Nearly 60 percent of the Turkish Internet population visit Mynet daily, ranking it as one of the largest Internet properties in Europe, he says.

“We are assertive about being the biggest Internet portal for Turkey,” he says. “Today, the number of people who have access to the Internet in Turkey is approximately 31 million, and most of these people make use of services like e-mail, news, finance, music, and video on Mynet.”

Kurttepeli, who studied industrial engineering at Columbia, chose engineering because he wanted to know more than just how things work.

“I wanted to know not only the what but also the why,” he says.

So far, with Mynet’s traction, things are working out fine, and Kurttepeli says what he learned at Columbia Engineering had a lot to do with his success.

The Engineering School and the diverse cultures among students, he says, helped him learn to appreciate other people’s points of view.

“As of today I still try to cultivate this diversity in the companies I’ve been part of and, specifically in a field of Internet, where everything is changing at lightning speed. I strongly feel this kind of approach and philosophy paves the way to success.”

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“Growing up in Turkey, Kurttepeli was exposed to an international flavor early on by attending a U.S.-affiliated high school.

“Continuing my education in the United States was a natural extension of this,” he says. “But what drew me to Columbia, besides the institutional reputation, really was the international flavor it has in its culture and students.”

Kurttepeli says the University lived up to its reputation.

“Studying at Columbia gave me not only access to great scholars and challenging students but also access to the best New York City has to offer. I was exposed to leaders in every aspect of life, and this has given me the ‘courage’ to think truly globally.”

Despite the success he has experienced with Mynet, Kurttepeli is not one to sit back and just watch his tech empire grow. He has founded or invested in more than 20 Internet and technology start-ups in Turkey, ranging from e-commerce to vertical social network sites to mobile and gaming companies.

Kurttepeli is also one of the founding members of the Columbia University Global Center in Istanbul, which opened in November. The center is the sixth opened by Columbia University since 2009 and will be a regional hub for a wide range of activities and resources available to the University community.

Kurttepeli always follows his passion.

“I believe it is the key ingredient of any successful entrepreneur, and when you have that passion, all those long hours of work and the compromises you make come so easy.”