

Evert Smit's New Year's message to Afera Members and the greater adhesive tapes industry



Ladies, gentlemen, esteemed colleagues and friends,

As we have just entered into the year 2025, I am honoured once again to address you as Afera's President. This is not only a moment for reflection, but an opportunity to reaffirm our vision and commitment as we face the challenges and opportunities of the year ahead. One that I am extremely proud of is that we have been able to (re)connect with the very large part which makes up our industry: what is known in our business as *the commodity tapes market*. Now with a strong representation on [the Board and Committees of Afera](#), including Aris Venetis of Atlas Tapes (Greece) and Carlo Maria Righetti of NAR (Italy) and we will be a much truer representation of the spread of our business.

We are also witnessing the emergence of a new, young generation that is, rightfully, changing the status quo. They are questioning old ideas and demanding fresh approaches to the way we do business. This energy is inspiring, but it requires us, the current champion-guardians of this industry, to embrace their insights and work together. After all, progress is not found in clinging to the past, but in finding new ways forward. This is why "[future workforce](#)" remains on Afera's shortlist of strategic topics.

In times of uncertainty, it is tempting to look for strong, decisive leadership. But leadership without a strong foundation is a house built on sand. True leadership lies in building a foundation of trust, shared values and strong co-operation—even true co-creation (which is far beyond just co-operation). All this

requires *trust*, and for that we should start with a look at ourselves: Are we allowing ourselves to bestow trust on others: our colleagues, partners, clients and associates within our companies and the entire value chain? A strong foundation empowers everyone to contribute and ensures the sustainability of our progress.

Embracing change



Let us also recognise a common, human response to challenging times: conservatism. It is natural to retreat to familiar paths when faced with uncertainty, but history shows that this is the wrong way to go in the long run. Stagnation is not an indication of effective leadership. As an industry, we must demonstrate true leadership by embracing change, even when it feels uncomfortable. And we do just this! I see this happening both close and far away from me. Let's also remember the timeless wisdom of the Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. This applies not only to our relationships, but to the way we treat the planet and consider future generations. The choices we make today should reflect the legacy we want to leave.

A key challenge for many of us is the balance between profit and growth. In a world increasingly defined by sustainability and global interdependence, we cannot prioritise one over the other. Growth without responsibility is unsustainable, but profit without investment in the future risks stagnation. Counter-cyclical investment—choosing to innovate and expand when others hesitate—has always been a hallmark

of long-term success. And the tape industry does just that: It finds new ways for business, solving society's future challenges already, before they become unmanageable.

Furthermore, we have all seen what happens when industry fails to act: regulation comes to call. The rules imposed by the E.U. often fill in the gaps left by industries unwilling to adapt. That is not the way to conduct innovation or leadership. As a sector, we must lead by example, shaping the future proactively rather than reacting to external pressures. The U.N.'s 19 Sustainable Development Goals remind us how interconnected and complex the challenges we face really are. From climate action to social justice, the SDGs require integrated solutions. Industry cannot fix everything, but we can and must play a pivotal role in addressing the parts closest to home. And I can only say, *We do!* Our jointly developed PCF calculation tool [TACK](#), which Afera will launch later this year, is a great example of this.

My final thoughts

When I look at our industry, I see reasons for optimism. Innovation is taking place close to home in our offices, factories and laboratories. It is happening across the tape industry with breakthroughs making me happy and proud to represent all of you. We are finding new ways forward—ways which inspire hope, drive sustainability and ensure long-term growth. In 2025, let's face the challenges ahead with courage and vision. Let's listen to the new generation, challenge old assumptions and act with purpose. Together, we can build a future which balances innovation, sustainability and growth, making our industry stronger and more resilient for generations to come.

Thank you, and I wish you all a prosperous and innovative year.



Evert Smit
President of Afera



For more details about what Afera did in 2024, and what Members can expect in 2025 and beyond, please visit [this article](#).