

# Susana Unzurrunzaga, 45 years working at ULMA



**SUSANA UNZURRUNZAGA.**  
ULMA Packaging  
**The longest working active member of the ULMA Group, at ULMA since May 1972.**

“ If our information is correct, you’ve been with ULMA since May 1972. This is your 45th year with us, which makes you the longest working active member not just in Packaging, but in the entire ULMA Group. Did you know that? When are you planning on retiring?

I wasn’t entirely sure, but I did suspect that might be the case. Just a few days ago, I was talking about it with some of my co-workers who are also close to retirement and, doing the numbers, it seemed like I was the one who had been in Packaging the longest.

What I didn’t know was that I’ve also been here the longest out of anybody in the whole ULMA Group.

As far as when I’m retiring, it’s scheduled for the end of February, 2018. But, with the early retirement subsidies from Lagun-Aro, I’m pretty sure I’ll be retiring at the end of July this year. We’ll see what happens...

“ Tell us Susana, what were the early days in the cooperative like? What has your career in the cooperative been like?

Wow, it’s been so long! But anyway, I had a lot of expectations, being as it was my first job and everything was new to me. It’s a fact that I found myself among some



of the most fantastic, caring people and I only have nice things to say about them.

They were the ones who really showed me what the world we live in is really like. They instilled the principles of cooperativism in me and, I’d say they even taught me what team work is. I’ll always be deeply grateful to them.

My career has had its ups and downs. I’ve had some really good times, less times good times, and also some bad times.

At some point, we all go through really tough times in the cooperative. For example, during the crisis of 1984; we didn’t know how that crisis was going to end and we had to work really hard. But, it worked out and here we are, stronger, bigger and without a doubt a great company and a great group.

As far as my own story, I started out as a draughtsman and then with the re-structuring and all that, I ended up doing everything from being the “copy girl” to working in the purchasing department and now I handle all the administration for the machining department.

“ In your extensive work experience, I imagine you’ve gone through all sorts of things... What times do you have special memories of?

I love reminiscing about the early years. I remember them dearly, because in those years there was a real sense of comradery, which has become pretty rare nowadays. We helped each other out and took care of

each other. Maybe it was because I was very young, but I always felt my co-workers were there for me, and I still feel that way about them today. That’s something I miss these days. So, that’s why those are the years I remember so dearly.

“ After working at ULMA for so many years, you must’ve seen how the cooperative and the ULMA Group itself have evolved. What are your perceptions of that evolution and how do you see the future?

To all appearances, the cooperative has done well. In fact, I’d say it’s done very well in terms of business.

When I started, we were all together. Construction and Packaging were both in Obispo Otadui, and it was all one business. As time went by, we got big and each business has followed its own path. And, in my opinion, it was good thing to split up, because they were two totally different kinds of businesses. And, this way both of them have ended up developing independently of each other.

On the other hand, I think along the way we’ve lost the sense of comradery, the spirit of cooperativism and all those kinds of feelings that should be innate to this kind of business. Nowadays, I feel like everything is too bureaucratic, everyone looks out for themselves. It seems like the directors are on a different level, out of reach. And, all of this, out of principle, should never be allowed in a cooperative. This isn’t a

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cooperative any more, it’s something else.

As far as everything else, when I think about the future I think it’ll go well. I don’t know if it’ll grow more or not. But, if they stay together, I think it’ll turn out well.

“ Which people would you like to remember here after a career of nearly 45 years, and why?

In the first place and without a second of doubt, I’d like to remember my sister Maite, who was the one who first got us into cooperativism, first me and later on my sister Mariló. And Vicente Elguero, my first boss, and José Andrés Igartua and all my co-workers from the first years I spent at ULMA. I’d like to thank all of them for their understanding, comradery and help.

“ Lastly, after everything you’ve been through at ULMA. Is there anything you’d like to say to your co-workers at ULMA?

Stay enthusiastic and motivated. You’ve got a great business and a great Group that are worth working for.