

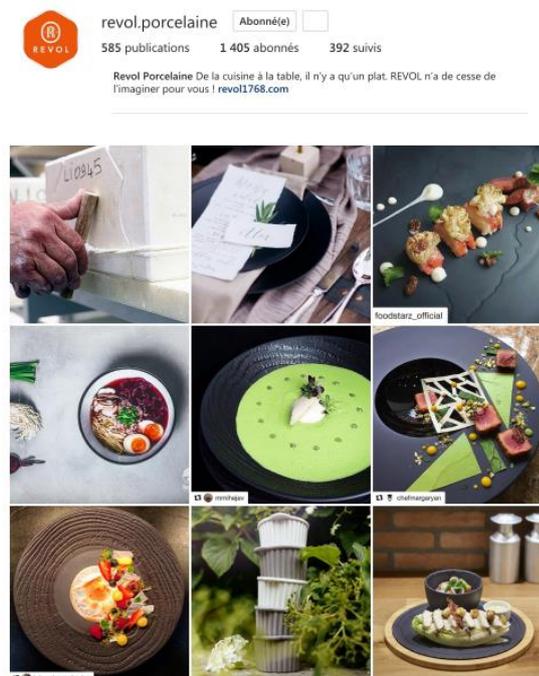
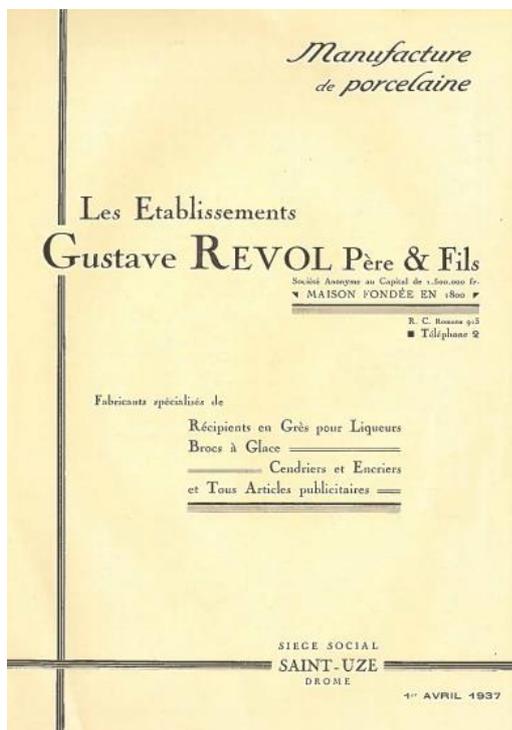
REVOL PORCELAIN: 250 YEARS OF CONTINUOUS INNOVATION

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All information has been gathered from the historians of Revol, Claude Franco and Claude Lagrange. I have been offered several documents which are helpful to understand the history of Revol, especially the history of Revol and Revol 250 years of history. I am really grateful to Claude and Claude for the quality of the different brochures to present Revol and its history and for their help and amendment on the previous draft.



Source: Revol archives and Revol Instagram

Revol Porcelain has been a family-run company for nine generations, with Olivier Passot as the Managing Director. Revol Porcelain designs, produces, and markets dishes, plates, and

other tableware in porcelain. Its clients are individuals as well as professionals, such as gourmet restaurants or tailored production for perfume or luxury alcohol brands.

Revol Porcelain produces high quality culinary porcelain. It is one of the only manufacturers to produce a paste – barbotine – from pure kaolin, feldspar, and silica. The company has demonstrated a constant creativity that has allowed it to keep up with the constant competition from the nineteenth-century until today.

REVOL PORCELAIN COMPANY

The history of the company

Revol Porcelain was founded in 1768 and nine generations have taken up the reins of this family company. For almost 250 years the company has innovated, based on the passion and skills of its employees.

The Revol family are manufacturers, traders, merchants, and master earthenware makers, from father to son. Genealogical records show that the family settled in the northern Drôme area in south-eastern France, but archaeology reveals regional roots as far away as the city of Lyon. The region in between the south of Lyon and Drôme has been associated gastronomic vitality and a variety of local products. Pottery has developed in the region because of the unique quality of its soil. Ceramic work has been present here throughout history, peaking during the 19th century. Revol inherited that tradition and contributed to its development. Pierre Revol's family set up their earthenware workshops in the 18th century.

At the age of only 26, Pierre settled in Ponsas in northern Drôme, and married Magdeleine Carrier, who herself came from a long line of earthenware makers.

Pierre's visionary spirit led him to explore the region and its hitherto untapped treasures. The abundant nature of the soil around Ponsas includes high-quality clays and sand, but above all deposits of kaolin, a wonderfully pure white clay with properties that were to open up new perspectives for him. He then had a daring dream of creating fire-resistant ceramic objects.

