

Eclectic portfolio keeps RoviSys growing during pandemic

Automation provider plans to hire 100 new workers in 2021

BY DOUGLAS J. GUTH

Since its inception 31 years ago, process automater RoviSys has worked within multiple industries to spread out risk. When the COVID-19 tsunami hit, the Aurora-based company already had built-in protection against the wave washing over so many industries.

In providing software and engineering services for manufacturing, process and building automation, RoviSys transitioned with long-term customers onto a wartime footing.

"There was a customer making specialty glass for vaccine vials and had to ramp up production," said marketing director Dick Ciammaichella. "We had companies calling us that wanted five engineers tomorrow because they needed to double production on a product. Our customers had to find people quickly."

RoviSys sustained growth over the first year of the virus crisis, garnering about \$200 million in revenue to keep pace with its 18%-20% year-over-year gains. The company employs more than 900 people at offices in Aurora and at sites in Atlanta; Boston; Raleigh, N.C.; Los Angeles; Houston; Taiwan; Singapore; Belgium; and the Netherlands.

The automation provider is poised for further expansion into Southeast Asia in 2021. In December, RoviSys was ranked second out of 100 systems integrators by CFE Media, maintaining its position in the top five on that list for a third consecutive year.

"RoviSys continues a reputation of quality and continuity, and a commitment to delivering automation and information solutions with measurable results and clear return on investment," stated a CFE Media news release from Dec. 16.

Cultivating a portfolio of industry giants including Glidden, Sherwin-Williams, DuPont, BP and Rockwell Automation, the company provides automation systems and products for the chemical, petrochemical, life science, consumer packaged goods, glass, metals, power and energy, data center, building management, water and wastewater, paper and wood, and oil and gas industries.

Life science — a sector comprising biotech and pharmaceutical firms — constitutes over 30% of RoviSys' annual business, said the company's director of life sciences, Matt Knott. The space became a bellwether for the company's evolution during the mid-1990s, one that helped RoviSys open offices in regional hotspots such as Boston and Raleigh.

"Life science has been on a leading edge of growth from a geographical standpoint," Knott said. "We were willing to go to the client and build office locations and teams to serve them. Talent gets attracted to those areas, so we've been able to grow our teams that way."

Repeat business

Founded in 1989 in Highland Heights, RoviSys moved in 1994 to its current Aurora headquarters. Over the years, the company shifted into



C.J. Davis, a water treatment operator, operates the local filter controls at the Aquarius Water Treatment Facility in Willoughby. The Lake County Department of Utilities brought on RoviSys two years ago to modernize its telemetry. | CONTRIBUTED

the chemical arena, aiding DuPont, Dow and other industry leaders in resin and compound production. Wastewater is another fast-burgeoning market, thanks to water treatment infrastructure going up on the coasts.

While the pandemic has slowed outreach to potential new clients, the relationships RoviSys built with current customers has more than kept the company afloat. Anecdotal, RoviSys might be tasked with a single controlled automation project that develops into a full automation system build-out.

"About 85% of our business comes through repeat customers," Knott said. "We always want to serve a client beyond the scope of a project. Especially in life science, where companies are always looking to invest and upgrade technology. Oftentimes, we'll work with a customer on a service offering then expand to provide other services."

The Lake County Department of Utilities brought on RoviSys two years ago to modernize its telemetry, with a larger goal of updating water treatment facilities and automated control systems.

The department, which serves 34,000 households regionwide, also got backup from RoviSys in swapping out traditional landlines for cellular technology, said director of water Franco Noce.

"They worked with us to set up a secure and easy cellular system with adequate redundancies," Noce said. "It was impressive how easily they helped us move over (to cellular) while giving us different options like radio and internet cable. (Installation) went without a hitch."

Noce also appreciated partnering with a knowledgeable team able to anticipate problems before they arise.

"RoviSys doesn't seem to have the agenda of pushing a product on you

— they want you to weigh out the options and come to a decision that works for you. That's refreshing in this business. They're not trying to sell you a Cadillac with every purchase."

For RoviSys, years of supporting customers nationwide eased potential pain points as the pandemic made remote work a household term.

"That helped a lot, because we already had ways to collaborate between offices," said Ciammaichella. "We could work with a customer in California with our whole team in Ohio."

And demand isn't slowing down, based on plans to onboard at least 100 new engineers and additional support staff before year's end. In past hiring phases, RoviSys recruited engineering graduates from Ohio universities and beyond state borders, a trend that continued this year albeit over Zoom.

Last June, RoviSys was among four area companies granted a job-creation tax credit by the Ohio Tax Credit Authority, an initiative tabbed to generate more than 240 jobs in total. RoviSys was approved for an eight-year, 1.52% payroll tax credit in return for creating 88 new positions, a move also ensuring the enterprise keeps in place its existing 450 local jobs.

As a constantly growing operation, RoviSys officials are excited to expand their eclectic client portfolio even further.

"I've been here for 15 years — what attracted me to the company was the broad spectrum of customers we get to work with," said Knott. "We're not on the product side directly, but there's a great deal of pride seeing a commercial for a drug, and knowing we were involved with its manufacturing."

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