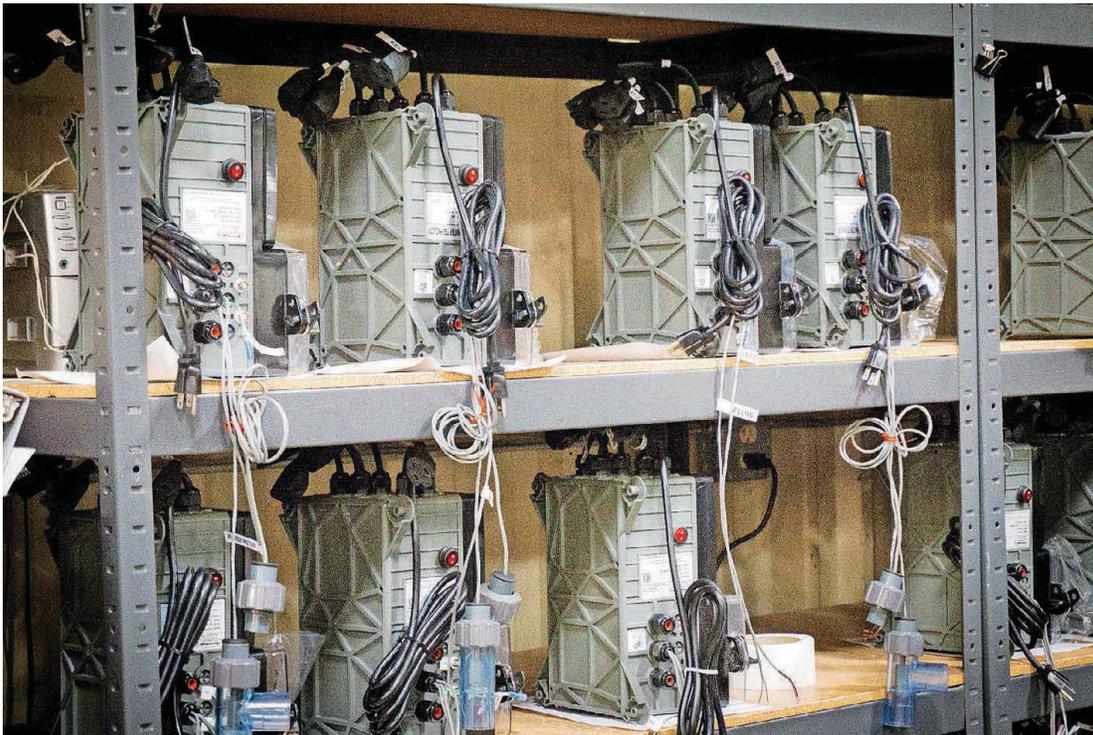




TROPHY CASE

Advantage Controls succeeds as tech manufacturer by following the Golden Rule



Controllers make it easy to continuously monitor and control industrial water systems such as cooling towers and boilers. TOP: Advantage Controls CEO Dan Morris showcases some of the awards received by the Muskogee-based firm. (PHOTOS PROVIDED BY OCAST)

MUSKOGEE — I was recently invited on a guided tour of Muskogee's Advantage Controls, which manufactures water control technology for industrial use.

The tour took me through a narrow corridor that snakes past the company's sales and accounting offices toward the manufactur-



OK INNOVATIONS

ing floor, and I came upon a lighted glass case filled with trophies.

Wall plaques surrounded it.

It was a literal com-

pany hall of fame.

As Dan Morris, president and CEO, explained, Advantage Controls proudly showcases the many awards it has received since it was founded in 1994 as a homegrown manufacturer of water control technology.

"We've gotten all kinds of accolades, from the Governor's Export

Champion awards to the Lt. Governor's Small Business award and an award from the Department of Labor, which was really an honor," Morris said.

"But there are two awards that I'm particularly proud of. One was the 2006 Supplier of the Year award by our

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ADVANTAGE

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trade association. The other was an anonymous employee survey in which we have been named as one of Oklahoma's top employers three times in a row."

The business

Advantage Controls and its sister company, Advantage TerraFab, employ about 150 people in Muskogee. With 52,000 square feet of manufacturing space at the Advantage Controls location, the company manufactures water quality instrumentation products.

"It's very specific

for cooling towers and boilers," Morris said. "The water that is in these systems is what we treat. The purpose of treating the water is to make the water last longer, so we are conserving water and helping them conserve energy by controlling what's going on in these systems.

With products branded with names like MegaTronXS and Microtron Series B, Advantage's technologies are used in cooling towers and heating systems in all 50 states and in 68 countries worldwide.

"Our products are applied virtually across every industry in every populated place there is," Morris said.

The back story

The history of Advantage Controls goes back to an earlier company that Morris's brother, Dick Morris, built and sold in the 1980s. Dick Morris founded Advantage Controls in 1994 and offered Dan controlling interest if he would assume management of the operation.

Today, Advantage continues to operate as a locally owned manufacturer that has diversified its scope of operations over the years.

"Advantage TerraFab is our sister division operating out at the Port of Muskogee," Morris said. "There we make metal products. Components for highway bridges is a big part of

our business, commercial construction steel, and we make products for other manufacturers that go into their product lines."

Some of those are used by Advantage Controls.

Advantage Controls distinguishes itself in part because as a privately owned corporation it can be flexible in the products it makes and markets it sells into, Morris said.

For example, the company recently branched into manufacturing what Morris calls "truck lungs" that are actually air-filled running boards that fit onto pickups and can air up tires if one goes flat out on the field or in the pasture.

Morris and his company maintain a close

relationship with the Industrial Development Office at the Port of Muskogee, which he credits for helping the company prosper. He also credits assistance from the Oklahoma Department of Commerce, the Oklahoma Manufacturing Alliance and the Oklahoma Center for the Advancement of Science and Technology (OCAST) for contributing to the company's growth.

'Model citizen'

"Everybody that I deal with in this realm seems genuinely interested in helping us prosper, and I don't know if it's like that everywhere," he said. "I think it's kind of unique to Oklahoma."

Kerry Keane, manager of workforce development for the Port of Muskogee's Industrial Development Office, described Morris as a model citizen for the community.

That is reflected in the many awards showcased in the company's trophy case.

"I think that speaks volumes about his business, the way they treat their employees, the way they treat their customers and suppliers," Keane said. "Dan has always said he runs his business by the Golden Rule, and he treats everyone he comes into contact with how he likes to be treated. It's evident in those awards and the respect in the city, for sure."