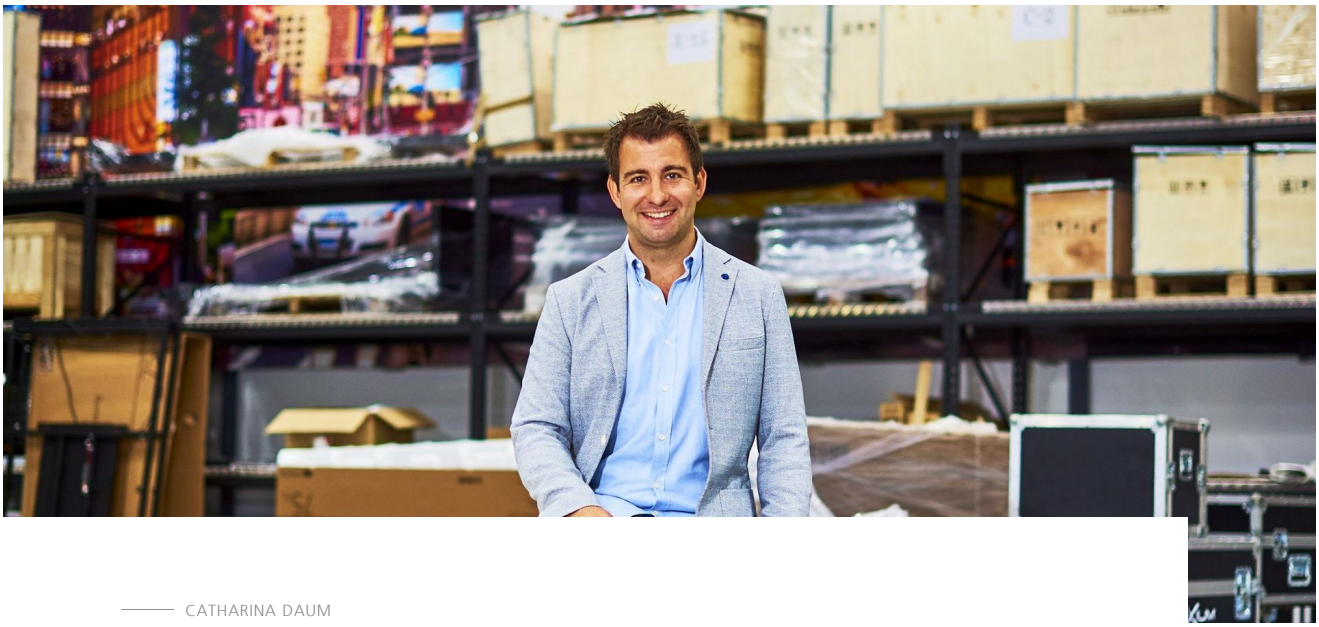


CATHARINA DAUM

# How TRUMPF technology lightens up the world

**The company Apametal in Portugal is a market leader in signage and display stands. We took an illuminating tour behind the scenes with managing director André Lourenço.**

It's an unusually muggy and rainy day in the Portuguese town of Sintra near Lisbon. As usual, André Lourenço kicks off the day at 8:30 a.m. with his first meeting. His father Adriano, brother Alexandre and cousin Antonio Manuel have gathered for the family's morning espresso at Espaço Laser, a cafe located on the company's premises. "It's become a ritual for us," says André. He's been working at the company for the past nine years. His father founded Apametal 41 years ago and has been running it ever since. Now, however, the 70-year-old is gradually stepping back from day-today operations and handing over more and more responsibility to the young trio.

## Comprehensive package for illuminated advertising

Recent years have seen the Lourenço family transform Apametal into a market leader for signage and displays in Portugal and Spain. "The secret to our success is our all-in package that includes development, product design, manufacturing and finishing," says André proudly. He is convinced this is what gives them a competitive edge. "One of our customers is a well-known Portuguese olive oil producer. Their display racks feature images of foods and the brand logo, a rooster, all cut into delicate patterns in metal using a laser. It was a huge challenge, but we found a creative way to put the whole concept into practice," André says. Product design is a demanding business in Portugal, he adds, particularly in the capital, Lisbon. Many of the old buildings in the narrow alleyways are home to design and art shops and trendy restaurants. "Everything has to be just right. Our customers want a tailor- made solution for every outlet and storefront. It's tremendously important to them." Determined to meet their customers' needs, the Lourenço family has invested in the most up-to-date technologies. Apametal's cutting- edge machinery includes a TruLaser 3030 and TruLaser 5030 connected to a TruStore, a TruBend 5130 and a TruBend Center 5030.

## Sheet metal production as a vocation

It's 9:30 a.m. – time to head to the second meeting of the day. It's gradually becoming clear that sheet metal fabrication is not just a job for André and his family, but a vocation. From the reception desks to waste baskets and signs, André designs and produces everything in his company himself. A few years ago, this earned him the John Jacob Astor design award for exceptional commercial real estate projects. TRUMPF machines play a big role in this strategy: "The technology helps us create products exactly how we imagined them," says André. That's a key issue for this creative entrepreneur – and it marks a big change from the situation Apametal was in just ten years ago. Back then, the team was unable to put some of its designs into practice because they didn't have the machines they needed. That was a thorn in the side of the Portuguese experts, which is why they sought TRUMPF's help. André himself is responsible for the conceptual design and development of projects for new customers. He deals with a selection of big names including Santander and Sonae.

**The technology helps us create products exactly how we imagined them.**

André Lourenço, managing director Apametal

## Three rooms filled with eye-catchers

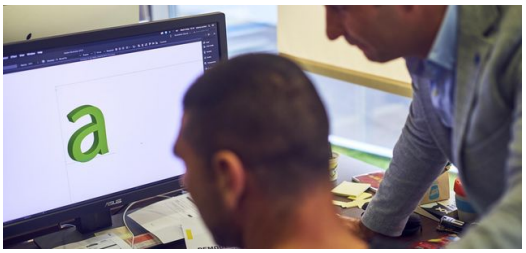
Nowadays, customers can take a tour of three showrooms at Apametal that throw a spotlight on all the company's skills. The products on show include everything from display racks to neon letters and digital billboards. It's only been six months since they opened their new showroom of digital solutions, but it's already the biggest of its kind in Europe. "The thing I need from the people who see our products is honest, constructive feedback. That's the only way I can keep improving," he says. His telephone rings every minute of our interview, yet the Portuguese managing director seems impressively calm and relaxed.

## New TRUMPF machines are being planned

Apametal originally expected to grow by ten percent in 2019, but their latest forecasts suggest it is now likely to be doublethat figure. This is largely thanks to a series of creative solutions that have impressed customers throughout the Iberian Peninsula. The company is doing very well indeed – so well, in fact, that the Lourenço family is keen to give something back. That's why it has dedicated an entire building on the factory site to young entrepreneurs, including renting out premises to the StartUp Sintra technology incubator at a symbolic price. And André already has more plans in place for 2020. He wants to buy two new TRUMPF machines – another TruBend and a TruPunch system – and the facility to house them is already under construction.

Most up-to-date technologies: Worker with the TruBend Center 5030 – Frederik Dulay-Winkler

The secret to Apametal's success: a mix of technology and creativity – Frederik Dulay-Winkler



Apametal’s customers want tailor- made solutions. – Frederik Dulay-Winkler

Tailor-made: Apametal develops and builds each digital sign itself. – Frederik Dulay-Winkler

Authentic: Cobblestones in the showroom help provide an authentic atmosphere. – Frederik Dulay-Winkler

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