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AquaSensors

By Jill Ries

MENOMONEE FALLS -- Thanks to good timing, the right investors and a desire to stay in Wisconsin, Bruce Bathurst has created an analytical measurement system that will help manufacturers and others with automated processes involving water become more effective, efficient and environmentally friendly.

Four years ago, Bathurst decided “it was just the right time in my life” to pursue his idea for a better device to measure industrial processes. Four years later, as president of AquaSensors LLC, Bathurst and his company have created a better way to process, communicate, and measure the chemical properties of water, waste-water, food, beverages, chemicals, pulp and paper and more.

The solution is AquaSensors’ “DataStick” device. DataStick is a modular sensor system that creates a more efficient way to measure, process and communicate with one tool.

The DataStick device is the first piece of equipment of its kind that is plug and play. When sensors in the tube-shaped tool wear out, they are easily replaced. It provides significant cost savings because of efficient installation tactics that reduces the time as compared to traditional sensors. The DataStick also features low maintenance requirements and reduced calibration needs because of sensor software called AquaComm. This software allows the DataStick to be pre-calibrated digitally during the programming stages, and remotely calibrated on site.

In 2005, AquaSensors finished in second place in the Wisconsin Governor’s Business Plan Contest, in addition to winning the Advanced Manufacturing category. The contest encourages entrepreneurs who are in the creation, start-up and early-growth stages of high-tech businesses in Wisconsin. Business contestants have a chance to win seed capital and valuable services that will help their businesses get started as well as help with Wisconsin’s economic development. AquaSensors won a \$20,000 prize.

“This was a great opportunity for us to be able to network. It was a great honor to receive,” he said.

In November 2005, the Wisconsin Department of Commerce gave AquaSensors a \$100,000 low-interest loan to help continue the company’s developments and growth. The Commerce loan was a part of Gov. Jim Doyle’s “Grow Wisconsin” plan, where investments must go towards companies certified by Commerce as qualified new business ventures.

In December of 2005, AquaSensors closed a deal with Silicon Pastures angle network for \$360,000 in financial support.

DataStick was first tested in 2003 in field trials in Milwaukee. By the summer of 2004, AquaSensors had released a full line of DataSticks on the market. In addition to DataStick, AquaSensors has also created other successful sensor products. AnalogPlus Sensors consist of a

full line of traditional analytical sensors which feature advanced reliability and reduce maintenance needs. AnalogPlus Sensors work in conjunction with many standard industrial transmitters, like AquaSensors own, AnalyzerBox. AquaSensors also produces a wide variety of mounting hardware equipment, as well as Calibration and Refurbishment software equipment.

All of the successes of AquaSensors would not have been possible if it weren't for the risk of Bathurst to follow his idea with passion.

“Whatever it is your doing you must be passionate and committed. It doesn't necessarily have to be the most logical thing at the time because if you think too much about it, you will scare yourself,” he said. “You must be committed to your idea and sacrifice to make it happen.”

That's sound advice from a man who knows first-hand how to start from scratch and build a successful company.

Ries is a UW-Madison student enrolled in “Issues in Science and Technology Communication,” a course taught by Wisconsin Technology Council President Tom Still.

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