

## **Fortune Interview ENG**

For 30 years, VRAYKOS has been developing high-quality technical projects for the largest industrial facilities in Greece and abroad.

VRAYKOS Sales & Marketing Director, Alexandros Vraykos, talks about how a Greek company managed to gain the trust of the largest multinational companies in Greece and abroad.

**Mr. Vraikos, could you tell us about VRAYKOS and what exactly is the scope of its work?**

VRAYKOS is a specialized technical company that develops integrated industrial projects oriented towards Raw Materials Handling and Process Engineering for production units in the Food and Beverage Industry. The company is active in the sectors of Flour, Bread, Coffee, Chocolate and Ready-Mixes Industry, having also expanded its activities in recent years in the Feed Industry, Chemical Industry and Plastics and Insulation Industry. With more than 30 years of presence in the domestic and international markets, it has gained the trust of major Greek and multinational companies such as NESTLE, PEPSICO, PURATOS GROUP, RAVAGO, DSM, STAR TRADING, ION, LOULIS Food Ingredients, PAPADOPOULOU, AKTINA FOODS, JOTIS, KENFOOD, MILLS PAPAFILIS.

**Alexandros Vraykos, Sales & Marketing Director of VRAYKOS**

**"The goal of consolidating VRAYKOS as a partner of large multinational companies was very difficult, and there is no room for laxity or complacency. It is something for which we invest, work, and strive every day."**

**What exactly do you offer your clients, in which part of the Greek industry are you active, and what are your competitive advantages as a company?**

VRAYKOS offers automation systems for production units in order to modernize them, increase their production capacity, and minimize human and energy resources.

One of our main competitive advantages is the high quality of our products. All electromechanical equipment systems are designed and manufactured exclusively in our modern facilities in Greece, following the highest criteria and the strictest manufacturing standards. Our many years of experience and expertise in handling difficult raw materials, such as flours, cereals, coffee, sugar, and liquid chocolate, have led us to create customized solutions adapted to the technical characteristics of the products handled and the peculiarities that may exist at the production level. Equally

worthy of mention is the technical service in the After Sales Service section, which focuses on the immediate response to emergency problems, ensuring the long-term and uninterrupted operation of the production units that place their trust in VRAYKOS.

### **What are Bulk Handling and Process Engineering and why are they important to the industry?**

Bulk Handling is the international term for the handling of raw materials at an industrial level when they are in the form of powder or granules. It is essentially the handling of bulk materials and more specifically refers to the mechanical handling or air transport of products, storage, weighing and batching, mixing, packaging, and palletizing.

Process Engineering on the other hand, is the field of engineering that deals with the design and optimization of automated industrial processes for product production.

Bulk Handling and Process Engineering are closely related, and are key parts of industrial processes. Efficient and reliable bulk material handling is critical to the productivity, safety, and profitability of many industries. Process Engineering involves integrating these elements into a system that optimizes the flow and handling of materials. It is in these two areas that our skilled engineers work, using their expertise to develop customized, efficient solutions that help minimize the resources of an industrial plant.

### **In a globalized environment and against the backdrop of the crisis, your company has managed to evolve in the Bulk Handling sector while supporting the Greek industry and investing in products made in Greece. How did you achieve this?**

VRAYKOS, during the last fifteen years when an unstable economic environment prevailed, invested in the implementation of a new modern manufacturing plant spanning 1,500 m<sup>2</sup> in the Ritsona area, equipping it with high-quality mechanical metal processing equipment. At the same time, it placed particular emphasis on finding and training suitable personnel, consisting of mechanical and electrical engineers and specialized technicians, thus ensuring successful staffing at all levels. With a view to increasing productivity and optimizing project management, VRAYKOS, through its R&D department, developed a series of systems and machines that competed in technical and quality terms with the corresponding applications from major European and American technology houses.

All the aforementioned actions created the appropriate conditions for us to cope with the difficulties, to evolve during the years of crisis, and to establish ourselves in our field, becoming a prime choice for multinational companies, both in Greece and abroad.

