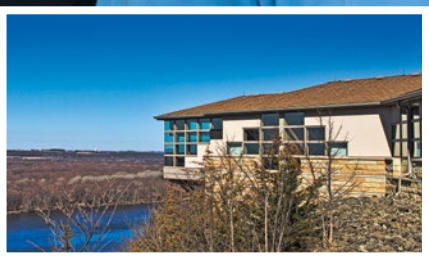
Extrusion Solutions

THE LATEST EXTRUDING NEWS FROM ENTEK

IFC CHOOSES ENTEK

Prescott, Wisconsin-based Company Uses ENTEK Extruders to Produce World-Class Technologies, Incubate World-Class Companies



Main Photo: ENTEK's Austin Lindsey (left) with Dr. Jeff Cernohous at Interfacial Consultants
Inset Photo: Interfacial Consultants headquarters at The Cervenka Center, Prescott, Wisconsin

Sitting atop a hillside with majestic views overlooking the Mississippi River, the Cervenka Center in Prescott, Wisconsin is home to Interfacial Consultants (IFC), a company formed in 2014 by Dr. Jeffrey Cernohous. IFC's business model is to provide 'Idea to Production' technical services. It prides itself on working to create value by controlling or manipulating the interface of dissimilar materials – and thereby creating new and improved material compounds. IFC serves as an incubator for new companies, helping them develop innovative, disruptive technologies that create highly differentiated technology platforms for its ventures and customers.

In a recent interview Dr. Cernohous discussed IFC's relationship with ENTEK Extruders – from his early lab trials at ENTEK's headquarters in Oregon, to his purchase of an ENTEK 27mm twin-screw extruder when IFC began operations, to ENTEK's development of an all-new machine, the QC^3-33mm twin-screw extruder, for use by IFC's new sister company, REV Materials.

Early History – and Lab Trials

In 2003 Dr. Cernohous left his job at 3M to start his own consulting firm, Interfacial Solutions, to act as an external 'technology champion' to help companies develop their technological platforms. In 2004 IFS was

incubated by Bob Cervenka, CEO and Founder of Phillips Plastics Corporation. Bob's emphasis on PEOPLE and his commitment to success helped Phillips prosper and grow to become a $300MM/ sales company in Wisconsin, while other plastics-industry companies were outsourcing their manufacturing overseas. This emphasis on people made a deep impression on Dr. Cernohous and motivated him to build companies with the same template.

In 2005, Dr. Cernohous left the Phillips incubator and began to build IFS. During these early years, he began visiting ENTEK in Oregon to run various material trials for a variety of end-product applications. "ENTEK had a reputation as a leader in running wood and fiber-composite materials," he said. "Their lab was a great place to experiment with material compounds, they had high quality machines, and their people were willing to help us out any way they could."

After several years of growing IFS, where he helped launch more than 50 products over a ten-year period, Dr. Cernohous sold the company to 3D printing leader Stratasys. After that he spent two years doing consulting work, and then he started up his next business venture, Interfacial Consultants (IFC).

New Technology for a New Company

One of the first things Dr. Cernohous did after starting IFC was to purchase an ENTEK 27mm twin-screw extruder for his new business. He was also joined in his new business by Dean Elliott, former Lab Manager at ENTEK. "Dean brought with him a strong twin-screw lab background, and a can-do attitude towards helping customers succeed," said Dr. Cernohous. "He also had a great deal of experience working with ENTEK extruders on a wide variety of applications."

When IFC began working on a new venture at the Cervenka Center called REV Materials LLC, they contacted ENTEK. REV Materials is a company with a unique business model to produce small lots of highly customized materials, rapidly (in 7-14 days) for customers. This provides customers with unprecedented speed in receiving custom compounds for testing, then scale-up and production. It also allows customers to order custom compounds in an e-commerce format on the REV Materials website.

"We consider REV Materials a disruptive, innovative company that can do what no other plastics industry company has done," said Dr. Cernohous. "The voice of the customer has told us that small lots of materials are key, they are what they want and need to develop their businesses – and they want and need them fast. REV Materials is working to dominate this small lots niche."

ENTEK's recent development of its QC^3 (Quick Change, Quick Clean, and Quality Control) twin-screw extruder technology fit the REV Materials business model perfectly. Only one thing was missing: the best sized machine for the operation. "We approached ENTEK asking them for something they didn't have – a 33mm twin-screw extruder," said Dr. Cernohous. "We wanted a custom-developed machine that was ideal for producing small lots, fast. To ENTEK's credit, because they're such a customer-oriented company, they agreed to build us just that."

At press time the new ENTEK QC^3-33mm twin-screw extruder is in production and scheduled for delivery Q2 to REV Materials. When asked what types of compounds it will be used to produce, Dr. Cernohous said "just about everything, from high performance and high temperature materials for aerospace, medical, biocomposites and more to recycled materials."

A Focus on People

When asked his thoughts on ENTEK, Dr. Cernohous came back to a common theme – people. "They have great customer service, and they go out of their way to help us," he said. "Just recently we needed assistance on a toll compounding project we were working on, and ENTEK was happy to step in to help us out."

Another ENTEK attribute that he values is the company's core values."ENTEK is a privately-held company whose core values are in line with IFC's," he said. "They are people-focused, like us – and those are the type of company values we are proud to share."