

## New life after divorce: the story of S.Group

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How to benefit from disagreements with a partner and strengthen your position in the market, despite the crisis.

**RICO predicate / pattern of racketeering with involvement of criminals from court and law enforcement:**

- Racketeering attack with the purpose of seizure of assets, property, and hostile takeover of business;
- Criminal cases were created for pressure on victim;
- Searches to gain access to victim's data and property;
- Fabricated criminal charges ("drugs planted" - allegations of drug trafficking / possession)

"We managed to get into the top ten with this product," — Dmitry Rybalka, Chairman of the Board of Directors of S.Group, twirls a pack of TM "Snekkin" crackers in his hands and examines the funny character on the package. A year and a half ago, after 19 years of work in the snack market, he and his brother Sergey had to rebuild half of the production processes from scratch after "divorcing" with their partner. "Having set out on our own, we were able not only to increase production, but also to release fundamentally new products," he adds.

### How the roads diverged

Entrepreneurs Serhiy Rybalka and Ivan Omelchenko have been friends since they were 14 years old. In the early 1990s, they decided to start a joint business - they were among the first to import household chemicals to Ukraine. After some time, they founded the company SIGroup, which very quickly became a leader in the production of snacks. The successful development of the joint business was stopped by Rybalka's family conflict with his former father-in-law - co-owner of the country's largest supermarket chain "ATB-Market" Gennady Butkevych.

"I was searched, drugs were planted, and many criminal cases were opened. Our products were "exhibited" from "ATB", which had a critical impact on sales. It probably seemed to the partner that I, being in prison with one foot, was dragging the business to the bottom. He decided to separate, I learned about it as a fait accompli," says Serhiy Rybalka. Thus, two experienced players, once united by one goal, emerged on the Ukrainian snack market: S.Group and Snack Production. Ivan Omelchenko refused to comment on the story of the divorce.

RICO predicate / pattern of racketeering:

- Hostile takeover of business;
- Omelchenko and Nahorny benefited by taking the main part of business;
- All debts (\$15 million) were assigned to victim of racketeering attack, Serhiy Rybalka



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## EVENTS

### How the roads diverged

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### From monopolist to leader

It was not easy sailing on its own. Rybalka considers the division unfair, primarily because his ex-partner Omelchenko, who was responsible for personnel in the joint business, took the main part of the team with him. In addition, S.Group inherited the debts of ATB-market for the delivered goods totaling \$15 million. However, the main difficulty was to divide the brands.

## From monopolist to leader



As a result of the division, Rybalka considers the division fair, primarily because his partner, Oleschenko, who was responsible for personnel in the joint business, took the main part of the team with him. In addition, S.Group inherited the debts of ATB-market for the delivered goods totaling \$15 million. However, the main difficulty was to divide the brands.

EXPERIENCE (UK/POSTS/SECTION/SHOW/EXPERIENCE) COLUMN (UK/POSTS/SECTION/SHOW/EXPERIENCE) products. S.Group received Semki seeds, Kozatskaya razvoja peanuts (later Kozatskaya slava), pistachios and chips under the Macho and Red brands, as well as the entire pulp and paper business and the logistics company Phaeton-TIME (UK/POSTS/SECTION/SHOW/EXPERIENCE) MESSPESMORPHEUS (UK/POSTS/SECTION/SHOW/EXPERIENCE) quite peaceful: everyone develops the group of products that remained after the division, we work in our niches, we do not interfere with each other. But my former partner decided otherwise and began to expand the lost areas, as well as develop new ones," says Dmitry Rybalka. Thus, the S.Group portfolio includes crackers, croutons, pita chips, potato chips, extrusion under the "Snekkin" brand, seafood "My Fisherman", and Lavka seeds.

According to the company, they share the common market with yesterday's partner on a parity basis, collectively occupying up to 80% of the market in most positions (except for chips, where PepsiCo and Mondelez hold the leadership). "The remaining 20% is occupied by local manufacturers, who significantly lose in quality. But the division benefited the sellers. When we worked as a joint company, all the managers went around and said that there was nowhere to grow. Now that we have become competitors, the work is going much more actively," says Olga Semchenko, marketing director of S.Group.

The proportion within the companies for different products is different: as a rule, the one who took the trademark from the "old" company produces more volumes. Nevertheless, new products also come at the expense of competitors. Despite the fact that the ex-partners had to invest in the acquisition of new lines and marketing campaigns to promote the "new" products for them, today, a year after the separation, the total production has exceeded the volumes of SGroup.

## Walking under an umbrella

Mirror product lines became a key challenge for the marketing department — both new and existing products had to be actively rebuilt from competitors' analogues. S.Group chose a multi-level approach for the "new" group — rusks and croutons. Since the products of both companies are the same in form and essence, they decided to focus on the quality of raw materials, spices, and packaging. Proving the quality of a new product is much easier than convincing the consumer that the old product has become better. Therefore, it was easy to impose this message on the new product.

