

Sirus building on success in pharma sector

Monday, January 20, 2014

Cork-based building management systems company Sirus is starting the New Year with plans to develop sales in Britain and a short listing for a Small Firms Association Award.



By Trish Dromey

In existence since 1993, the company specialises in providing BMS systems and HVAC (heating ventilation and air conditioning) services to the pharmaceutical and medical device industries and to a range of companies in the commercial and electronic sectors.

Company managing director Frank Caul says Sirus now has between 50% and 60% of the market for BMS services for the pharmaceutical sector in Ireland and is looking to Britain to achieve further growth.

Becoming a finalist for the Small Firms Association Innovator of the Year award is expected to help raise the company's profile. "This has come about as a result of the development of patented technology which is used to recover energy from the natural gas distribution grid. This has worldwide application," he explains.

Over its 20-year history, the company has adapted to both market and technology changes and its decision to specialise in the pharma sector was taken when the demand for building management systems for the commercial sector fell.

Sirus started out as two separate companies in separate cities. In the mid-1990s Mr Caul was operating a HVAC company called Temperature in Cork while James Byrne had just started a new building management system company called Compute in Dublin. Due to changes in technology the HVAC business required a temperature controlling system. At the time the market for building management systems, which use computers to control equipment and manage energy use, was beginning to take off.

"We merged to form a new company. Temperature had an existing customer base, Compute had a presence in Dublin and it worked well," reveals Mr Caul, explaining that the new company had a combined staff of 10 and initially operated by providing general HVAC services and carrying out BMS projects for commercial operations.

In 2000 Sirus identified a significant opportunity to provide BMS services to the pharmaceutical sector. "Our initial breakthrough with a qualified BMS system was for the Blood Transfusion Board Headquarters in Dublin. This project led to Sirus's first major pharma project with Genzyme in 2002," says Mr Caul adding that, since then the company has completed projects for GSK, Merck Sharpe Dome, Pfizer, Schwarz and in 2013 signed a contract with Amgen in Dunganvan

In recent years Sirus has been involved with a number of projects outside Ireland. These included a power plant in Wales, a data centre in Moscow as well as a distribution centre in Oslo. Most of these projects were for general BMS systems and came about as a result of Irish contractors moving abroad to work and requesting Sirus's services.

Mr Caul says that business has been growing by an average of 20% in recent years, but has taken an occasional dip such as in 2011 when investment by pharmaceutical companies in Ireland dropped due to consolidation

"The HVAC and the BMS businesses have been fairly evenly divided. Some years it's 60% for HVAC and 40% for BMS, but the next year it can be the other way around," he says, explaining that the BMS business level fluctuates more because it involves

large projects while the HVAC business is more constant.

Air conditioning is in increasing demand for all industries which require sterile, temperature-controlled, clean rooms such as pharmaceutical and electronics and this continues, recession or no recession. Customers in this area include the Mercy and the Mater Private hospitals in Cork as well as UCC. Sirius also provides HVAC services for Primark and Hertz and in 2013 it signed a new contract with Dunnes Stores.

Adaptations by Sirius to changing market demand have involved the creation of an energy division in 2008. In 2011 the group rebranded as Sirius Building Energy Solutions

Now the company has identified the pharmaceutical industry and data centres as two areas with strongest potential for developing BMS services. Last summer it established a sales office in London and recruited a staff of two.

Mr Caul believes the fact that the company worked for so many of the big names in pharmaceutical in Ireland will help win customers in the UK.

"We have a reasonable number of projects in the pipeline, this will keep us busy to the middle of the year. We would expect to win one or two more projects and for this we will be targeting the UK."

Employing a staff of 70, Sirius has taken on an additional 15 people over the last year and is now in the process of recruiting two more.

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It's been a good year for Cork-based building management systems company Sirius. It has between 50% and 60% of the market for BMS services for the pharmaceutical sector in Ireland and is on the shortlist for a Small Firms Association award, writes **Trish Dromey**

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Frank Caul of Sirius Group, beside the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland Award, which the firm received last year: The company is looking to Britain to achieve further growth.

Picture: Denis Scannell

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Company profile

- **Name:** Sirius Group
- **Headquarters:** Marina Commercial Park, Cork
- **Managing Director:** Frank Caul
- **CEO:** James Byrne
- **Staff:** 70
- **Business:** BMS, HVAC services
- **Website:** sirius.ie

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