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Tomorrow's Technology Today

Tech Trailblazers



Byline: Kate Grusich staff writer__

With a background in ocean engineering and rocket engine development, John Justak always had a lot of novel ideas when it came to emerging technology. So when he felt his employer -- Pratt & Whitney Aircraft Co. -- was moving away from research and development, he packed his bags and never looked back. Now, almost eight years after starting his fledgling Advanced Technologies Group in Stuart, Justak and his staff are becoming the darlings of the industry -- quickly reaping an enviable list of government contracts. "When they began moving away from R&D, I thought, 'Maybe I can do this on my own,'" Justak said. "And it's been great. I'm very pleased with our work." Founded in 1997, Advanced Technologies Group offers services ranging from applied research to software and data system development. The five-person staff -- some of whom hail from Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institution -- has found significant success through the Small Business Innovation Research, or SBIR, program. The competitive program allows small firms the opportunity to win federal research grants for innovative technologies that benefit government operations. The program helps fund the startup and development stages and provides the incentive to commercialize those technologies.

In recent years, **Advanced Technologies** has received a number of separate government contracts through the program. It is working with the Navy to develop an active balance system for the Joint Strike Fighter and has joined forces with the Army to create high-temperature advanced seals for aircraft. Rounding out the list of current projects are two funded through NASA. One involves the development of a propellant mass gauge for space exploration, while the other entails a cryogenic flow sensor for zero-gravity applications. Sounds complex? Well, it is. Essentially, this means -- among other things -- the Stuart company will have a hand in assisting astronauts in space and improving the fuel efficiency of military and commercial aircraft. "They're the cream of the crop," said Carol Van Wyk, an SBIR program manager for Naval Air Systems Command in Maryland. "The goal of the program is to get better products out to the fleets. Advanced Technology has been really good at reading what the customer wants." The private company generated about \$500,000 in revenue last year, an amount expected to increase. Although the bulk of the firm's business caters to Defense

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Department needs, Justak said many of the company's patented technologies have future commercial applications, even benefiting transportation and home health care. "What we're trying to do is develop some commercial products so it's not just all funded R&D," said Justak. "Now, about 90 to 95 percent of our work is with the government. We'd like it to be 90 to 95 percent commercial instead." - kate.grusich@scripps.com
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ATGI develops disruptive technologies for the aerospace and private sectors. ATGI is an independent, privately held engineering research and development firm. ATGI was formed in 1995 to meet the needs of government and private-sector clients with technological challenges that defy conventional solutions. ATGI has the capability to design, develop, manufacture prototypes and perform tests in their laboratory facility, by providing innovative, timely, cost-efficient design and consulting services. ATGI has seen both our government and private-sector client base broaden significantly.

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