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EDI MAKES MARK ON COLUMBIA MANUFACTURING COMMUNITY (Published August 21, 2004, in the Columbia Business Times) - 8/21/2004

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EDI MAKES MARK ON COLUMBIA MANUFACTURING COMMUNITY

COLUMBIA, Mo. – Transforming the world one wastewater treatment plant at a time, the growth of Environmental Dynamics Inc. makes it an important pillar of Columbia’s manufacturing sector.

Environmental Dynamics researches, develops, manufactures and sells aeration diffusers and biological treatment systems for wastewater facilities. To clean water of impurities, air bubbles must be released into the water in a process called “aeration,” which allows biological oxidation of the waste. The aeration functions like the bubble tube in a fish tank, although on a much larger scale. EDI makes the systems and parts that aerate the water.

EDI projects about \$15 million in sales this year to customers all over the world. Although municipal wastewater cleanup facilities are the company’s main customer, EDI also virtually invented the market for aftermarket part sales in wastewater systems by supplying aftermarket parts for other companies’ systems through a subsidiary, Diffuser Express.

Closer to home, EDI also is working with local officials about possible improvements to municipal wastewater treatment facilities in Columbia and the surrounding region. D.J. Nunamaker, marketing coordinator for EDI, said the company was putting together a tour of its facility with key city officials.

In addition, EDI’s systems have been able to eliminate odors emanating from hog and poultry waste lagoons, which is a constant problem in rural areas in Missouri and around the world.

“The thing that’s impacted me the most about EDI is how appropriate the company name, Environmental Dynamics, is,” said Brian Gauler, the company’s director of business development. “It really is a very dynamic company.”

The company's dynamism shows in its ability to transform the wastewater treatment facilities of the world. With offices in Japan, India, China, Germany and Argentina, the company is equipped to outfit wastewater treatment facilities around the world. Its products are used in more than 4,000 installations in 70 countries across the globe.

Gauler said he was especially proud of the new videoconferencing facility in the company's headquarters that allows the company to conduct large seminars and sales meetings with people around the world. The ability to communicate with these far-flung offices via videoconferencing technology creates and builds on the global networking that the Chinese call "Guanxhi," he said.

"Guanxhi is basically networking or the 'good-old-boy' system here, but it is much more extensive than what we have here because it will include families, and it includes people knowing about other people's families," he said. "It will include nepotism, it will include all the aspects of what strong networking would be here, but even beyond that because of the culture in China. Now if you've got that type of relationships that are developed, those are personal, one-on-one relationships. So our attempting to work with firms initially by virtue of e-mail is greatly enhanced when we can get them into an office, sit down and talk via videoconferencing, and you begin to develop a more personal relationship."

In partnership with the University of Missouri-Columbia, EDI has helped launch the Centech Wastewater Institute, which combines the hands-on expertise of EDI engineers with that of faculty experts in a one-week training program for people from other countries. Training events such as this and one-on-one assistance in China have led Chinese designers to demand EDI products and specifications as they design wastewater systems.

"The Chinese are amazed that we will assist them without charging them," Gauler said.

About 70 percent of EDI's customers tend to be municipal governments, and 30 percent tend to be industrial concerns. As rural areas urbanize, EDI has the largest market share of communities wanting to change from the use of lagoons to aeration systems.

The company is second in market share to chief competitor ITT Sanitaire. However, EDI employees say the rival technology has been in use for at least 30 years, and EDI's advanced technology has allowed its market share to grow continually at the expense of its competitors. In addition, because the older rival technology often carries huge energy costs, and because EDI's products are more energy-efficient, they can save customers a substantial amount of money over the life of a wastewater system.

Oxygen transfer efficiency is a measure of the relative efficiency with which oxygen is introduced into wastewater by different types of diffusers. In deciding to contract with EDI, the City of Dallas determined that, for every 1 percent increase in oxygen transfer efficiency, the city would save \$600,000 in energy costs over the life of the equipment. Because they were able to gain 2 percentage points in oxygen transfer efficiency, Dallas saved \$1.2 million in energy costs by choosing EDI's system.

President Charles E. Tharp started EDI 29 years ago as a firm focused on home and packaged wastewater systems. Over time, the company evolved to provide engineered aeration

designs for wastewater systems worldwide. The company, which today has 73 employees, now manufactures the largest aeration diffuser product mix in the industry, including specialty membranes to meet the particular needs of specific industries such as paper manufacturers and chemical companies.

As its international business grows, now at 40 percent of total sales, the company has collected several awards over the past few years. Earlier this year, the company won the U.S. Department of Commerce's Export Achievement Award. In 2001, EDI received the "Exporter of the Year" award from the U.S. Export-Import Bank and the "Missouri State Exporter of the Year" award from the Missouri Department of Economic Development. In 2002, the company won the U.S. Department of Commerce's prestigious "E" award for Excellence in Exporting.

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