



At the recent *Saudi Arabia Coatings Show*, **PPCJ** met with **Mohammed Sanaobar**, Regional Technical Director – Dubai, Wacker to discuss how ambitious construction plans are fuelling the coatings industry in the Kingdom

## Paving the way in Saudi



Mohammed Sanaobar, Regional Technical Director - Dubai, Wacker

**W**acker established Wacker Chemicals Middle East in Dubai in 1999 and has successfully offered solutions for coatings to the region ever since, alongside training and testing facilities at the Wacker Academy. **PPCJ** recently met with the Regional Technical Director for the Middle East, Mohammed Sanaobar, to discuss what makes Saudi Arabia such a prominent and exciting market right now.

### Why is Saudi Arabia such an important market to Wacker?

Simply, Saudi Arabia is one of the GCC countries and when it comes to the construction and coatings industry, this is one of our main focuses: it's one of the core businesses that we are always trying to develop here in the region.

The second thing is, typically, the development of the construction base over here in Saudi is much faster than any other in the region currently, especially with the mega projects that they have such as Neom, the Line, etc, which not only Wacker but so many companies will be very interested to contribute to. We want to be part of this success and we want to contribute. The vision Saudi has regarding sustainability intersects at points with Wacker's sustainability strategy, so we wanted to show the government here that yes, we can help you to translate those visions into actions in order to achieve the overall targets.

### What, in your opinion, are the main challenges of doing business in this region?

There are many challenges and I can summarise them in a few points. The major thing is the harsh conditions, the climatic conditions; you would need to make sure that all of the construction material and coatings will be sustainable enough and have a very long durability to resist all of the harsh environmental conditions, such as high humidity.

The second thing is the lack of skilled applicators – even though you have an excellent material, you need to have the skilled applicators on the job-site in order to do the application in

the right way. It's not only about the material but also about the application.

The most important challenge, in my view, is that we are still at the very early stage of the regulation and the guidelines, as they have in Europe or in the western world. This needs to be adapted to our region and our needs. We don't need to take the European standard as it is, because it was developed for Europe according to the climatic conditions over there. We need to adapt the standard to our norms and climatic conditions. So: lack of standards; skilled applicators; and harsh environments. Those are the three main challenges that we can foresee for the market over here.

### Do you think sustainability is a key trend for the coatings industry in this region?

I would say one of the trends but also, another trend that you can see is that they are trying to build new cities completely away from the centre of conventional cities, so organisation is another key trend. I would also say, they are using a lot of the latest technology related to the construction industry, such as 3D concrete, this is another trend. Besides all of this, sustainability is definitely a topic that we can contribute to as a company.

### Do you think exhibitions like Saudi Arabia Coatings Show help with your business?

The exhibition helps us a lot, because it gives us more exposure not only to existing customers but also, our target is to increase customers, to improve new prospects and to include the specifiers – for example, today in our seminar, delegates from SASO, the Saudi Standardisation Organisation, attended and we can deliver the key message that, while we don't have something to sell to them, our additives can contribute to their main vision. The exhibition gives us exposure to new clients that we haven't met before and we are also trying to send a very specific message about our sustainability.

### Was the exhibition a success for you?

It was busy for us and I would rate it above expectations.

**PPCJ**