

## Luca De Meo Departs from the Fiat Group

12 Jan 2009 - Alfa Romeo and Abarth CEO, and Fiat Group marketing chief, Luca De Meo, one of the Italian carmaker's high flying star executives, and often regarded as the strongest contender as a future CEO of Fiat Group Automobiles, has resigned all his positions today. The news came this afternoon from *Automotive News Europe* which cited sources close to the situation.

*ANE* quoted its sources today as saying that "De Meo is leaving the company to pursue new professional opportunities. They said he departs on good terms with Fiat CEO Sergio Marchionne." As well as being in charge of the fortunes of the Alfa Romeo and Abarth units, 41-year-old De Meo is the group's overall marketing chief with responsibility for the five Fiat Group Automobiles' brands as well as niche luxury sports car maker Maserati, the agricultural-and-construction equipment division CNH Global, and the trucks-to-buses arm Iveco.

Luca De Meo was born on June 13 1967 in Milan where he earned a degree in Business Economics at Università Commerciale Luigi Bocconi in Milan before studying Marketing Management at Insead in France. In the period 1992 – 97 he rose to positions of increasing responsibility in Sales and Marketing at Renault in Italy and in France, eventually becoming Product Manager. In 1998 he moved to Toyota Motor Europe where among other responsibilities he was in charge of Product Planning and Commercial Planning Coordination for the Lexus brand and General Manager, Product Management Division.

He joined Fiat Auto in 2002 as Lancia Marketing Manager where the 41-year-old quickly made a name for himself in this role, and in June 2004 was put in charge of the Lancia brand, helping to steer a revival in its fortunes despite having very few resources, and this led to him being quickly promoted - less than six months later during a restructuring of the then Auto Division's brands - to head of the Fiat brand, which also included responsibility for the Fiat Professional (light commercial vehicle) division.

During his time at the Fiat brand he oversaw the arrival of a raft of important new models, including the Grande Punto, Bravo and Croma, as well as the hugely successful *Car of the Year* award winning 500, as the Italian carmaker battled back from the financial brink. He also revived the long-defunct Abarth 'tuning' brand to create a stand-alone Fiat brand performance division. De Meo was seen as one of Group CEO Sergio Marchionne's protégés and was often considered by the media to be the front runner to become Fiat Group Automobiles CEO when Marchionne eventually relinquishes the role. In 2007, in a surprise move, he became group marketing chief and relinquished his role at the Fiat brand, although he still retained responsibility for Abarth. Last December the departure of Alfa Romeo CEO Antonio Baravalle saw De Meo promoted to CEO of the sporty brand with a task to overhaul the struggling unit from top-to-bottom.

(Source: Italia Speed)