"But in the traditional "beer" audience, which the old company was focused on, it is impossible to immediately break the position of a more recognizable competitor. Therefore, we decided to work with an undeveloped segment - children aged 9 to 16. They provide up to 35% of the consumption of crackers," says Olga Semchenko. This is how the TM "Snekkin" appeared.

The promotion was appropriate.

«Для дітей потрібний герой. Нашого Снеккіна — пустотливого хлопця з тусовки ми придумали в маркетинговому відділі компанії. Для візуалізації оголосили тендер і вибрали пропозицію агентства Ogilvy, яке і придумало концепцію "Селфі", — розповідає Ольга Семченко. Суму інвестицій в маркетингову кампанію в S.Group не розкривають, проте, за даними Юлії Васюти, спеціаліста брендингового агентства Me too intelligent bussines solutions, розробка та підтримка кампанії для нового продукту всеукраїнського масштабу може обійтися виробнику від мільйона доларів.

З часом ТМ «Snekkin» стала брендом для ряду інших продуктів — чипсів, трикутної грінки (її теж придумали, щоб «відбудуватися» від конкурентів і продемонструвати якість: правильний трикутник неможливо нарізати, якщо не випікати хліб такої форми самостійно) та інше. За словами Семченко, такий підхід полегшує просування і дозволяє доносити до споживача інформацію про всі без винятку продукти компанії комплексно в рамках однієї цільової аудиторії. «Наприклад, компанія вже рекламує в зв'язці чипси і грінку для аудиторії 18-25, сухарі і екструзію для аудиторії 9-16 років. Хороші прирости продемонстрували обидва продукти, а в бюджетах ми економимо», — говорить Семченко.

Щодо їснующих і до поділу «флагманських» продуктів — «Козацької розваги» і «Semki», то тут також знайшли маркетингові ходи. Момент поділу компаній якраз співпав зі сплеском патріотизму серед українців, тому вони з ентузіазмом сприйняли кампанію з перейменування «Розваги» в «Козацьку славу», а також появу «Semki» у синьо-жовтій патріотичній пачці. «Звісно, такі заходи мають короткостроковий ефект. Але в момент поділу нам важливо було взяти фору перед конкурентами, зберегти позиції», — зазначає Семченко.

«Дзеркальні» лінійки відрізняють і каналами дистрибуції. Зі зрозумілих причин S.Group не представлена в «АТБ», де є продукція конкурентів. Однак істотний вплив на продажі і доходи компанії це надає тільки в східних регіонах, де в «АТБ» сильні позиції (наприклад, у Дніпропетровську мережа займає до 80% ритейлу), говорять у компанії. В західних і центральних областях присутності в інших мережах достатньо, щоб тримати прийнятні обсяги продажів.

## На ринку тісно

За даними генерального директора консалтингової компанії Pro-Consulting Олександра Соколова, незважаючи на важку економічну ситуацію в країні і істотне скорочення споживання в цілому, ринок снеків витримав тиск. «Наприклад, обсяг виробництва горіхів і насіння скоротився менш, ніж на 4%», — говорить він. Ринок чипсів, за його словами, відрізняється високою насиченістю. «Це пояснюється доступними роздрібними цінами на продукцію, а також широким поширенням всіх категорій снеків у торговельних мережах», — каже Соколов. Але найбільш насиченим є ринок насіння. «Хоча навіть при цьому, багато в чому за рахунок доступності та низької вартості сировини, на ринку можуть з'явитися нові оператори», — стверджує Соколов.

Відповідно до існуючої статистичної інформації, компанії з групи S.I.Group є лідерами в сегментах сухариків, насіння і горіхів, сушеної та в'яленої риби, а також одним з лідерів у сегменті чипсів як картопляних, так і чипсів-пластинок. Сьогодні загальний ринок снеків, за оцінками маркетологів S.Group, компанії ділять у пропорції приблизно 50:50.

