

INNOVATION DESTINATION

FOUR COMPANIES SPARK AN INTEREST FROM INTERNATIONAL
MARKETS FROM RIGHT IN OUR BACKYARD.

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There was a push a few years ago to rename the Treasure Coast as the Research Coast – but with the influx of successful, international businesses calling Stuart home, the new moniker doesn't cut it. What about calling our area the Innovation Coast? The Export Coast? Doesn't "You Could Pick Anywhere, Choose This Coast" have a nice ring to it?

It does to many business owners who started and expanded their companies right here in Martin County, even though their products have national and international appeal. Lured by our beautiful beaches, relaxed lifestyle and strategic proximity to ports and big cities, this coast is becoming a magnet for economic growth.

ATGI PLANNING TO EXPAND TENFOLD WITHIN THE YEAR

FROM SENSORS ALERTING users of maintenance needs for their refrigerators to air turbines on F-18 Navy aircraft that help jam enemy radar communications, the products developed by ATGI are nothing if not innovative.

This research-and-development firm, based on Gran Park Way in Stuart, was kick-started with a government program known as Small Business Innovation Research, or SBIR. That program offers small businesses the opportunity to receive substantial grants in exchange for developing needed technology that has both government and commercial appeal.

"Once I knew there were avenues for direct proposals to the government to develop technology, I knew that was going to be my starting point," says John Justak, ATGI's founder and president. "Now within 12 months, we'll be 10 times the income we are now."

That's because ATGI, which stands for Advanced Technologies Group, Inc., has developed a wide range of products, with a focus on jet engine improvements. It has developed hydrodynamic seals shown to improve efficiency by 20 percent, a product originally created for the Department of Defense but now marketed to commercial manufacturers of large engines.

Founded in 1997, ATGI also created an optimal mask gauge sensor, which uses lasers to alert NASA engineers to the remaining amount of fuel left in a rocket within zero gravity.

And the latest effort of Justak and his 13 employees is with jet air turbines, which are installed under F-18 Navy aircraft and use passing airflow to produce energy that powers the "jammer." The turbine is a crucial development in the government's intelligence and surveillance work.

It's the busy, thank-task staff that excites Justak, who previously worked in research and development for Pratt & Whitney before starting his own firm. Today, he holds 13 patents while ATGI was recently named one of the "50 Top Clean Energy to Watch in Florida" by Florida Trade NEXT. His company also received the Florida Governor's Business Diversification Award for innovation and was honored with the national Tibbets Award for economic impact of technological innovation by the Small Business Administration.

And while he could locate his company anywhere, he and his family are happy to live near where Justak went to college at the old Florida Institute of Technology in Jensen Beach.

"The east coast of Florida and Stuart was just the ideal place for family and weather," Justak says, while doing business in Minneapolis, Houston, Paris, London, Milan, Denmark, St. Louis and Los Angeles.