

Stratom small consulting firm with big clients

BY **DIANE FREEMAN**

Business Report Correspondent

BOULDER — Mark Gordon founded Stratom Inc. on the premise that a few people with a high level of specialized expertise could help Fortune 500 companies as well as startups come up with plans to streamline their operations.

Since 2001, Boulder-based Stratom, a consulting firm consisting of Gordon and four employees, has helped companies with outsourcing, supply chain management, introduction of a new products and operations management and strategy. The staff of engineering and operations specialists assist government, commercial and global clients.

Most of the competition in this sector comes from large contract manufacturers that offer these services through a special division, Gordon said.

“The skill set we bring to the table is higher-level talent. We’re more specialized than these divisions within contract-manufacturing companies. All the big guys have a division to do this,” he said.

The company assists customers by sharing its industry knowledge and providing focus and management. It offers engineering services, detailed design, integrated system design, development, and management consulting services. It also provides customers with process, physical distribution and logistical consulting services and project management.

“We do product development introduction. A company may get funded to do a new technology. We come in and bring that technology to market,” he said.

For example, if the new product is a storage device, Stratom would do a detailed design for the client bolting onto its core technology, Gordon said. “Then we would help them bring it to market.”

“We help them with the detailed design. They need to put a box around it. Then we help them select suppliers and perform the development processes,” he said.

Today’s product development cycle is continually shrinking, Gordon said. “To stay competitive, companies must constantly reduce their product development and release time through the development of a collaborative and integrated approach to the product introduction process,” he said.

The company helps customers design and deliver their products for mass customization and configuration from concept through production.

Stratom also helps customers shift their supply chain management as well as outsourcing operations and logistics. It also focuses on expanding or consolidating operations.

Most of Stratom’s clients have been high-tech companies located along the Front Range. Many are in the storage technology industry since that is Gordon’s background.

Usually, it takes about a year to conduct the whole process from design to market. But the company also handles shorter-term assignments consulting on projects, he said.

Stratom is looking for new clients at other high-tech companies in areas



JONATHAN CASTNER

Mark Gordon, president of Stratom Inc., consults clients Kurt Newlin and Dave Penland of Advanced Energy Industries Inc. in Fort Collins. The Boulder-based consulting firm is helping Advanced Energy transition its supply chain to Asia.

west of the Mississippi River — including Texas, Idaho, California, Utah and Arizona, he said.

The privately held company earned revenues of \$278,000 last year, he said. Gordon is a former Marine Corps officer who worked for Boulder-based Exabyte Corp. for seven years. He was an engineering, operations and production manager. He also worked briefly for Broomfield-based McData Corp.

Stratom generally prices its services by the hour although some work is priced by the project because the length of time is hard to estimate, Gordon said.

Stratom has worked with large contract manufacturers to help bring in products. That can take about a year and a half, Gordon said.

The company has worked with Fort Collins-based Advanced Energy Industries Inc. (Nasdaq: AEIS), to assist in cost reduction and overseas sourcing of suppliers.

“We ran through their qualification cycles. They identified their partners, and we’re helping them go through the execution process,” Gordon said.

Advanced Energy Industries offers a suite of products used in the production of semiconductors, flat panels displays and data-storage products.

Sean Wilson, vice president of operations for Advanced Energy, said Stratom has been working with the company for about a year and a half “on transitioning our supply chain to Asia. It’s mostly electronic light gear — PC boards and sheet metal boxes,” he said.

Wilson said Stratom also did a lot of work with program management for the project. “They worked on internal processes like taking care of tracking and customer qualification,” he said.

Stratom has provided its services to Fortune 500 companies as well as startups. Other clients have included Arrow Electronics, Goodrich, RPM Technology, the Society of Manufacturing Engineers and MedSource Technologies.