

CASE STUDY: ECOTECH

Winner: Environmental Solutions Award, 51st Australian Export Awards (2013)

For outstanding international success in environmental solutions, clean energy innovation, materials and energy efficiency, waste and water management, green buildings and R&D collaboration

Background

Ecotech is a Victorian-based environmental monitoring company that manufactures and exports air monitoring instruments and systems.

Founded in 1976 to service instrumentation used in the air quality monitoring market, Ecotech soon developed its own brand of instrumentation and software.

Today the company offers a comprehensive package of instrumentation, software, integrated systems and services that are used in ambient air, blast and climate change monitoring applications.

The company began exporting in 1993 – initially to India, Mexico and Cyprus. It now markets its products and services to more than 70 countries.

Approach to business

According to Managing Director of Ecotech, Nicholas Dal Sasso, the company's approach to business is focused on developing new markets and nurturing existing ones.

"We look at emerging markets and trends in our industry and then look at what sort of strategies we need to enhance our offer - whether it be our systems, our people or our manufacturing operations," he says.

"The real trick is identifying what are the trends, where is the market heading and where we can apply our strengths."

Over the past 20 years, Ecotech has used a distributor-based export model – in order to minimise costs and risks – and now has a distributor network that encompasses more than 70 countries.

So far, the company has manufactured more than 5,000 ambient and emission monitoring systems and thousands of products used in these systems.



SNAPSHOT

- Established in Victoria in 1976
- Export manufacturing up 100% in the past 12 months
- Distributor network encompassing more than 70 countries
- High-tech manufacturing facility in Melbourne
- Export accounts for 40% of their business
- 120 staff working in Australia and overseas
- Winner of Governor of Victoria 2013 Export Award - Environmental Solutions category

ECOTECH

Last year, it broke into the research market with a niche range of climate change instrumentation and has since won its first export contract for air quality data management outside Australia.

Dal Sasso says Ecotech is also developing a range of equipment that analyses dust and visibility issues.

“This requires us to introduce some higher tech equipment, but that’s a key part of our growth strategy,” he says.

Currently, more than 40 per cent of Ecotech’s business is offshore.

“The export market is where there is the greatest potential for growth”

Nicholas Dal Sasso, Managing Director, Ecotech

International engagement

Dal Sasso says Ecotech’s move into the export business in 1993 was “very deliberate”.

“Strategically, the export market is where there is the greatest potential for growth,” he says.

Ecotech now sells its products and services into major markets such as China, India, the Middle East, and the US. Over the past 12 months, new markets have been established in Bulgaria, Ecuador, Panama and Russia.

Dal Sasso says a major turning point for the company took place in 1999 when a supplier approached the company to manufacture ambient gas analyser equipment en masse for its network in Asia and the Americas.

“That was a big move for us. We were only relatively small – around 40 people – but we decided to take on the risk and tackle the project. It certainly paid off,” he says.

Since then, the company has grown to employ 120 people, with production last year reaching 1,000 units – more than double the previous year.

“We’ve been challenged by this growth, but certainly have strategies in place to accommodate it,” says Dal Sasso.

He says it’s been important for Ecotech to grow with the market and that has resulted in several changes to the way the company does business.

“For example, we are much more strategically prepared now to go to market as a generic product (brand) that local players could brand in order to increase our market share” he says.

“This has worked really well in certain markets, particularly in China where our products have gone from four out of four in the marketplace to equal first. There is no way we would have been able to do that using our own brand.”

FACT

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Winning an Australian Export Award

Winning the Australian Export Award made a real impression, says Dal Sasso.

“An award win like this may not make or break a sale, but it represents something very special to our staff and stakeholders,” he says.

“Most importantly, it recognises those people behind the scenes for their ongoing dedication and hard work, and that’s a great thing.”

Dal Sasso encouraged all Australian companies that export to participate in this year’s awards.

“Just go for it,” he says. “It’s a great way to promote yourself, get some recognition for your team and celebrate your achievements. Whether you win or lose, the event is a great way to get the team together.”



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Nicholas Dal Sasso, Managing Director, Ecotech

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www.ecotech.com.au