



Terekas' blow moulder „Lito“

From DIY user to machine manufacturer

by Kay Barton

Terekas, a machine builder, bottle and preform producer based in Kretinga, Lithuania, claims to be the largest company of its type in the Baltic States, in terms of size and output. The major part of its business is now the manufacture and supply of blow-moulding machines for a broad client base. Their machines are distinguished from the broader market by being made of standardised components - a concept that was born of necessity.



In 1994, a few years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, brothers Juozas and Almantas Maksvytis obtained a property that had been a heavy industry repair centre during the Soviet era. The young entrepreneurs, who were just in their mid-thirties at that time, saw potential in the property and decided to become active in the newly flourishing PET bottle market. They invested in a PET blow moulding machine and started producing bottles. A good decision, as it turned out, as more and more Lithuanian bottlers were switching from glass to plastic containers and the availability of PET bottles was limited. Terekas' customer base and associated output grew and ultimately triggered the first repair work for the blow moulding machine. This turned out to be a crucial turning point in the company's future growth; in order to save time and money the brothers developed a solution to replace defective parts with standard purchased components. In keeping with the idea of "learning by doing", other machines that Terekas acquired over the fol-

lowing years were also repaired in this way until the team finally established that it had disassembled and reassembled the plants completely independently, consequently improving not only cost burden but also the durability.

With this knowledge and accumulated expertise, Terekas started the serial production of its first own blow moulding machines. It made them from standard components, with the declared aims of simplifying maintenance processes on-site at customers' facilities and creating greater flexibility. The company now uses several milling machines to produce all the components needed for its blow moulding equipment and packages them in a housing design that one could definitely describe as somewhat futuristic.

Terekas has 120 employees in total, including the two founding brothers, of course: Juozas Maksvytis is CEO and Almantas Maksvytis is Director of Commerce.

The blow moulding machines are today sold to customers in (among other countries and regions) Western Europe, USA and Canada. The company offers relatively broad range of equipment with 1-6 cavities for volumes from 100ml to 10l and for 15-120mm necks, including jars, hot fill containers, bottles with integrated handle or special and custom-made designs.

One hundred million bottles in total are produced at its Kretinga plant every year. It purchases standard preforms from European suppliers but also produces special preform types itself and offers them to the market, with barrier technology if required. Its own preforms range from 38mm for hot-fill to 83mm diameter twist-off for standard metal lids, and in weight sizes from 30-74g for a variety of applications in juices, sauces, herring, etc. The annual output is 100 million.

The preforms are usually supplied to customers as an integral part of the package for customers buying blowing machines.

"Being a PET bottle producer ourselves helps us better understand the blowing machinery as we can actually test our equipment in serial production, and make reliable decisions about engineering", Juozas Maksvytis explains and adds: "When it comes to

high speed production, we are compared to established EU brands. However in the segment of flexible blowing machines we see little competition."

As for the future? We were told that the company plans to invest continuously. Terekas' plans for 2016, for example, include the launch of a visual in-line test system to analyse the quality of preforms.

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