**What have been the milestones of your company's development, and how have you managed to gain the trust of not only iconic Greek companies but also multinationals?**

The history of the company began in the early 90's when Dimitris Vraykos, a graduate of the RWTH Aachen University in Germany, in collaboration with Aristidis Melios, Mechanical Engineer of the National Technical University of Athens, founded VRAYKOS & Associates Mechanical Ltd. With many years of work experience in similar applications in European industries, they started a huge effort to upgrade the production process of the Greek industry.

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After systematic work and great effort, VRAYKOS won the trust of the company Mili Loulis in 2001 by undertaking the expansion of the company with a new industrial unit in Romania (Moara Loulis Mills), executing projects with a total budget of more than 1 million. This was essentially our first major project abroad. The implementation of a privately owned manufacturing plant in Ritsona in 2010 is also considered a benchmark for the company, an investment that was a foundation stone for the company's upcoming growth in the following years. The benchmark for our development was also 2022, a year in which there was great growth in all areas of the company. Turnover increased by 40% compared to the previous year, while at the same time industrial projects were implemented in Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, Nigeria, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates.

**Can you share with us some of the challenges you have faced?**

One of the biggest challenges has been the creation and development of the company's modern construction department under adverse economic conditions, as well as organizing and staffing it with people capable of succeeding and gaining the trust of our

clients. Equally challenging was making the company competitive with its global counterparts and competing for major technical projects from multinational companies. The goal of consolidating VRAYKOS as their partner abroad was particularly difficult, and there was no room for slackness or complacency. It is something for which we invest, work, and strive every day.

**We are entering the age of automation. What are the challenges that VRAYKOS has to face based on the changes that may arise in the Bulk Handling sector, and what are your goals?**

The new era we are living in is characterized by the digitalization and automation of all possible processes that are implemented within industrial production. The need for control, monitoring, and automatic handling at the industrial level is becoming more and more imperative for companies since the shortage of skilled technical personnel worldwide is expected to be one of the major problems of the future.

The challenge for VRAYKOS is to develop its expertise and adapt it accordingly to the modern digital era. This can only be achieved through continuous staff training, the transfer of knowledge and existing experience to the company's new generation of people, and the ongoing research and development of its systems and applications.

The company's goal is to develop innovative industrial systems that will enable a company to improve its productivity while minimizing its human and energy resources.

**Mr. Vraykos, from 2020 onwards, the economy is experiencing another crisis. Yet the company you lead managed in fiscal year 2022 (last published balance sheet) to show sales growth of more than 40%. How did you achieve this?**

Despite the difficult economic conditions, our company managed to achieve significant growth by implementing a number of strategic initiatives. One of the key factors was our ability to adapt quickly to the changing business landscape. We identified areas where we could add value while keeping prices competitive. Our experience and expertise in the ready-mix processing sector, for example, ensured that we were able to expand our customer base with little competition.

Another important factor was our decision to focus on innovation. In particular, we invested in research and development, such as our R&D department, modernization programs, and metal processing machinery. Thanks to the creation of a new company organization chart with new departments, design programs, and digital tools, we increased our capacity and worked on products and services that could help us stand

out in a demanding market. With the goal of improving safety, reliability, and efficiency, we placed a strong emphasis on customer service. We recognized that to succeed in a challenging economic environment, we needed to exceed their needs by implementing a series of measures to improve communication between us, responding quickly, and providing customized solutions to meet their requirements in full. At the same time, as a company, we have become more extroverted, promoting the VRAYKOS philosophy and values, which were recognized through our recent win at the Manufacturing Excellence Awards.

### **What are your goals for the upcoming two years?**

Our company's business plan for the next two years focuses on developing and expanding our overseas operations, with an emphasis on identifying new markets, creating strategic partnerships, and maintaining existing ones. To achieve this goal, we will invest in highly skilled human resources and digital tools to automate production and improve efficiency. This includes implementing cutting-edge technologies as well as upgrading our production equipment to ensure we remain at the forefront of the industry. Our goal is to build a team of experienced professionals who will help us navigate the complex and rapidly changing global business landscape while maintaining our commitment to high quality, innovation, and personalized service.

To support these initiatives, we have developed an investment plan for the next two years, which includes building expansion and the acquisition of new production machinery. These investments will allow us to increase our production capacity, improve the quality and range of our products, and serve our customers' needs at a higher level.

We envision the next day of "made in Greece," regaining the trust of the next generation in Greek industry.