 2005, Qubica merged with AMF Bowling Products, creating the company now known as QubicaAMF.

That proved to be a game changer as the Qubica and AMF R&D teams began working together to improve existing products and develop new ones.

In 2012 and again in 2013, Qubica's founders attempted to buy out their private-equity partners. Finally, in November 2014, they were successful.

"We knew that to take QubicaAMF to the next level, we needed to truly think long-term," explains Govoni, the CEO of QubicaAMF. "We needed to be able to take on long and complex investment projects that don't fit the quick ROI required by private-equity funds."

The company's most recent acquisition is CDE Software, which specializes in competitive bowling software. Although QubicaAMF's scoring system is built around entertainment, the company's owners realize that

competitive bowling remains a key element of the business for many proprietors.

Despite the company's growth over the last 25 years — it now employs more than 580 people — QubicaAMF continues to invest in the future with a 51-person R&D team and manufacturing in both Bologna and Richmond, Va., the historic home of AMF.

"We invest so much to constantly create new products because we are convinced that bowling has so much more potential to attract and entertain even more people," says Govoni. "We are spending more than ever before in R&D to extend the bowling population, to reach the younger generations, and to increase their spending and frequency of visits. It is what drives us every day, and we are going to introduce more amazing new products very soon."

Ciniello, co-founder of Qubica USA and Chairman of the Board of QubicaAMF, reflects on what the company has achieved in a relatively short period of time.

"I remember my first trip to Bologna to meet Emanuele, Luca and Roberto back in 1994, and... it truly amazes me to see how much that small start-up scoring company has transformed to become the largest bowling equipment provider worldwide in terms of its employees, R&D team and revenue.

"One thing that has not changed is our vision to innovate and build unique products that differentiate our company from everyone else. Over the last seven years, we have invested more than \$30 million in research and development to improve and develop our current product line. In 2017, we invested 45 percent more in R&D than what we invested just three years ago to develop tomorrow's products."

Adds Ciniello: "We think the future of bowling looks amazing."

Which is exactly what Messrs. Govoni, Vaioli and Drusiani envisioned in 1993.



The company's headquarters in Richmond, Va.