

Customer Story | Saracakis



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Customer **profile**

With a leading presence in the Greek business ecosystem for over a century, Saracakis is the exclusive distributor of a very broad range of automotive and machinery products of world-renowned brands.

Established in 1922 and still controlled by the founding family Saracakis is an energetic organization aiming to continue supporting private, corporate and governmental customers. Right now, Saracakis have physical footprints in Greece as well as in Romania, Bulgaria and Cyprus.

Digital transformation – **A necessity in times of uncertainty**

Saracakis, a group which imports, distributes a broad range of automotive and machinery products from over 20 world- renowned brands.

Even with its long-established and respected business of importing and distributing cars and machinery made by Honda, Mitsubishi, Volvo, FIAT and other renowned companies, Saracakis was not immune to the severe financial crisis that had begun to sweep through Greece in 2008. The effects of the global financial crisis that hit Greece in 2008 made a severe blow to the business.

When sales plummeted, Saracakis launched a long-planned IT upgrade, involving Microsoft Dynamics AX and Annata Dynamics IDMS solutions, which integrated its diverse operations, reduced costs and underpinned a restructuring needed to overcome the economic downturn.

The company quickly saw the entire car sales in Greece plummet by 70%, from 270,000 to 55,000 annually. Sales of machinery, such as construction equipment, fork-lift trucks and generators, also fell rapidly.



Digital transformation – **A necessity in times of uncertainty**

“We had a total collapse in the automotive market in Greece,” recalls Stamatis Chondroudakis, the Information Services Manager of Saracakis. Business in Cyprus and Bulgaria, where Saracakis also operates.

To survive this serious blow to the core of the business, the company decided to start restructuring in November 2010 by reorganizing more than 10 businesses dedicated to particular car or equipment brands, with the aim to form smaller units dealing with ranges of products. It has also decided to enrich its portfolio and increase competitiveness in insurance, tires and vehicle paint sector. However, in the four years from 2008, it had to cut its workforce of 750 by more than half.



System consolidation for a more **efficient and integrated operating environment**

The primary challenge that Saracakis faced was that the business operated 12 software solutions on three platforms, with separate systems for many divisions, such as sales and distribution, which required extensive IT support. “When we had different systems and different suppliers the cost was really high,” says Chondroudakis. This was the main reason why Saracakis decided to overhaul its IT in 2009.

Local solution suppliers were seen as inadequate to support the requirements of such a large business, so this left Saracakis with a choice between large automotive-system specialists SAP and Microsoft Dynamics AX complemented with Annata Dynamics IDMS, which produces dedicated systems for fleet operations.

After calling in Dynamic Integrated Solutions (DIS), a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner with ERP specialization, Saracakis carried out six months of research and trials, including the ones among the software firms’ customers, before opting for Microsoft Dynamics AX 2009 and Annata Dynamics IDMS, along with investments in IT infrastructure, such as on-premise HP Blade servers required for the ERP solution.



Support for **restructuring**

The complex mix of products and business procedures in Saracakis led to a project team of nine from its IT department and up to 25 people from around Saracakis taking part in workshops to define the group's workflows. "You need the early involvement of the people who will eventually be using new tools if you want to avoid difficulties later," says Chondroudakis.

The introduction of the software began in the most important part of Saracakis, the import and distribution operation division, primarily to improve links with suppliers and vendors. After five months the implementation was rescheduled to reflect a new Saracakis management decision to merge its import businesses into one.

The complexity of Saracakis, with 250,000 m2 of premises throughout Greece and operations in Cyprus and Bulgaria, presented some implementation challenges, resulting in some minor customization of the Dynamics AX and Annata, initially led by D.I.S. "Generally, it's easy to customize procedures in the new solution, and we have managed to do it ourselves once we built up our knowledge with the system," explains Chondroudakis



Streamlined communication flows **with dealerships**

“Generally we are very happy, and we have improved a lot of procedures. One of the most important improvements was to the communications between dealers and Saracakis, previously done only by telephone,” says Chondroudakis.

“We now have the option to share more of the information with our dealers, and they have online information about orders, stock... everything they need to know about the business,” he adds.



Upgrading to **cloud-based platforms**

In 2021, Saracakis succesfully upgraded their Dynamics AX/Annata IDMS solution landscape to the cloud allowing them to reduce the cost of system upgrades, enhance the business management process and created more agility of how their products and services are brought to market.

With a very ambitious timeline for the upgrade project Saracakis went live with Dynamics & Annata 365 in January 2022 in all their business entities in Greece. These digital transformation initiatives allowed Saracakis to streamline its business performance and significantly increase collaboration among its stakeholders through an improved IT infrastructure.



Enhanced **business intelligence**

Saracakis is seeing strong business intelligence benefits throughout its operations. “A lot of our business units are very satisfied. They can do many analysis now, and we can help them in a lot of ways,” says Chondroudakis. Decision-making is easier and faster now, he adds: “The new solutions are improving the way they are doing business.”

Overall, Saracakis has reaped large financial benefits from the project investment. “We have managed to achieve a very big cost-saving with the implementation of this new solution. One of the savings is that the company has been able to reduce the IT team because IT maintenance is easier overall,” says Chondroudakis.



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Stamatis Chondroudakis

Information Services Manager at Saracakis.



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