



# (inside) industry

*Mastering the art of  
continuous improvement*

## **BRALO**

*Rivet, fastener and tool*

## **CROSS MANUFACTURING**

*Precision sealing solutions specialist*

## **HEILIND ELECTRONICS**

*A leading distributor of connectors*






*Bringing*

# TRUCKING MUSCLE

— **TO AFRICA** —

Mercurial entrepreneur Joe Sakr is a man who likes to go beyond borders, break down barriers and doesn't fear risk. Andy Probert profiles his Lynx Group, one that reflects the man: fearlessly building a bespoke brand across Africa that creates links between industrial and truck bodywork manufacturers and transporters.



Spotting a gap in the African market several years ago has enabled Joe Sakr to build from the ground up – or the road – by establishing the Lynx Group which represents European and Turkish truck builders and meets the needs of transporters in their specific areas.

Now prevalent in 17 countries, mainly French-speaking ones in West and Central Africa – extending from Mauritania to the Democratic Republic of Congo – Lynx Group is run from its main office in Beirut, Lebanon. It has regional offices in France, Senegal, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Mali and Togo.

Mr Sakr's initial move into the African market was fuelled by his career in export sales for a reputed truck bodybuilder and then working in the Sultanate of Oman where he partnered with a local group in creating a manufacturing facility.

Following the European economic crisis, truck bodybuilders were being forced to find new markets, but having to align with prevailing local market conditions. Mr Sakr had already spotted that answer: Africa.

### Strategic move

"In 2013, I made a strategic move, shifting away from manufacturing to trade by representing Menci Italy in Africa. This led to the trade house Lynx Trailers, and then the Lynx Group as we developed many regional representations in West and Central Africa," he detailed.

Having struck exclusive distribution agreements with significant bodybuilders, principally Italy's Menci, the Lynx Group expanded and now represents OKT Turkey, Seyit Usta Turkey and DyMac UK.

Its market share varies from country to country and product to product. In Senegal, Lynx Group is a market leader in the fuel tanker segment, while in Ivory Coast, it sells more tippers. ▀







*Joe Sakr Founder and General Manager*

Our products are specially designed and made for Africa, unlike the majority of our competitors who sell a single-designed product for all markets

"On average, the Lynx Group retains around 15-20% market share as our client-base is mainly transporters who have high-quality requirements," added Mr Sakr.

All Lynx Group products are designed in Europe and manufactured in ultra-modern plants equipped with state-of-the-art tools and machines and the latest generation of welding robots. Tankers are fully compliant with the UN-ADR code and validated by Total Paris and Shell/Vivo South Africa for their respective markets.

Lynx offers carbon steel tankers, stainless steel and aluminium based on the haulier's preference and the technical requirements of the liquid transported. In addition, the company responds positively to the many and varied preferences by offering cylindrical, elliptical, Double-D and conical shapes (tapered).

Its tankers cover all sectors of liquid-transport activity such as fuel, bitumen, HFO, LPG, chemicals and food products. Following the new UEMOA regulation, it also offers four-axle tankers, tipper and cargo trailers.

Lynx Group, which is ISO 9001 certified, offers extensive tanker families as well as introducing side tipping trailers with higher stability and better response in difficult mining operations. This range is available in a semi-trailer configuration or as a road-train.

Freight carriers are also well served with a range of cargo trailers varying between simple flatbed, sided-flatbed, closed-sides trailers or curtain-siders. Lynx also provides spare parts related to its trailers, such as running gear, brake and electric systems, ADR certified tanker components and hydraulics and composite hoses.

### **On a different level**

Mr Sakr said the expansion of the Lynx Group in under-represented countries, such as Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo and Mauritania, were still a priority to help consolidate Lynx's brand presence further.



While Covid-19 has stopped Mr Sakr from travelling to Africa once a month, for his typical week to ten days business trip, he has taken to broadcasting weekly videos on LinkedIn, Facebook and Instagram to stay in touch with clients and elaborate on various topics related to the industry.

He pointed to the group's long-time knowledge of the African environment, its ability to coordinate with subcontractor design departments to offer custom-made and custom-designed products for every environment as critical differentiators from its competitors.

### Quality remains key

Mr Sakr went on: "Our products are specially designed and made for Africa, unlike the majority of our competitors who sell a single-designed product for all markets.

"But like any other industry, we are facing Chinese competition. No objective comparison can be drawn between our quality and theirs, but still, they are the main threat, especially as they propose financing to promote their low-quality products."

Mr Sakr not only considers Africa the fastest-growing market in the world, but it's a continent eager for development too.

"Nowadays most of our sales are carbon steel-made trailers, but soon, the demand will go towards stainless steel and aluminium. As the market matures, Lynx Group is ready and best placed to offer dedicated African design and specs.

"We are committed to serving West and Central Africa to the best of our abilities by providing custom-made, high-quality semi-trailers for all transporters in various industries like petroleum, bulk, aggregates, mining and cement."

In conclusion, Mr Sakr said he is optimistic for the future of Lynx Group.

"We are specialists in Africa, unlike many newcomers who think that the market is easy and available then realise that they are going nowhere," he said.

"17 years of expertise in this specific environment has allowed us to keep pace with the industry and maintain a strong advantage over many other rivals who are just driven by curiosity."

