

R.E. Morrison and Sheridan:

All smiles with new dental vacuum system



Ray Ralph - President of R.E. Morrison Equipment

Having weathered the storm of the global recession, R.E. Morrison Equipment had taken its lumps like countless companies, but now this industrial distributor of vacuum equipment was ready to expand.

With increasing attention paid to water conservation and reducing water consumption, company President Ray Ralph was eager to break into international markets with his line of BaseVac dental vacuum systems that feature dry suction without consuming water.

But his systems needed to be redesigned. Used successfully for heavy-duty applications, they were bulky and needed a cosmetic face lift. He needed to make them smaller, more efficient and with improved functionality.

“The market was changing faster than we could respond,” Ray conceded, adding the recession forced a reduction in the company’s size to 14 employees. “Though we were busy with business, we just didn’t have the design staff, nor the time or resources to hire and train them,” he added. And yet the opportunity to grow was undeniable.

His company’s situation was ideal for partnering with Sheridan College the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario (FedDev Ontario) and its Applied Research and Commercialization Initiative.

The ARC initiative matches small- to medium-sized companies with Sheridan faculty and students to conduct applied research, development and innovation activities that help companies become more productive, competitive and ultimately create jobs. (Funding of up to \$50,000 is matched by a 33% cash or in-kind contribution by the participating company.)

Under the direction of instructor Dr. Farzad Rayegani, P.Eng., a professor with Sheridan’s Faculty of Applied Science and Technology, Sheridan faculty and students from three disciplines (Electromechanical, Electronics, Mechanical Engineering Technician Technology - Design and Drafting), worked with R.E. Morrison to identify and resolve technical problems.

Working with R.E. Morrison for several months, the students continue to provide the research and innovative design thinking that is leading to new system prototypes that are scheduled to be unveiled next year. Their valuable contribution is the result of fresh ideas and thinking paired with enthusiasm for working with industry.

“Industry often involves technology that we don’t have in the classroom,” said Farzad, adding that working with R.E. Morrison is a perfect example, as vacuum technology is not part of Sheridan’s engineering curriculum.

For many small- and mid-size companies, R&D is not on their agenda because of a lack of funding or resources. And yet it’s crucial in order to prosper. “We can offer that,” stressed Farzad, who referred to using Sheridan as an R&D partner as ‘in-sourcing’. “Our faculty and students have the knowledge, talent and skills that can be transferred to a company.”

Having never worked with a college before, Ray found the new relationship has benefits that extend beyond productive R&D. By making the partnership with Sheridan known, he believes his company was looked upon more favourably by large dental equipment dealers. “This connection with Sheridan created a new level of acceptance and credibility,” he said.

That credibility has led to R.E. Morrison recently signing a deal with a Middle East distributor to take its BaseVac dental product line overseas. The company is also expanding export sales into the U.S. And, to complement his growing business, Ray also recently hired two marketing graduates from Sheridan.

Wanting to further the knowledge exchange between the company and college, Ray intends to help construct a vacuum technology lab within Sheridan’s Davis Campus in Brampton to simulate real-world vacuum technology projects.

“The FedDev project and Sheridan College helped us complete the development work we had neither the skills or resources to do at a time when our recession-weary small business needed it most.”

Ray Ralph, President, R.E. Morrison Equipment



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