

Paul McCann of Commonwealth Technology, Inc. on ...

The revamp of an engineering and manufacturing government contractor



by Trenna Nees

LOOKING AHEAD...

"We have a smart, professional group of engineers, craftsmen, machinists, technicians, and administrators ready to take on new challenges. Our next step is to seek additional opportunities for strategic expansion, whether by organic growth or mergers/acquisitions, and future success as an industry leader. Providing full client services from the front-end of a project to the back-end in an agile manner is what will maintain our competitive edge, along with remaining true to our corporate culture of communication, teamwork, and integrity."

—Paul McCann, President

It can be said that Commonwealth Technology, Inc. (CTI) is vital to the defense, intelligence, and security needs of our nation. The Alexandria, Virginia-based company's niche is in engineering and manufacturing services for the government, and CTI president Paul McCann and a seasoned group of executives, directors, and managers have transitioned their insight, knowledge, and understanding of government contracting into a sustained effort that has led to growth, diversity, and continued success.

Joining CTI in 1997 as its controller, McCann set out to develop a more robust financial- and administrative-support infrastructure to complement the company's operational engineering and manufacturing capabilities. "Aligning the support side with the expertise of our engineering and manufacturing services created a more sophisticated business platform," McCann explains. "It supported not only financial growth; it also positioned us to diversify our customer base and to increase and improve our capabilities."

In three short years, CTI's diversification strategy was paying off. And in September 2001, its engineering and manufacturing services, with a niche in specialized hardware and mission support relied upon by the defense, intelligence, and security communities, became a distinct advantage. "The attacks on 9/11 were devastating," McCann states. "As all Americans, we were brought to a new sense of awareness not only in how we functioned as individuals, but also in how we did business and addressed security needs. The longevity of our organization, the level of integrity with which we operated, and the proximity of our organization put us in a position to contribute to new priorities."

With its multidisciplinary group of highly regarded and seasoned engineers, craftsmen, machinists, technicians, and administrators, the expertise, agility, and responsiveness of CTI further launched the demand for its custom client solutions. Over the next eight years, CTI experienced exponential growth, adding more software-engineering, systems-engineering, and RF capabilities while also investing in leading-edge manufacturing equipment. In



PAUL MCCANN, PRESIDENT

October 2009, the board of directors appointed McCann as its new president.

Recognizing the growth and maturity of CTI and the changing landscape of its environment, McCann wasted no time in implementing new project-management and business-development approaches. His first order of business was hiring an industry-seasoned COO. "We could no longer operate our larger and more visible company the way we had when we were much smaller. We needed a project-management professional to help drive us to the proverbial next level on the operational side of our company," McCann says.

With the addition of John Griffin in November 2009, CTI began revamping how it manages its projects. "Today, we have a CTI-specific project-management framework, implemented company-wide and applied to each and every project to the extent applicable," McCann explains. "We have invested in training about a dozen of our engineers and managers in a 15-week-long, CTI-oriented, internal project-management course. In the near future, we expect to have a number of our engineers and managers PMP certified, a growing requirement in our line of work."

Next, McCann set out to hire an industry-seasoned business-development executive. "We were at that point where we needed a continuous business-development function. We could no longer turn our attention to business development only when our backlog diminished. We were finally willing to commit to true business development—the long-term process of building relationships through creating trust," McCann says.

With the addition of Will Kee in June 2010, CTI ramped up its marketing efforts and now identifies custom solutions in five hard-to-solve problem areas: sensor packages; smart collection; mission support; simulation, evaluation, and training support; and research and development/unique engineering.

Additionally, McCann notes, the recent acquisition of Q.E.D. Inc. has played a major role in furthering CTI's electrical, RF, and software-engineering capabilities, moving it closer to becoming a complete solutions company and its customers' "go-to-partner." The company's foresight to transition from tactical engineering and manufacturing services to a strategic full-service platform will create more thorough solutions that will benefit its client base.

Working diligently to cast a positive message that incorporates CTI's strong commitment to communication, teamwork, and integrity and its ability to deliver superior custom solutions in an industry-recognized "quick-reaction-capability" environment, CTI has positioned itself to evolve as an industry leader in specialized hardware and mission support. "What we strive for, and thus what becomes our competitive advantage, is to be more nimble than our competition within our niche," McCann explains. "Our longevity speaks for itself, as CTI has been an industry performer spanning over four decades. It has been our creativity, innovation, and integrity that keep us moving forward to be the best at what we do." [P]



"In our marketplace, we will distinguish ourselves by providing a comprehensive suite of blended, custom, high-value technology solutions. Our drive to tightly couple critical engineering disciplines with unparalleled in-house modeling, simulation, and fabrication capabilities will keep CTI positioned prominently atop the list of developers focused exclusively on specialized defense, intelligence, and security applications."

—Paul McCann, President

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