Company Expands Focus Beyond Microscopes

TECH: McBain Systems, leading Leica distributor, now does manufacturing.

By MARK R. MADLER Staff Reporter

McBain Systems is in the business of making small objects appear large.

The Simi Valley company is the leading distributor – in a vast area that stretches from California through the southwest to Louisiana – of industrial microscopes made by Leica Microsystems AG.

Most people know the Leica name for its high-end cameras with stellar optics, made by a separate firm spun off from the same German predecessor company. Similarly, Leica Microsystems sets the gold standard for its product.

McBain’s close association with Leica has been good for the distributor, which had $9.78 million in revenue in 2011. That amounted to a 37 percent increase in sales. Growing Private Companies. McBain employs more than $1 million for models that can run on their own around the clock. Their lens-magnification.

He is counting on the engineering side of the business, particularly in designing and building equipment incorporating microscopes. An example of that is a system with robotic technology that repeatedly checks silicon semiconductor wafers during the manufacturing process. It incorporates infrared cameras. Such systems can sell for $1 million or more.

“With someone there doing demos and presentations, it’s an important step to serving Canada and the geographical territory. A former executive at Japanese camera and optics manufacturer Olympus Corp., Crump decided to develop innovative products and full systems that not only captured images with the microscopes but could analyze them with sophisticated software. The move was reflected in a name change from McBain Instruments to McBain Systems.

Where is the demand coming from?

McBain serves a diverse customer base ranging from defense industry heavyweights such as Boeing Corp. and Teledyne Technologies Inc. of Thousand Oaks.

Crump is considering having a full-time employee based at the center starting in 2014, to support a subsidiary of Teledyne Technologies Inc., a state-of-the-art facility that is developing and commercializing new semiconductor technology. The center is a collaboration between private companies, including McBain, IBM Corp., and Teledyne Dalsa – a subsidiary of Teledyne Technologies.

We are a very different company than what it was in 1997,” said Crump. He hired an operations manager with a background in production equipment and a sales manager who could make capital equipment deals to make the transition.

Engineering services is vital to McBain’s future because it is not under the same constraints as the microscope distribution business that is dependent on the product Leica makes available – or to a geographical territory. 

“I’m not limited where I can sell my engineering products,” Crump said.

A new venture that McBain has joined demonstrates the company’s reach.

In Quebec, McBain is installing its $1.6 million DDR 2000 semiconductor-inspection machine, a proprietary device incorporates an infrared microscope. The machine was acquired by the MiQro Innovation Collaborative Center, a state-of-the-art facility that is developing and commercializing new semiconductor technology. The center is a collaboration between private companies, including McBain, IBM Corp., and Teledyne Dalsa – a subsidiary of Teledyne Technologies Inc., of Thousand Oaks.

Crump is considering having a full-time employee based at the center starting in 2014, an important step to serving Canada and the Northeastern United States.

“With someone there doing demos and meeting with customers it is a growth opportunity,” he said.