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THE TEAM/SANTANDER

Equal measure

A hospitality venture has transformed its fortunes with a work-ethic makeover.

By Venetia Rainey
Photography Markel Redondo

Company: Deluz y Compañía
Founded: 2006
Staff: 160
Restaurants: 8
Revenue: €11.6m (2018)

Right from the start, the family behind socially minded restaurant group Deluz y Compañía decided to do business differently. Carlos Zamora, a hotelier and restaurateur, along with his siblings and mother, set out to create beautiful spaces where people could eat good food that was responsibly sourced.

Finding great locations was key. Their first restaurant, Deluz, opened in 2006 in a 1950s house near the beach in Santander and boasts an English rose garden. Their most recent addition, La Caseta de Bombas (pictured), is in the old bilge-pump building of the city's former dry docks.

But sourcing the right producers was even more important because beyond providing delicious ingredients, the Zamoras also wanted to make sure that their supply chain helped support small businesses. All the cheese for their desserts, for example, comes from Los Tiemblos, a tiny organic farm run by a mother and two of her children, formerly nomads struggling to make a living as cattle farmers in the Pasiegos Valleys.

In a similar spirit, Deluz also runs several social initiatives: a catering service employing people with disabilities, a fair-trade coffee roaster and a co-operative of organic cattle farmers in Cantabria. But after a while, Zamora realised that it wasn't enough. "We were doing all these beautiful things but we all began to suffer with stress, getting sick, exhausted – there were unresolved conflicts," he says. "We could not cope with everything.

We did not see the medium-term sustainability of the company, our sales and financial results started to go down. We were very worried."

Zamora started searching for solutions and came across Frederic Laloux's *Reinventing Organizations*, a radical book (see page 82) about, among other things, the power of self-management. It was the prod that the company needed. "Now, for example, each team votes on decisions that affect them – everyone from the

pot washer to the manager. The team decides who should be hired or fired and they determine the objectives for the year. Also the financial results for each restaurant are shared with the whole team every month."

Since starting the process in early 2018 the results have been overwhelmingly positive, says Zamora. "Profits have tripled. There've been no redundancies this year. We're now setting up a training centre to help other companies do the same." — (M)

The WAY to WORK



1. **María Montesino** Farmer. "President of our co-operative of organic cattle farmers, Siete Valles de Montaña."
2. **Elena Gutiérrez** Event planner.
3. **Zaira Gómez** Restaurant consultant. "She has the abilities of a five-star hotel organiser. No detail is too small for her."
4. **María Ruiz** Communications director.
5. **Inma Ruiz** CEO of Deluz restaurant. "She started as a breakfast supervisor 11 years ago."
6. **María Jesús Fernández** Los Tiemblos cheese producer. "I can only admire her strength – she lived half her life as a nomad."
7. **Georgette Navarro** Restaurant manager at La Caseta de Bombas
8. **Lucía Zamora** Joint CEO. "My sister and an immigration-rights lawyer."
9. **Fausto Alonso** Executive chef. "He has the perfection of a Swiss watchmaker."
10. **Carlos Zamora** Joint CEO. "That's me!"
11. **Pablo Zamora** Interiors adviser. "My brother and one of Spain's best photographers."
12. **María Gorbeña** Interior designer. "My mother has let us fly with our dreams."
13. **Babacar Güeye** Head kitchen porter. "Born in Senegal, he is the perfect example of resilience – companies need this energy."
14. **Chencho Gómez** Shepherd. "If I was brave enough I would live in the mountains looking after 300 sheep too."
15. **Ali Sennad** Sous chef at La Caseta de Bombas. "He started as a kitchen porter and is now as good as a Michelin-star chef."
16. **Rubén Rodríguez** Assistant cook. "We met through a local association for mentally disabled people."
17. **David Muñoz** Financial controller. "He started as a waiter while at university."