

IndustrialValves

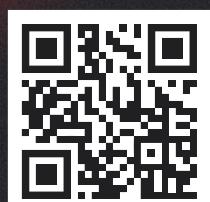
International Edition of Industriearmaturen&Dichtungstechnik

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Closer than ever: IDT strengthens its global reach with a new hub in Spain

Think global, act local: IDT has been flying its flag on the Iberian Peninsula since mid-2023 with a newly founded subsidiary in Tarragona. The German sealing technology specialist is not only responding to the call of its industrial customers who want to secure their production processes abroad in accordance with German factory standards. In addition, there is a growing interest in innovative sealing technologies and efficient on-site support “made in Germany”.

“Our Tarragona location is the central hub for IDT’s full range of services and technical support in Spain and Portugal”, says Frank Rafalski, Managing Director of IDT S.L., explaining the company’s reach. In Spain, there is a trend towards higher quality products and solutions. Large-scale industry in one of Europe’s fastest growing countries is increasingly pursuing the goal of reducing emissions. At the same time, the changing market situation in the plastics sector – including the PFAS restriction process and the closure of 3M’s German subsidiary Dyneon – has created significant momentum.

Industrial Valves magazine spoke with Frank Rafalski about the challenges and goals that IDT is facing on the Iberian Peninsula.

Can you describe the products and services that IDT S.L. offers in Tarragona?



Figure 1: The team at IDT in Tarragona.

Frank Rafalski: The industry in Tarragona has access to the full portfolio of products and services that we at IDT have in our program. This includes the entire standard range of pipeline gaskets as well as solutions for hydrogen applications or special designs for customer-specific requirements. Whether it’s on-site production, trainings, QA/QC services for TA projects or technical questions about design, material and product selection, we are the solution provider – not only in Germany, but also in Spain, Portugal and many other places around the world.

What were IDT’s strategic goals in opening the office in Spain?

Frank Rafalski: Spain is one of the fastest growing economies in the EU. The chemical park in Tarragona covers around 12,000 hectares and is the third largest in Europe. More than 100 different chemical companies operate on the site. The manufacturing industries represent the classic value chain and specialize in petrochemicals, polyolefins, plastics, organic chemicals and industrial products, as well as specialty and fine chemicals.

Although the country is developing at a dynamic pace, we still see a need for Spanish industrial companies to catch up in the technical areas. How can plant shutdowns be managed more efficiently? What sealing solutions can meet increasing environmental requirements?

This is where we fit in. It has always been our goal to be closer to our customers’ world and to provide reliable support in foreign markets. The quality and know-how of IDT knows no



Figure 2: IDT's on-site stock ensures fast delivery of the full product range. Rush orders for soft material gaskets can also be cut on site for immediate pickup or delivery.

boundaries. That's why our Técnico Comerciales are indispensable as experts and discussion partners.

What challenges did you face in setting up the new site in Tarragona and how did you overcome them?

Frank Rafalski: We're not completely new to the game. We've been connected to the industry and the market on the Iberian Peninsula for about 25 years thanks to our partnership with a local distributor. They successfully marketed our product portfolio, but in the long run, they just couldn't meet our high standards for technical service.

The chemical and petrochemical industries face a number of challenges. Tighter environmental regulations, increasing demand for low-emission and durable solutions, and the safe handling of demanding media are daily operational issues. In addition, the increasing complexity and interdependency of capital-intensive equipment requires specialized maintenance and repair skills, while stricter safety and labor regulations increase the pressure to continuously adapt and optimize processes. Without a trusted partner with deep technical knowledge and international experience in all these areas, these challenges are difficult to meet.

We are that trusted partner. This is a key strategic focus. That's why we took matters into our own hands in Spain. Within a few weeks in the summer of 2023, we established our own company, set up a warehouse and a service station, and entered into important cooperations in the other Spanish regions.

It has been 1.5 years since IDT S.L. was founded in Tarragona. What stands out for you?

Frank Rafalski: For one thing, my Spanish is getting better every day. My team is also learning German, but most importantly, our people are quickly learning the specific applications of the local

industry. The positive attitude and dynamic growth we are experiencing in Spain is a welcome change from the tense economic situation in Germany.

From day one, we have demonstrated our commitment to the values and goals of the region, a shared concern for safety, sustainability and emissions reduction. We've joined the Chemical Association of Tarragona (AEQT) and are increasingly recognized as a strong local partner, not just the new kid on the block. This shows that we're on the right track, and that's how we'll continue to move forward.

How does the subsidiary in Tarragona contribute to IDT's innovation?

Frank Rafalski: Research and development has always been and will remain at our largest German production site in Saxony. However, as a technology partner to the local industry, we also gain direct insight into the site-specific challenges in Spain, such as the effects of sea air, salt water and the Mediterranean climate on system components. We work closely with our R&D department in Germany to find better answers to these challenges and to develop products that can withstand these extreme conditions – helping to prevent corrosion in the long term and offering plant operators maximum reliability.

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