Their eldest son, Joseph-Marie, was passionate about this noble material, which he loved to shape and transform. In 1800, he took over the firm and opened the Saint Uze workshop, the real starting point of the Revol story. The company flourished and grew, and the workshop was

rapidly transformed into a real factory. Revol had the privilege of being recognized for the quality of its products at national exhibitions, the forerunners of the universal exhibitions. Joseph-Marie was a visionary and made plans for the business far into the future. To meet the flood of orders coming in, he built new, better-adapted buildings. When his son reached adulthood, Joseph-Marie's wish to perpetuate the heritage led him to set up a company under their name in order to ensure the succession. He already saw Revol as a family company with great ambition and scope.

Revol Father & Son continued its development in the 19th century under the leadership of Gustave Revol in Saint Uze, followed by that of Hector Revol.

Box 1: High quality porcelain

At the turn of the 19th century, Revol has been investing in high-quality wares to enhance its reputation and to be selected in different exhibitions. Revol developed stoneware and brown porcelain. Sandstone is a perfectly safe material without metallic substances. It is a hygienic materials. Brown porcelain is a very fine sandstone used for decorative pieces. In order to protect its invention, Revol trademark Hygiocerame in 1834. To signal the quality and to extend its market, Revol showcased its products in national exhibitions and won several honorable mentions in 1801, 1806, 1823, 1827, 1834, 1839 and 1844.

Fig1: 250 years of production



Source: Revol archives

The Management of Revol: Balance between entrepreneurs and managers

Starting up and managing a 250 year-old company requires both entrepreneurial spirit and managerial capabilities to invest, open new markets, and maintain the viability of the company. It seems that all the directors of the company engage simultaneously in investing in new production capacities and managing the growth of the company. Box 2 illustrates the market development of Revol Porcelain.

Box 2: Balance between entrepreneurs and managers devoted to Revol

1768	Pierre Revol - The Founder	
1785	Magdeleine Revol - The Regent	Healthy products for everyone; sandstone; small beer jugs - simplification of the manufacturing process - culinary pieces in brown porcelain
1800	Joseph Marie Revol - The Architect	
1844	Gustave Revol - The Beloved	
1861	Hector Revol - The Precursor	Decorative arts; "les bleus de Saint-Uze", blue porcelains from Saint Uze; perfumers
1901	Louis Gustave Revol - The Industrial	
1911	Jean Bourgogne and Fernand Loire - The Entrepreneurs	Advertising products - funeral arts in early 30s and advertising products for Anisette Ricard, Lustucru, Danone, etc.
1955	Suzanne and André Passot - The Investors	Specialist markets (liquor makers, advertisement products, perfumers, etc.)
1980	Bertrand Passot - The Porcelain Maker	From oven to table: airline products, liquor and luxury brands bottles, chef alliances and general public
2007	Olivier Passot - The Pioneer	Culinary specialized porcelains; innovation; increasing production capacities; rationalization

Source: Revol archives and Revol history book

For each period, Revol combines a baseline as well as new developments for the next period. For example, their knowledge of ‘blue’ porcelain, which was mostly decorative, was applied to culinary dishes and tableware at the turn of the 20th century.

Fig 2: Blue porcelain



Source: Revol archives

Around the same time, Revol developed hanging light fittings for perfumes and violet flower essence. Decorative know-how was redeployed to specialist markets, especially alcohol and aperitif brands.

Fig 3: Advertising products



Fig 4: Luxury flacons for brandy



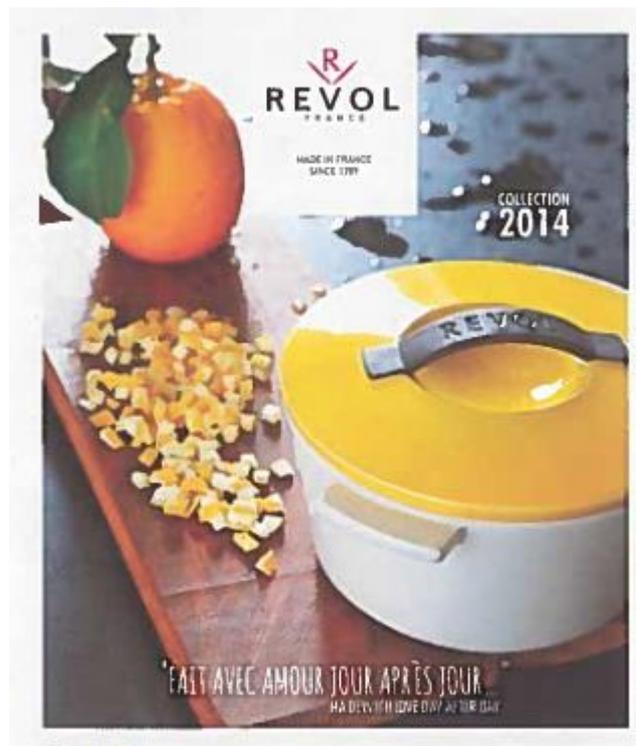
Source: Revol archives

Since the 19th century, and more importantly at the end of the 20th century, Revol has been associated with luxury and prestige. Recently, Revol invested simultaneously on new designs (e.g., crumple cups) and innovative pieces to accommodate different types of cooking (microwaves, induction, etc.).

