



Environmental Dynamics, Inc.

President and CEO Randy Chann explains how this biological wastewater treatment solutions company uncovers opportunities by paying attention to its customers needs

Path of Progress

Adaptability, entrepreneurship, and innovation are more than words to Environmental Dynamics, Inc.'s (EDI) Randy Chann. To him, they are the core competencies that this biological wastewater treatment solutions company has worked hard to develop and integrate into every aspect of its operation for more than 30 years. And as this company continues to grow, one thing remains constant: EDI's commitment to serve its customers.

"Staying responsive to the needs of our customers is paramount in this industry," said Chann, president and CEO. "It's not hard to identify your market in this business; we know where the wastewater-treatment plants are. However, discovering how we can serve our customers is the key to our success because those vary widely among our client base, and in our industry, they are always changing."

Founded in 1975, EDI emerged shortly after the EPA established regulations to enforce water quality standards, setting up shop in Columbia, Mo. The wastewater treatment solutions manufacturer dabbled in different market sectors in its first few years before embarking on the development of aeration technologies: solutions that clean wastewater by degrading contaminants through biological processes and the introduction of oxygen. With so many methods to aerate water, EDI developed a diverse product line ensuring it could match the needs of all its customers, and it's been growing along with that adaptable approach ever since, said Chann.

Opportunities overseas

Keeping its domestic roots intact, EDI supports municipal and industrial wastewater treatment plants all over the world with more than 6,000 installations in more than 90 countries today. "We have always aspired to support the global market," said Chann. "So we leveraged our strengths in



product innovation and challenged the organization to develop, in this case, sales programs to expand and service international markets. There are a lot of needs out there, especially overseas."

Unlike the established infrastructure in the US, where there are approximately 20,000 municipal wastewater treatment plants, some countries started building their first treatment facilities only a few years ago. That's where EDI spotted the opportunity to expand its services, said Chann. "Again, that entrepreneurial spirit motivated us to challenge ourselves and travel in new directions," he said. "To help these countries not only build but manage their infrastructure, we expanded beyond equipment solutions and now provide application expertise, replacement parts for most major brands, and installation and maintenance services."

The move was a smart one for the modest-sized manufacturer of 120 employees since EDI's strengths in application know-how and design dovetailed well with the project delivery methods being used in many international markets. "They are building their plants at a quicker pace by using a design-build or design-build-operate model: an approach that uses a



multi-service single contractor as opposed to a more traditional design-bid-build concept,” said Chann. “We provide these multi-service contractors with a wide range of services, including design support, value engineering, equipment solutions, and field services.”

The creation and fostering of those supportive relationships has enabled EDI to extend its reach into regions all over the world, said Chann. “It’s allowed us to create a strong international presence without having high visibility there,” he said. “However, as these markets mature it’s time to develop in-country assets to service the long-term needs of this customer base.”

In 2009, EDI started that venture by acquiring the operating assets of Water Engineering Ltd. in the UK and a relationship with USI Technologies in Singapore and is currently in the process of building a support team in China and India, said Chann. “We are evolving right along with our customers. The offices will provide support to new projects, but more importantly, they will assist plants already in operation, allowing us to remain responsive and adaptive to their long-term needs.”

Broader solutions

EDI isn’t stopping there, said Chann. “A lot plant operators are starting to acknowledge that they need help maintaining their infrastructure, especially as costs continue to rise, budgets get tighter, and more efficient aeration technologies emerge,” he said. “It’s a new market focus for us, and we are ready to take on the challenges that come with it.”

It’s a natural next step for EDI to assist treatment plants with efficient operations since efficiency is a primary thrust of the company’s product R&D effort. The company recently rolled out a new diffuser solution called FlexAir StreamLine: a product that is particularly well suited for ultra-high efficiency applications. “This product represents the convergence of many years of design and application expertise,” said Chann.

Chann credits EDI’s continual efforts in product development to the lines of communications the company has long

established with its customers. EDI’s entire sales team is technically versed, so it cannot only guide the customer with product selection, but also gain feedback on how the company’s products and services can be fine-tuned moving forward.

“It’s about establishing that mindset and forced rationalization of what your customers need today and what are they will need tomorrow,” he said. “Today, there are lots of discussions about green technology and energy efficiency. We are directly involved in this area as 50% to 70% of a treatment plant’s energy use is tied to aeration. We’re using our relationships with our customers to navigate through this emerging market much the same way we have with everything else.”

As EDI continues to move forward, Chann says the entrepreneurial spirit of the organization will continue to aid in its growth efforts, whatever direction that may be. “We’ve created a very collaborative and open environment here,” he said. “All of our employees have had a hand in our success as we bring together our ideas on how we can better serve our customers. It’s difficult to have the vision of an organization come from a single head, or a small executive group. When it comes to mapping out our future, we’re asking everyone to think about where we will be in the next few years and beyond. Overall, that’s what’s kept us forward thinking and on the path of progress.” ■

—Erica Garvin



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