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TITAN ENTERPRISES LTD
GOING AGAINST THE FLOW

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MINI TURBINES AND FLOWMETERS ARE ESSENTIAL MEASUREMENT DEVICES ACROSS A WIDE RANGE OF SECTORS, AND TITAN ENTERPRISES CONTINUES TO EXPAND TO SERVE THEM ALL.

GOING AGAINST THE FLOW

PROJECT MANAGED BY: DEAN BROWN

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Trevor Forster, Managing Director of Titan Enterprises, started out as draughtsman, later becoming a chief engineer for flowmeter development firm Litre Meter, making high-quality mini turbines.

"I took the job because the firm worked five doors away from my house, so I thought I'd be able to leave late and get home early. It didn't work out that way," Forster jokes.

Forster did well within the company, but after a while, he grew curious about an idea for a new venture.

"I could see the potential for another area of products altogether, in mini turbines and flowmeters for electronics," he recalls. "I believed washing machines would have mini turbines in them before long, so I left Litre Meter and established a new business. We set out to manufacture good quality low-cost mini turbines that would fit into the expanding white goods market."

Things didn't go exactly as planned - while Forster's prediction that mini turbine flow meters would become essential washing machine components was correct, it turned out he was a little ahead of the curve. However, Forster's business soon found a niche for itself providing to the OEM market.

The reasons for Titan Enterprises' success are many.

"Obviously quality is high up there," Forster tells us. "We're also flexible and willing to get involved from the development stage, for runs as small as only 500 or 1,000 pieces, and price that in accordingly."

Back in the early days of the business, Titan Enterprises' tagline was "Doing things a little differently and a little better", and it is a testament the company has stuck to.

"A few times we've been told 'You can't do that!', and we've just done it anyway. The way we work with customers from research, development, through ››

to production has enabled us to solve a lot of OEM application issues," Forster recalls. "Through that process, we've helped customers decrease their assembly times, improve efficiency, and provide extra functionality."

One example of Titan Enterprises' method bearing fruit was its work for a customer manufacturing cooling systems. The third world countries the products were being exported to often had poor water quality, damaging the meters. Titan Enterprises was able to solve that by developing an ultrasonic flowmeter that could operate accurately and reliably even with contaminated water.

"Our USP is our flexibility, adaptability and ability to work with customers," Forster tells us. "We have a great range of standard products, but 70% of our sales are from OEM customers. Spending six months working with the customer to solve a problem to get a long-term OEM solution, gives us stability and future where we know we will be manufacturing say 4,000 meters a year for the next ten years. I don't think many companies do that."

THE AGE OF THE FLOWMETER

It is a model that is working well for Titan Enterprises. Flowmeters and low-cost mini turbines are becoming much sought-after components, driven by the growing demand for sustainability, reliability and repeatability.

"The whole flowmeter market was £5 billion globally last year, and it is set to go up at 6% a year for the next ten years, across the board," Forster tells us. "The control of small flows has become more critical for managing waste. Even if you have a large chemical plant, you still have small flows to worry about. I think it's been driven by the general search for more efficiency and more precision control. The global market expects it."

The applications are widespread, as Forster points out, "You can buy a turbine flowmeter for your coffee machine for less than a £1, and if you only want it to last 400 hours it's perfect, it'll do the job. However, if you're cooling water in a medical process, long-term efficiency and reliability are integral, so a robust turbine flow meter is more appropriate. In the agricultural machinery sector, we have five OEMs for agriculture equipment, from fogging storage silos with a fungicide to injecting small amounts of fertiliser/insecticide into individual seeds. That detail of control is giving people the best products, driven by businesses with the desire for productivity, maximum efficiency and a lack of waste."

Of course, serving such a wide range of markets brings its own challenges.

"Because our market is so diverse, ensuring we are promoting ourselves sufficiently across the sectors can be challenging. From companies making beer in Canada, to medical equipment in Europe and mining in South America or Africa. We also serve the offshore sector where we see a large number of our high-pressure oval gear flow meters go to oil rigs," Forster says. "However, our wide customer and geographic base have made the last couple of years not as painful as it could have been."

How does Titan Enterprises succeed in marketing to such wildly different sectors simultaneously?

"It's challenging certainly!" Forster laughs. "We deliver targeted campaigns to each market depending on the flowmeter product and application we want to focus on at the time. We also like to write case studies with our customers to promote new and exciting applications where our flowmeters are integral to the process. We have a decent spend on SEO to ensure we are maximising our digital presence too. This is a key component of our overall marketing strategy, as is writing technical articles to support the industry. We have recently published wiring tutorial videos to help customers install their flow meters to help prevent simple mistakes that cost customers time and money. Having recently brought our marketing in-house means we are able to deliver a more responsive and focused strategy involving all parts of the business."

High performance ultrasonic flowmeter for measuring low flows.

VALUED TALENT

Aside from marketing, Forster points to recruitment as the biggest challenge.

"Getting good quality staff has always been difficult. It's the sort of company where people need to work together and be prepared to step up and work outside their 'job description' to do what's necessary. If something needs packing, I will do the packing. Flexibility is what we do and we require that of our employees," Forster says. "Our first job advert said 'Intelligent, dextrous, articulate, numerate assembly worker'. Only one lady applied

Ultrasonic flowmeters for industrial process monitoring and 'clean' environments.

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"OUR UPS IS OUR FLEXIBILITY, ADAPTABILITY AND ABILITY TO WORK WITH CUSTOMERS TO UNDERSTAND THEIR APPLICATIONS AND FIND WORKABLE SOLUTIONS."

and said, 'I had to look up one of the words' and we thought 'You'll do'! She stayed with us until she retired, and her son works with us now as a subcontractor."

Today Titan Enterprises uses employment agencies to source their assembly staff, recruiting personnel on short-term contracts, then signing them on for longer if they prove to be a good fit for the company.

"That's worked well for us and we've just taken on our latest production staff member in exactly this way. This method keeps our staff turnover low and recruitment costs to a minimum which is great for customers and our continuity." Forster says.

Titan Enterprises has a good, committed staff, an excellent work ethic, and a strong market position. To Forster, it is a good place to further build from.

"We want to consolidate our place in the market. We have a good position and a product range we are proud of. Only one or two players globally are where we are and as far as I can tell they don't offer the flexibility that we do," he says. "We will look at projects and rather than try to sell anything upfront, work closely with our customers to see if we have a solution first. It means we may go down a rabbit hole or two but most of the time it works out because I won't take on a problem unless I believe we can solve it. It means we spend a lot on Research and Development, but the industry does not stand still and investing in R&D is paramount to us staying ahead of the game and taking advantage of the latest technologies. Our R&D spend is 20% of our turnover where the norm is 8-10%."

It is that extra investment and ongoing high R&D spending that will see Titan Enterprises at the vanguard of their sector for years to come.

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