Revol has employed not only technologists but also designers and users to promote new uses of culinary and decorative products.

Box 3: Culinary art

Beginning in early 90's, Revol manufactured a wide range for products for professional use, such as dishes for regethermic catering. At the same time, the company started collaborating with the chef Regis Macron. Revol is associated with haute cuisine, luxury restaurants and brasseries. More than culinary devices, Revol's products are becoming culinary artefacts for cooking enthusiasts and professionals.



Revol's website reveals Revol's friends, i.e., those individuals who signal Revol's up-market orientation. It is a very international group of personalities, including the likes of Elizabeth Karmel, an American chef and a cookbook author; Mariana Dulac, a French private chef; and Eric Berthes, a French designer.

Revol is also very active on different social networks, such as Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn.



Source: Revol archives and Revol Instagram

AN EMBEDDED COMPANY

“There is no wealth but man” (“Il n’est de richesses que d’hommes”), J. Bodin, XVII.

Revol has been continuously expanding: new buildings, new installations, new equipment, and increasing numbers of employees. The main achievement of Revol overtime is the emergence and expansion of its worldwide reputation as culinary porcelain. Revol gains in reputation, visibility and renown. Revol also opened new markets, predominantly in Europe and in the USA.

Revol has been meeting with clients and audience. Clients as it matches a demand. Audience as Revol is gaining visibility and renown. Revol has been leveraging on two elements: innovative and updated production facilities and deep local engagement.

Expansion and logics

Revol’s factory is housed within the historic buildings where the company was established. Revol continues to evolve and adapt new technical developments.

Fig 5: factory



Source: Revol archives

In the early 1900's, Revol introduced the new technique of slip casting and jiggering, perfected by the manufacture "*Porcelaine de Sèvres*"¹. Around 1950, two tunnel kilns are installed in the factory. They enable rapid manufacturing and forced the company to reorganize its work processes, with continuous production and 3x8 shifts. In the 1985's, the glazing and firing techniques were revisited. In addition to the tradition immersion techniques, Revol used spray techniques in carousel machines. Furthermore, to reduce production costs, a single fire process was implemented.

To produce new formats and new designs, Revol introduces the technique of pressure slip-casting, producing higher quality pieces more rapidly.

Revol is more than equipment and buildings. It also contains a long tradition of human skills in not only invention and design but also in polishing, finishing, and quality control of the different pieces.

¹ The *manufacture nationale de Sèvres* is one of the principal European porcelain manufactories. It is located in Sèvres, Hauts-de-Seine, France.

Fig 6: The new tunnel kiln



Source: Revol archives

Table 1: Evolution of the labor at Revol

Year	Number of employees
1800	30
1844	100
1876	200
1974	200
2001	210
2007	230
2017	250

