



THE PARLIAMENTARY REVIEW
Highlighting best practice

Rakem



Kieran, Kevin and Eugene Rafferty



FACTS ABOUT RAKEM

- » Managing directors: Kieran, Kevin and Eugene Rafferty
- » Established in 1996
- » Based in Bury, Lancashire
- » Services: Chemical manufacture and distribution
- » No. of employees: 35
- » Family-run business
- » www.therakemgroup.co.uk

The Rakem Group was founded in 1996 in Bolton, Lancashire, by Francis Rafferty, who had worked for Sachtleben Chemicals for over 20 years. Beginning as Rakem, a chemical distribution company, their reputation grew rapidly within the industry as a reliable, knowledgeable and enthusiastic new company. Using their father's experience, the three brothers were able to aid the construction, coatings and plastics industries with novel new products, primarily titanium dioxide. By 1999, the company had outgrown their Bolton offices and moved to Bury with a new warehouse of 8,000 square feet.

From there the company blossomed, quickly turning into the Rakem Group, which was comprised of five companies. Maker Industrial was the first sister company to be formed, utilising our wide portfolio of raw materials; they began by making pigment slurries for the paper industry followed by water-based paints and construction materials. Operating as confidential Toll Manufacturers, they are able to offer a variety of manufacturing and packing services.

Closely following Maker, Cemkem was formed, specialising in the manufacturing and distribution of additives for the dry bagged mortar and cementitious industries. Cemkem prides itself on being the home of the novel lithium carbonate, Lithkem. With three companies now operating at full capacity, we became the Rakem Group. In 2018, we will welcome two more companies: Hydropak and Envirokem.

Can you imagine a world without pigment?

Day to day, we use objects and have no idea how they have been made, or what they are made of. Many people do not realise how common the chemical titanium dioxide is in everyday items. From sun cream to paracetamol to paints and plastics – if it is white or opaque, there is a very high chance it contains titanium dioxide. Here at Rakem we love titanium dioxide, our number one selling pigment, where it is used in the manufacturing of all paints, plastics and inks made here in the UK. Rakem have a wide range of products that complement the use of titanium dioxide in formulations. We have used titanium dioxide to grow all our current businesses, from the paints produced in Maker to the by-product being sold on to the construction industry by Cemkem.

Innovation

We are proud of our reputation as a group of innovative companies. We strive to always represent companies offering novel products to help our customers achieve the best quality results, while also reducing costs and improving efficiency.

Maker has rapidly expanded in two years, now operating across two sites, with over 40,000 square feet of production space and two state-of-the-art labs, constantly researching ways to improve their products, which are manufactured on behalf of famous everyday brands. Using the raw materials we sell, Maker has an advantage in the market, as it can work closely with the supplier, ensuring it maintains confidence with the customer through all stages of the manufacturing and development of products.

In 2017, Cemkem introduced their novel alternative to lithium



Third generation Caitlin Rafferty

carbonate – Lithkem. Based on blends of organometallic and metal salts, Lithkem and Lithkem+ react to accelerate the hydration process of both fast-set cements and Portland cement. In a rapidly developing industry, Cemkem strive to be forward thinking and continue to manufacture products which achieve high-quality results.

Damian Baxendale, director of Cemkem Limited, comments: “Lithium carbonate is a chemical admixture that can be used to adjust and accelerate the setting time of fast-setting cementitious binder systems such as high-alumina cements (HAC) and calcium sulfoaluminate (CSA) and alumina or CSA-Portland cement blends.

“Common applications for fast-setting cements include tile adhesives, self-levelling floor compounds, concrete repair compounds and refractory castables.

“Demand for lithium, the hottest commodity on the planet, is poised to continue on its upward trajectory, becoming the world’s new gasoline and earning the nickname “white petroleum” due to its use in lithium batteries for electric cars.

“The Rakem Group are proud that they have the reputation as a group of innovative companies”

“Alongside manufacturing expansion the company has gained over 15 new employees in 2017”

“The lithium demand for battery production is expected to increase significantly as demand for plug-in hybrid electric and all-electric vehicles grows.

“Due to the high demand and restricted supply, lithium carbonate prices have experienced significant increases over the last few years and this trend is expected to continue as demand intensifies.

“Increasing lithium carbonate prices have impacted directly on the dry mortar producers and in reaction to this Cemkem initiated a development programme to look at developing a lithium carbonate replacement as a commercially viable alternative which isn't so directly linked to market availability and pricing on lithium.”

Development

In December 2017, we moved into our purpose-built offices, with state-of-the-art research and development labs and a 25,000 square foot warehouse. Remaining on the same industrial estate in Bury, we are now planning our third and fourth buildings, which will allow Maker and Cemkem to expand their manufacturing facilities.

Alongside manufacturing expansion, we gained over 15 new employees in 2017. We are proud to welcome our first group of apprentices. This expansion has covered all aspects of the business, and we now have apprentices in admin, sales, technology and manufacturing. These apprentices will shadow managers, while studying at nearby Bury College over the next two years.

Steve Bunker, our chairman, comments: “The board strongly believe in the value of training and development and its investment in apprentices across most disciplines in the business reflects this. Government support and drive in this area is welcomed and gives us confidence that our recruitment strategies are in line with central policies for UK PLCs.

“The Rakem Group has continued to expand its workforce with the addition of two new development chemists and a sales director joining the team in Q1.”

Beyond the pigment

From a small company comprising just five people to a team of 35 today, we have become a significant employer in the community and we feel it is important to give back to our local town. In 2017, we participated in the Bury Hospice Corporate Challenge; starting with £50, which we managed to turn into over £30,000. Bury is a thriving town with a big community spirit, and we were honoured to sponsor the Pride of Bury Awards and look forward to continuing our support. We are also avid football fans, and have chosen to support three local teams including Ramsbottom FC and Walshaw Junior club, assisting with the purchase of new kit and development of improved training facilities.

Rakem staff at a charity football match in aid of Bury Hospice

