

Uponor's leaders through time

Every leader in Uponor's history has influenced the company in some way. In order to understand the company, one must become acquainted with the men behind it.



The founder of the company, **Aukusti Asko-Avonius**, was a self-educated visionary who understood the benefits of serial production and saw that people in a strongly developing nation would need plenty of affordable household goods. He began his journey in the backwoods of Karelia and built a business empire that became the largest employer in the Nordic countries as well as the largest furniture manufacturer.

Asko-Avonius was succeeded by his son, **Arvi Tammivuori**, who inherited his father's entrepreneurial spirit and business drive. He was the father of Upo, a sister company to Asko, which became a leading domestic manufacturer of household appliances and metal goods. Tammivuori insisted on entering the plastics business despite the opposition of most of his colleagues.



Karl-Jan Govenius was the first man outside of the family, who was hired to manage the plastic business, during its start-up phase. A dynamic leader, Govenius realised that one needs to focus on fittings alongside pipes in order to achieve a breakthrough in plastic pipe systems. He also worked actively to promote Nordic industry standards and established a strong network of contacts with other key players in Europe, both of these factors turning out to play a key role in the future success of the business.

Heimo Eloranta is considered by many as *The Father* of the Uponor division, i.e. the joint venture company Oy Uponor Ab, established in 1982. Eloranta's role in creating the company strategy and culture was central in the success of the business all through the 1980s and long after his resignation. It was on his initiative that the company turned its attention to hot water systems (=building solutions). Early on, he cherished the unattainable vision that Uponor would become one of the three largest plastic pipe companies in the world in the 1990s, a vision realised at the end of the decade when Uponor's net sales topped the industry.



Heikki Mairinoja continued along the path set by his predecessor. During Mairinoja's time, the company continued its aggressive acquisition programme, both in the municipal engineering and building solutions sectors, in order to strengthen its position internationally. The company continued to implement a policy of keeping central administration small and allowing regional subsidiaries a lot of freedom in developing and managing their business.

Uponor's next steps were led by **Jarmo Ryttilahti**, who had been centrally involved in Asko's management in the effort to make the company

profitable after the financial turmoil of the 80s. Rytilahti completed the dismantling of the conglomerate structure, including divestments of non-core operations, which resulted in the company focussing on plastic pipe systems and the merger with its subsidiary Oy Uponor Ab. After the merger, he headed the new Uponor until retirement, further consolidating operations and starting the integration process by reducing the number of brands.



By the beginning of the 21st Century, it was time for something new. Along came **Jan Lång** who created the *One Unified Uponor* process, following in the footsteps of his predecessor. Lång launched a forced strategic evolution highlighting the key focus areas: growth, a corporate brand and operational excellence. During his time, the company launched a one brand strategy globally, implemented international management and business processes, and started a reorganisation process where sales & marketing and the supply chain were separated from one another, in order to focus on maximising the firm's strengths and synergy gains. Jan Lång resigned in August 2008, to be succeeded by Jyri Luomakoski as the CEO.