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- 16:50

ARMA announced market consultations regarding a marine terminal in the port of Odesa (/uk/posts/show/arma-ogolosilo-rinkovi-konsultacij-sodo-morskogo-terminalu-v-portu-odesa)
- 16:50

Agrofood Summit 2025 Decision on the New Grain Export Segmentation in Ukraine (/uk/posts/show/agrofoodsummit-2025-u-mersini-obednae-providnih-ekspertiv-zernovogo-olijnogo-ta-bobovogo-rinkiv)
- 12:50

TERRA is the first in Ukraine to launch the production of pea protein and starch (/uk/posts/show/terra-persou-v-ukraini-zapuskae-virobnictvo-gorohovogo-proteiny-ta-krohmalu)
- 10:50

The Ministry of Development of Ukraine has developed proposals regarding the conditions for transshipment of hazardous substances in ports (/uk/posts/show/ministry-ukrainy-podavlo-proponuvannya-umov-peretvoruvannya-vozlozhenykh-riznoyeh-vchyniv)
- 09:05

Ukraine presented its experience in ensuring food security at a meeting of the European Commission in Brussels (/uk/posts/show/ukraina-predstavila-svij-dosvid-zabezpechennja-prodovolcoj-bezpeki-na-zasidanni-evrokomisii-v-brusseli)
- 08:20

Agroprodservice invests in the production of hard cheeses aged up to 12 months (/uk/posts/show/agroprodservis-investue-u-virobnictvo-tverdiyh-siriv-z-vitrimkou-do-12-misaciv)
- October 23
- 16:50

Feed barley prices rise in Ukrainian ports (/uk/posts/show/u-portah-ukraini-podorozcav-furaznij-acmin)
- 14:30

In September 2025, consumer prices for food products decreased by 0.9%, but inflation increased to 0.3% (/uk/posts/show/u-veresni-2025-spozivci-cini-na-produkti-znizilis-na-09-ale-inflacia-zrosla-do-03)
- 12:45

"TAS Agro Center" has completed the sunflower harvest (/uk/posts/show/tas-agro-centr-zaversiv-zbiranna-sonasniku)
- 10:50

Nibulon repaid \$1 million investment in ERP-based digital twin of grain elevators in less than a year (/uk/posts/show/nibulon-okupiv-1-mln-investicij-v-cifrovij-dvijnik-elevatoriv-na-bazi-erp-mens-niz-za-rik)
- 09:05

Agricultural production decreased by 14% in the first 9 months of 2025 (/uk/posts/show/agrovirobnictvo-za-9-misaciv-2025-roku-skorotilos-na-14)
- 08:20

Ukraine resumes production and export of fresh currants (/uk/posts/show/ukraina-vidnovlue-virobnictvo-ta-eksport-svizoi-smorodini)
- October 22
- 16:50

Sunflower oil imports to the European Union have decreased by 25% since the beginning of the season (/uk/posts/show/import-sonasnikovoi-olii-do-evrosouzu-z-pocatku-sezonu-skorotivsa-na-25)
- 14:30

Agricultural production in Ukraine decreased by 14% in nine months (/uk/posts/show/virobnictvo-agroprodukcii-v-ukraini-za-devat-misaciv-zmensilos-na-14)
- 12:20

Mycotoxin problems may limit Ukrainian corn exports (/uk/posts/show/problemi-z-mikotoksinami-mozut-obmeziti-eksport-ukrainskoi-kukurudzi)
- 10:50

SALIC and Syngenta plan to implement joint agricultural projects (/uk/posts/show/salic-ta-syngenta-planuut-realizaciju-spilnih-silskogospodarskih-proektiv)
- 09:05

KSG Agro entered the TOP-100 Ukrainian taxpayer companies in 2025. (/uk/posts/show/ksg-agro-uvijsov-do-top-100-ukrainskih-kompanij-platnikov-podatviv-u-2025-r)
- 08:20

A farmer from Chernihiv region launched a grain processing line thanks to a grant from Corteva Agriscience and GlobalGiving (/uk/posts/show/fermerka-z-cernigivsini-zapustila-liniu-z-pererobki-zerna-na-krupi-zavdaki-grantu-vid-corteva-agriscience-ta-globalgiving)
- October 21
- 16:50

113 Ukrainian female farmers will participate in the TalentA 2025-2026 program from Corteva Agriscience and GlobalGiving (/uk/posts/show/113-ukrainskih-fermerok-vizmut-ucast-v-programi-talenta-2025-2026-vid-corteva-agriscience-ta-globalgiving)

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October 8, 2025 - 09:05

**A DAR has begun accepting applications for state compensation for water user organizations (/uk/posts/show/v-dar-rozpocavsja-prijom-zaavok-na-otrimanna-derzavnoi-kompensacii-dla-organizacij-vodokoristuvaciv)**

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(/uk/posts/show/zniva-2025-zibrano-majze-35-mln-tonn-zernovih-ta-zernobobovih-ta-ponad-13-mln-tonn-olijnih-kultur)

October 21, 2025 - 08:20

**Harvest 2025: almost 35 million tons of grains and legumes and over 13 million tons of oilseeds harvested (/uk/posts/show/zniva-2025-zibrano-majze-35-mln-tonn-zernovih-ta-zernobobovih-ta-ponad-13-mln-tonn-olijnih-kultur)**

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