

Emre Aydın

Ciceksepeti.com



“ I saw an opportunity to create an online gift market in Turkey. ”

COUNTRY	Turkey
INDUSTRY	Technology
EMPLOYEES	160
YEAR SELECTED	2011
WEBSITE	www.ciceksepeti.com

COMPANY SNAPSHOT

Turkish entrepreneur Emre Aydin is helping his countrymen send begonias with a browser or carnations with a click. Ciceksepeti.com has blossomed into the largest online flower store in Turkey. Launched in 2001, Ciceksepeti.com has since gone through two reinventions: first in 2007 when Emre quit his job to dedicate himself entirely to the business, and in 2009 when Emre began building a network of local flower shops to scale throughout Turkey. Now, Ciceksepeti.com has over a hundred partner flower shops that allow it to deliver same-day orders anywhere in the country. An ambitious entrepreneur, Emre won't stop there. His vision is to become the leading online gift delivery company in Turkey.

As the number of Turkish internet users has grown, so has the e-commerce market. Ciceksepeti.com is taking advantage of this trend. Recently, it raised funding from Hummingbird Ventures to build a management team and launch a new product line, gourmet food packages. And in December 2011, Amazon.com agreed to make a minority investment in the company, only its second venture in Turkey.

Emre's entrepreneurial spirit has been present throughout his life. As a young boy growing up in Eskisehir, Turkey, he resold chocolate boxes in the street with his brother to make extra spending money. After graduating from Bogaziçi University with a degree in Industrial Engineering in 1998, Emre went to work at Unilever as a SAP systems analyst. While at Unilever, he also took on additional consultancy projects on the side. In 2001, Emre decided to leave his corporate job at Unilever and, along with four partners, started his own SAP consultancy firm, Elsys. That same year, Emre noticed another opportunity. His brother, who lives in the US, wanted to buy flowers online and have them delivered to a friend in Turkey. When they couldn't find a good option, Emre didn't hesitate. He purchased the domain for e-cicek.net ("cicek" means "flower"), and in his spare time, built the website and launched an online flower delivery company. The company directed orders to a local flower shop that arranged and delivered the bouquets. But without Emre's full attention, the business grew slowly over the following few years.

It wasn't until 2007, when Emre dedicated himself fully to e-cicek.net, that the business started flourishing. While Elsys was employing 70 engineers, making close to US\$10 million in revenue, and working with blue-chip clients such as Unilever and Mercedes, Emre was bored. So, he sold his stake for US\$230,000 and decided to go fulltime at e-cicek.net (which he renamed to ciceksiparisi.com – meaning "flower delivery"). To grow the business, he decided to build an internal supply, production, and distribution system. He used half of what he cashed out from Elsys to build three distribution centers (two in Istanbul, one in Ankara) and trucks, hire personnel, kick off a new marketing campaign, and finance operations. In 2007, the number of orders grew by more than 450%. As the volume of orders continued to grow the following year, Emre realized the site's logistics weren't scalable. At the time, Emre was directing orders to a few flower shops outside of Istanbul and Ankara, but didn't have formal partnerships. In 2008, he rebranded the company again – this time to its current name, Ciceksepeti.com ("flower basket") – and shifted the company's operating model by building a network of third-party flower shops throughout Turkey.

Through its network of florists and emphasis on customer service, Ciceksepeti.com has become Turkey's leading online flower store. Ciceksepeti.com is well positioned to grow in conjunction with the Turkish e-commerce market, creating the Turkish equivalent of 1800flowers.com. He has started to expand out of the flower realm by also offering gourmet food baskets through Ciceksepeti.com and experiential gifts through magicgift.com, another website he has developed.
