

Media Sciences: Color Them Ready

All trends point to color being the product sector of opportunity for the aftermarket. That being the case, Media Sciences feels well positioned for the long term.

by Craig Berosh • Recharger Magazine

President and CEO Michael W. Levin is building Media Sciences into a true global company in sales, manufacturing and distribution.



FEB. 12, 2007: Xerox introduces the Phaser 8560 color printer and MFP series using solid ink technology.

MARCH 26, 2007: Media Sciences launches solid inks for use in Xerox Phaser 8560 models.

Simple arithmetic shows Media Sciences' release earlier this year for the Xerox 8560 was less than two months after the OEM introduction. It's a product development cycle in which the company takes much pride and that provides its customers with a jump start in the marketplace. Media Sciences' launch of solid inks for the 8560 epitomizes the significant investments the company has made in personnel and technology during the last several years.

"We were able to turn around the 8560 solid inks in record time," said company President and CEO Michael Levin. "Clear R&D goals supported by people and technologies have increased our pace of product development."

The focus of the Media Sciences product line has long been color. Specifically, the company specializes in solid ink sticks for Xerox color printers and color toner cartridges for non-HP machines including Xerox, Oki, Konica-Minolta, Ricoh, Epson and Brother models. Most recently it entered the Dell market with the November 2006 launch of color toner cartridges under its Clearcase brand for the Dell 3000cn/3100cn/3010cn machines.

Instrumental to Media Sciences' speed to market is that the company manufactures new-build products — that is, 100 percent newly designed



way under 1 percent, with no volume constraints. So we are able to satisfy the market demand and we are able to provide it to our customers actually less expensively than if we remanufactured products,” Levin said.

conscious customer base so why not extend your brand?” Levin said. “If you look at non-HP color, it’s broken up amongst a lot of different models. Why focus resources on developing competencies in these lesser-volume products? Fulfill them through a Media Sciences product, meet your customers’ needs, meet their value-consciousness purchasing habits while delivering a quality product.”

and manufactured — which creates distinct challenges as well as advantages in the marketplace. In fact, the company’s Marketing Communications Director Barb Short says the company refers to Media Sciences as “the other OEM.”

“The result of manufacturing a new-build product is that we are able to build a product that has quality rivaling the OEM, a defect rate

Media Sciences’ customers include members of the technology channel (sellers of printers and CPUs), office products wholesalers and dealers, and remanufacturers and resellers of aftermarket consumables. The company sells mainly in the U.S. and Western European markets.

“For members of the remanufacturing industry, solid inks can’t be remanufactured. They have a value-

Team building

The ultimate goal for Media Sciences is to take the company to the “next level,” according to Levin. In terms of dollars, the next level is becoming a hundred-million-dollar business. Media Sciences International Inc. (MSII) is a public company, traded on the Nasdaq stock market. In 2006 it reported \$21.3 million in net revenues.

Reaching that next level has meant significant reinvestment into the company. Some fundamental upgrades such as a new facility in New Jersey and new equipment have been made. Most importantly, according to Levin, changes and additions to the Media Sciences management and supporting teams have been and continue to be put in place.

In January 2006 Media Sciences began the first in a series of new additions and promotions, naming company Vice President of Operations Larry Anderson as its new COO. Anderson is accountable for the performance of all operational areas, including research and development, quality assurance, manufacturing, distribution, logistics, facilities, inventory control, purchasing, technical support, and information technology.

“Everything Larry does is customer focused,” Levin said. “We are responding to inbound customer

COO Larry Anderson has brought a process and accountability to every facet of the company, from R&D and quality assurance to inventory control and technical support.





“We have the tools to get the job done,” says VP of Engineering Eric Tuveesson. He stands in front of a rapid prototyping machine that has aided in the company’s speed to market on new products.

support phone calls, from channel partners or end users, in a timely fashion with excellence. We are now tracking customer satisfaction stats. It’s all about process and documentation so we get consistency and scalability.”

Other key management appointments in the past year include Kevan Bloomgren as the company’s first full-time CFO. On the research and development side, industry veteran Eric Tuveesson was hired as vice president of product development and engineering.

“Media Sciences is well positioned to continue to be a leader in the color market,” Tuveesson said. “The quality is absolutely there. We have top-notch suppliers and from the top down we are an engineering company. We have the tools to get the job done.”

