

MANUFACTURING BUSINESS OF THE YEAR

Yellow Springs' YSI spreads its reach around the globe

■ BY TRACY STALEY
DBJ CONTRIBUTOR



WINNER

The home office of YSI Inc. may sit in tiny Yellow Springs, but the company's reach extends well beyond village, state or even national borders.

In fact, the 60-year-old company's latest branch office is thousands of miles away in Abu Dhabi.

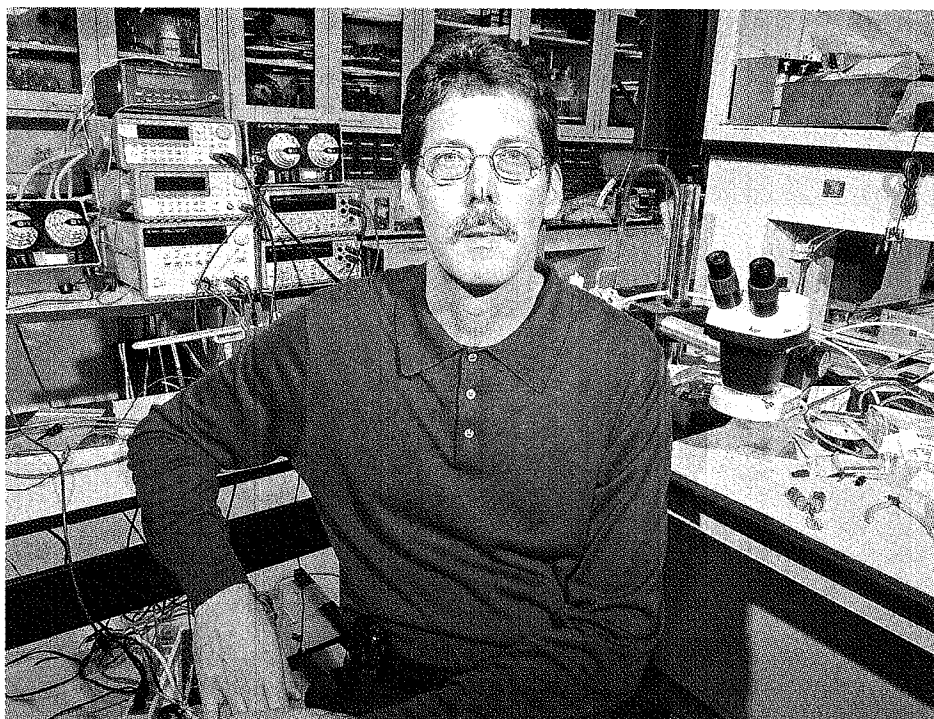
YSI, which in recent years has evolved into chiefly an environmental testing and monitoring firm, operates 22 branch offices across the globe. The company tests and monitors water quality quantity, most often carrying out the work for companies mandated to do so by the government.

The combination of geographic diversity and government-mandated work has so far shielded YSI from the economic downturn, said company Chief Executive Officer Richard Omlor. The company expects to grow revenue by 12 percent in 2008, stronger than the estimated seven percent industry average, Omlor said. The Yellow Springs workforce, which numbers about 120, has grown by about 10 percent over the past year, continuing its tradition as a strong economic driver in the village.

As a result, YSI was selected as the Manufacturing Business of the Year.

"Even in these economic times, unless something unforeseen happens, this will be another record year for us," Omlor said.

YSI started when four engineers from Antioch College developed sensors and timers for researchers at the Wright Air Field.



JAMES E. MAHAN ■ DBJ

Richard Omlor, chief executive officer of YSI Inc., at the company's Yellow Springs offices.

That first project launched the Yellow Springs Instrument Co., which in the 1950s contributed such innovations as the temperature probes used extensively in U.S. space program and components for the first commercial heart-lung machine.

Throughout the decades, the company created a broad array of products for water qual-

ity sampling, health care technology and other industries.

In 2006, the company sold its temperature sensors business to focus on outdoor environmental testing and monitoring. Omlor said the firm is targeting research and development, organic growth and acquisitions.

To understand the type of work YSI does

these days, take a look at the company's motto: "Discovering solutions for a Healthy Planet." The firm offers sensors and other types of technology that monitor, collect data and test drinking water, wastewater, storm water, surface water, ground water, oceans — even food and beverages such as yogurt and wine.

"People really enjoy working for a company that benefits society and mankind," Omlor said.

For YSI, where there is water, there is work. In the past 10 years, the company has opened offices in China, Spain, Baton Rouge, La., and several other locations. In 2008, offices opened in Australia and India.

YSI usually has three to four employees in each branch, with more if there is manufacturing for local clients involved.

"We truly believe that with the issues of water quality, water scarcity and climate change, we are in a great position to be in a long-term player in these markets," he said.

World markets aside, YSI today plays an even greater role in the economy of its birthplace. With the closing of Antioch College, Yellow Springs relies heavily on the tax income generated by YSI. It's one of the village's largest employers and one of its most active corporations, said Karen Wintrow, executive director of the Yellow Springs Chamber of Commerce. She called them an incredible business.

"YSI is basically at this point the brightest light in Yellow Springs," she said.

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RAJ SOIN

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