

PROFILE

Gianni Ciserani: the Italian job

He's a family-oriented business man who loves to win, yet landed his job at P&G by accident. Elen Lewis meets Gianni Ciserani, P&G's energetic UK and Ireland boss

Gianni Ciserani never expected to be running a country operation. Indeed, the likeable, enthusiastic Italian, who heads up Procter & Gamble (P&G) in the UK and Ireland, seems thrilled and maybe a little astonished at his success.

"If someone had told me I would have earned one-fifth of the salary I earned now, I would have signed a contract for the rest of my life. If someone had told me I could have been a marketing director, I would have signed straightaway. This is the joy of life. I never would have expected this to happen," he exclaims, dangling one arm from his leather chair in the P&G boardroom in Weybridge, Surrey.

Ciserani has injected some Italian passion into the UK operation since his arrival in July 2004. He is a vivid reflection of P&G's quiet revolution as the business opens itself up to the outside world and shakes off a cloak of formality and secrecy.

Ciserani doesn't sit in an office, but in the open-plan, atrium-like spaces at the Weybridge headquarters. He plays football with P&G graduates every Monday night, who he admits are almost half his age. And, if he wants to know something, he just strolls on over and asks. "I like to walk around. In the beginning it was a little shocking, but now it works beautifully," he reveals.

"We used to sit on decisions for a long time, but today's environment

doesn't allow that. There are days when we see something in the morning and have made a decision by noon. I'm always paranoid about the speed of

decision-making. Those who win are those who are able to discover the issues and opportunities fast, which is why transparency of communication is vital," he elaborates.

Ciserani joined P&G by accident. After driving trucks to help finance his economics degree at Università Bocconi in Milan, he rocked up to a seminar selecting the top Italian students in business, and it happened to be run by P&G. He had always presumed he would work for a bank.

Since then P&G has kept him interested. And considering Ciserani's boundless energy and drive, that's quite an achievement. At university, he could not stand still in lessons. And even today he struggles in tennis lessons.

"Once I had a tennis teacher, and after just 10 minutes, I had to say, 'would you mind if we just played, I'll learn by doing it'. I need to do stuff to have fun. Every time I start getting comfortable with what I'm doing, I get a new challenge, and then I start again. I haven't been bored at P&G, for not even one day. I would get mad if I didn't have something to do, for just one hour."

Ciserani sealed his reputation at P&G in his last role running the baby care business across Europe. The division launched premium products tied



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