In 2007 Media Sciences also bolstered its sales force with the additions of Vincent Kelly as vice presi-

dent of U.S. sales and Ian Copsey as director of Europe, Middle East and Africa sales. The company currently has 75 employees.

“We needed different skill sets and capabilities and experiences to bring the company from a \$15 to a \$150 million company and beyond,” Levin said. “There are some common threads among each of these people, namely that they are seasoned in their roles. They have gone through the type of growth that we are capable of, that the market will support and we expect of ourselves. They are professionals who have seen the type of opportunities and challenges that we are likely to encounter.”

Pillars of success

As outlined by Levin, quality, consistency, scalability and IP respect are the four terms that embody Media Sciences. Rightfully

proud of his company’s ability to bring new product to market in a timely manner, Levin explains that a first-to-market product also needs to be a best-to-market and repeatable solution, an attitude the CEO says goes beyond product.

“If we build a quality product today, but can’t build 500 of them tomorrow to accommodate the growth, then we are not a sustainable business,” he said. “It’s not only in our products, it’s in our teams, it’s in our ability to finance the company. We have to be scalable in all aspects of our execution.”

Equaling its commitment to human resources has been the company’s recent investment in technology to ensure the four principles of Media Sciences are achievable. Media Sciences is in the process of being ISO 9001 certified. Anderson estimates the company has invested hundreds of thousands of dollars in cutting-edge equipment such as analytical testing equipment used during the company’s baseline testing of raw materials and OEM product including in-house chip analysis; a 3-D printing or rapid prototyping machine that has been invaluable in speeding the development of new product; and a walk-in environmental chamber as the company ships product to many different regions of the world.

“We are not afraid to make those types of investments,” Anderson said.

Media Sciences performs its research and development as well as manufactures its solid ink sticks at its U.S. facility. The company’s color toner cartridge production is done by an Asian contract manufacturer.

Lastly, Levin is explicit when discussing his company’s stance on the increasingly important topic of intellec-

tual property in the marketplace.

“We don’t wait to be asked by our customers. We are proud to provide indemnification for our customers. We can do so with confidence,” he said.

Levin explains Media Science has a basic philosophy on IP issues. Chiefly, the company takes the position that it will not take a product to market until it has developed a non-infringing solution. In its stance on IP it assumes the validity of the patent, meaning Media Sciences doesn’t challenge a patent’s legitimacy but rather allocates the necessary resources to design around it.

The value proposition

Coupled with indemnification, Media Sciences offers a comprehensive warranty. If its product causes a problem and a channel partner or end user incurs cost to remedy that problem, the company covers the cost of replacement or repair. Media Sciences strives to offer a risk-free proposition.

With an education and background in mechanical engineering, Levin still gets excited by the new product development process — “I enjoy the process of creating a quality image and doing so time and time again,” he said.

He is also the CEO of a corporation. From that perspective and with responsibilities to stakeholders, he says that at the end of the day it’s about sales and treating the customer well.

“We understand our customers have to be able to make money,” he said. “That is not just about product. It’s in ease of doing business, it’s in support, and a lot of other things. Without the rest we’re just an engineering company. We want to be known as a company that customers want to do business with and a good



Media Sciences has made significant investments in cutting-edge equipment, including a walk-in environmental chamber for testing products under various conditions.

team to work with.”

As part of its marketing programs, the company operates a customer loyalty program, MSI ClearProfits, and offers sales tools including training, brochures, lead sharing, a dealer Web site and end-user education tools. The company recently launched a new generation of its INKlusive free color printer programs, where customers buy the supplies and get free one of three Xerox Phaser 8560-series printer models.

Plans for the immediate future, six to 12 months according to Levin, include expansion in existing areas of strength designed to improve customer relationships worldwide. The company is allotting resources to establish and expand European logistics and support with the goal of becoming “a true global company in sales, manufacturing and distribu-

tion,” Levin said.

“We manufacture quality products,” Levin said. “How that translates to the customer is that they never have to worry about consistency of the product, quality of the product, or source of the supply. They are never going to run out of products from Media Sciences. If they get a large corporate end user they will be able to fulfill that demand. Selling Media Sciences products is essentially a risk-free proposition with a solid business approach.” **R**

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