

aims are all known and shared from the beginning of the operational activities."

Technical problems can thus be faced taking into account the needs of all functions at the same time. A correct outline and the coherent development of the project are then possible from the beginning and they represent the source of remarkable quality and time efficiencies which can be achieved.

Every decision has ensued from an interfunctional process with the right level of delegation and responsibility. Thus the project revision cycles have been left out, in which, in the traditional development process, functions examine the work carried out by the function upstream. If they do not agree upon it, they ask for corrections, then examine the modified project again and only if they agree upon it do they let it be examined by the function downstream.

Interfunctionality has been granted through the creation of working groups composed of specialists coming from company functions (Planning, Production, Purchase, Marketing, Accountancy and Control) and coordinated by a "core team" which has followed the project from outlining to production consolidation (mass-production).

In S.E. a continuous and coherent flow of information has arisen, originating from the individualization of customer needs. These were outlined through surveys led by marketing specialists, who use accurate and reliable recognition and identification techniques of the voice of the customer (VOC) together with suitable check procedures of correspondence between the product, at its development stage and customer's desire. In this way Fiat has safeguarded herself against any changes of product contents after production start which would not only be expensive but would endanger the achievement of quality aims.

Marketing information has been changed into project contents throughout the drawing up of various technique/technological alternatives, all coherent with the innovation strategies of product contents and process technologies and the strategies of execution of product reliability and quality excellence objectives.

In the analyses of project alternatives a major role was allocated to the supplier system. The change has involved not only the company internal processes but also the external relationship process which regulates the relationships with suppliers.