Source: Revol archives

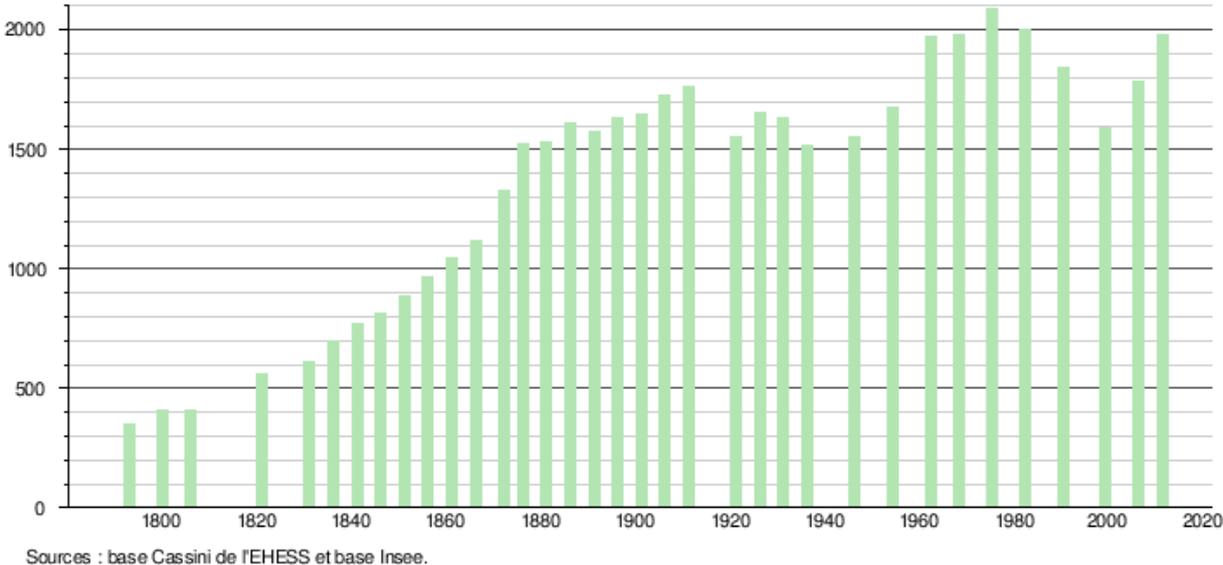
Embedded in the village

Revol is the largest company in the area and the largest employer. Its activities have been developing for more than 250 years and the management style is paternalistic. The top management team is close to its employees. Revol is a family owned and managed business. It is also a paternalist company. Multiple generations of the same family work at Revol. Teenagers and students do internship at the company, even if they find a position elsewhere later on.

Revol is highly involved in Saint Uze city life. Since the 19th century, different members of the Revol family have been mayors of Saint Uze for a combined term of 63 years. Being mayor is not only an honorific title; it also allows the Revol family to nurture a Saint-Uze/Revol lifestyle. At the end of the 19th century, Hector Revol promoted work housing to accommodate properly Revol’s employees. Mayors have also built a new church, a new cemetery, a primary school, and a wastewater treatment plant.

Saint Uze city is lively and the population has been expanding over the long term.

Fig 7: demographic evolution of Saint Uze (Drôme)



FUTURE: SHARING AMBITION AND DARING WITHIN A COMMUNITY

Revol has been visionary in addressing new audiences and mobilizing users and opinion leaders to promote culinary porcelain. Technological innovation, as well as a profound involvement in the local environment and with the Revol workers are important to address on-going and new challenges.

Revol leverages on tradition and associated trust to foster audaciousness and daring. The main challenge is to envisage the next turn and to prepare Revol to address it. What will be the next fan communities of culinary porcelain? Who will be the next opinion leaders?

TEACHING NOTE

Revol is a family own company which has been prospering over the last two centuries and which has been booming recently. Different dimensions of Revol's history and evolution worth to be discussed. First of all, Revol has been reinventing its clients several times. It is interesting to discuss this entrepreneurial ability. Second, Revol has been deeply involved in the city management, bridging Revol management and Saint Uze management. Finally, new challenges need to be discussed.

Client/customers reinvention

The history of Revol articulates technological innovation, new equipment and clients. Can you map out the different evolutions?

Elements to be discussed:

- Enabling role of technology
- To what extent is a niche market orientation sustainable?
- How did Revol articulate B2B and B2C?
- Which is the engine of growth in the last period? How does Revol shape the audience?

We invite readers to use a business model lens² to read the Revol case. For Revol, market, market segmentations and existing clients are only on side of the coin. The second side of the coin is the reinvention of clients. The history of Revol has been marked out by client reinvention, be the luxury brandy and whisky brands after the perfume, the tobacco and alcohol brands for the goodies or the culinary porcelain for the last period.

Revol management: paternalism and local embeddedness

During the 19^o century, Revol CEOs have been also involved as mayor of Saint Uze or member of local assemblies. It seems that Revol CEOs expanded paternalism over the frontiers of the company to the city. By the time, Revol was in a logic of control to monitor workers' behaviors.

² Baden-Fuller, C., & Mangematin, V. 2013. Business models: A challenging agenda. *Strategic Organization*, 11(4): 418-427.

During the 20^o century, Revol management is less directly involved in Saint Uze even if Revol remains the main employer of the city. At the turn of the new century, Revol is going international. The involvement of Revol management becomes more multicultural. It is not only Saint Uze, but also the different communities (perfume, luxury alcohol brands, chefs of high end restaurants, culinary advisors, etc.).

I would like to engage a discussion with students on the different audiences, the ways to engage with different audiences and the internal capabilities to be developed.

New challenges to be discussed

The dynamism of Revol is based on the identification of the bottleneck and the shape of original solution based on the redeployment of actual capabilities. During the 19^o century, the main bottleneck was the ability to produce and Revol CEOs have been securing production capabilities by investing locally to better monitor workers, at the end of the 20^o century, when tobacco and alcohol advertisements have been banned, Revol invested in culinary porcelain and it mobilized different audiences to make Revol a high end brand for professionals and individual cooks.

I would like to discuss with the students which are the on-going capabilities which can be redeployed. I also would like to discuss the emerging potential audiences which are forming the next markets.

Finally, I would like to discuss with the students the specificity of family run businesses as agile companies which are confident enough to redeploy their capabilities.