

Building a successful new, and rapidly growing, company based on a few solid principles

Emin Sarikus is a mechanical engineer by training, and is today president and chairman of Sarem Makina in Istanbul, Turkey. Just over 10 years ago he had an idea to start a new business. The plan was to produce plastic extruding machinery to make plastic piping for all sorts of industrial, commercial and residential applications.



Sarem Makina was founded in 2003 with 5 people and now, 11 years later, it comprises a team of 80 professionals producing a turnover of USD 15 million. Here Mr. Sarikus talks about the background of how his small, clear idea turned into a big and growing company which is today exporting to 35 countries around the world.

1. Emin Sarikus, The Chairman of the Board of Directors of Sarem Makina

“Before I started Sarem,” says Mr. Sarikus, “I was the factory manager at a pipe company where we made various types of plastic piping. So I had lots of experience with pipe extruding machines. I had decided to leave that position but, when I did so, I was not necessarily planning to start a company. However, due to my success and experience in that previous position, many pipe companies in Turkey were asking if I would like to work for them.”

“I knew I couldn’t work with all of them but, at the same time, I saw a business opportunity to make and sell this type of equipment in Turkey. Previously all plastic extruder machines were imported, mainly from Germany. Thus, I realized I actually could do business with all the companies if I could make top-quality extruders. The company was born based on this idea and a few solid guiding principles.”



2. For Sarem Makina as one of the largest extruder manufacturer in Turkey, machine quality and performance are critical.

Most important item: No unplanned downtime

The most important founding principle was that Sarem's machines must never stop unexpectedly. Using this as the starting point, Mr. Sarikus began designing the equipment and also started looking for leading partners to supply key components to give his extruders the highest possible reliability. A second, very closely related, idea was to rapidly establish the Sarem brand with a strong reputation for the very highest reliability on the extruder market.

"So we decided from the start," he continues, "that we would only use highest-quality components from the best companies to avoid any failures or problems. And one of those suppliers was ABB. Frankly, the main reason our customers choose us is that they know they get high-quality machines that make high-quality piping very efficiently and reliability. Our equipment starts rapidly and produces a superior product at high yield per unit of time with failure-free operation. I can honestly say that any customer buying from us doesn't leave us. We have dozens of repeat customers, with them all placing high value on the nearly zero downtime we have proven."

As far as the specific ABB components used in the machinery, Sarem first started with ABB low voltage drives, specifying ABB products in the quotations. As the company has developed, so has the range of ABB components in the extruders, so that Sarem now uses a growing number of ABB components like PLCs, HMIs and motors.



3. Sarem installs ABB's drives, motors, operator panels, PLCs and low voltage products in their machines.

Superior line control a key competitive advantage

Besides the reliability, Mr. Sarikus points out that superior control is another strong advantage that ABB components provide to the extruders. "There is tough competition the pipe market and everyone is focusing on low costs, low energy consumption, low maintenance requirements and fast production. All of these performance factors, which ultimately determine profitability, are closely related to very precise control of the machine and the process. There are numerous critical steps in pipe extrusion, as we are melting the plastic raw material pellets which can cause a real mess or even a fire if the control is substandard. Therefore the whole line, and all process steps, must be very well synchronized and harmonized with each other. ABB gives us, and our customers, that control."

Torque control and temperature control are the most critical parameters when dealing with this molten material. Poor torque or temperature control gives bad pipe quality, which can hurt your reputation, says Mr. Sarikus. "If a pipe is poorly made, it will have an undulated or rippled inner surface which in turn will raise the resistance to the fluid flow through the pipe. For example, if you are piping water to the top of a building, the increased resistance will demand more pumping energy consumption or even make it impossible to pump the water to the top, which is certainly not the desired result."



4. Since 2003, Sarem Makina has grown from a small company with only 5 employees to over 80.

A good reputation is your best sales asset

"Today, as we have done from the start, we continue to use top-quality components from ABB to give our customers the best torque and temperature control all through the production line," continues Mr. Sarikus. "It is all part of our continuous focus on getting the highest uptime, to produce the best pipes with the lowest resource inputs. That in turn gives us the excellent reputation that we have in the market and has allowed us to grow on a global scale. A strong reputation is the best asset you can have to sell your products."

As an example of the importance of Sarem's good reputation, he mentions a customer from Iraq who several years ago was interested in buying a plastic pipe extruder. Before making a purchase he visited numerous OEMs in Turkey to check the quality of the equipment he was considering buying. Since Iraq was then in a state of war, it was critically important that the machine should never stop, and no maintenance would be required.

"I remember that the customer visited seven or eight piping manufacturers in Turkey to get their input. Every single one of them recommended that he purchase a Sarem machine, with the comments mainly saying 'those machines never stop'. I certainly take that as a very credible testimonial to the quality of our equipment and the brand we have established. We supplied that machine many years ago, it still running well and we have never been asked for any service. That's a very nice memory."

When asked how he sees the company developing five years from now Mr. Sarikus says that timeframe is too far out. "I am not thinking about where we will be in five years, I don't have time for that. I am instead thinking about and focusing on ensuring we continue to have customers today who are totally satisfied with the quality of our machines. And as the company is growing so rapidly, we need to make sure quality stays high. Frankly, I'm also thinking about having enough space to make all the machines that we need to." That sure sounds like a good problem.

Global support, if is it ever needed

Concerning the global reach which Sarem has achieved, with exports to 35 countries around the world, the question of worldwide support comes up. When problems do arise how is the required support supplied? Mr. Sarikus laughs as he answers the question.

"First of all, there must be a problem in order for there to be a requirement for support. We don't have problems and therefore there is very little need for support. But if service requests do arise, we can, in conjunction with ABB's strong global support services, address them very professionally and rapidly."

Article



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