



Case Study:

Synergy Systems – Growing its Business to Meet the Needs of the Nation’s Top High-Tech Manufacturers

When Microsoft designed a new mouse and its Xbox game player, it turned to Synergy Systems to manufacture the prototypes.

When Nike needed a new pair of celebrity sun glasses prototyped, the company turned to Synergy Systems to make the first pair.

When Synergy Systems needed help doubling – or even tripling – its revenues as a prototype manufacturer, it turned to Baldwin Resource Group, Inc. (BRG). Synergy Systems is an expert in taking a company’s design specs and turning them into a real product – years before that product is ever mass produced. But the company needed help getting bigger.

Enter BRG. Synergy Systems chief executive officer Don Williams called John Campbell, BRG’s executive vice president and an expert in corporate strategic plan development, new venture feasibility studies and mergers and acquisitions. Campbell had already helped Synergy’s parent company – Sealaska Corp. – determine the valuation of Synergy Systems and was quite familiar with the company. He later helped Williams pursue the possibility of a management buyout of Synergy Systems from Sealaska – a native owned company based in Juneau, Alaska. That included everything from finding a bank, choosing a CPA and law firm and building a management team and infrastructure.

While the proposal was solid, Sealaska ultimately had other plans. It no longer was interested in selling the nationally known prototype manufacturer whose clients include Boeing, Nike, Dell Computer and Philips Medical Systems. Instead, it decided to grow its thriving baby - big time.

Campbell is helping Williams do just that. He’s helped develop a short-term and a long-term strategic growth plan. He helps to keeps everybody in the loop. He pulls the ideas together so Williams can continue to address the everyday needs of his business, which at any one time is prototyping or meeting the limited-run manufacturing needs of dozens of the world’s best known companies.

“I’m motivated to make money and he clears these obstacles out of the way,” Williams says of Campbell. “The reason I like working with John is he knows what the end product will be and knows how to get here. He takes the bull by the horn. For example,

he set up a meeting with my controller and my general manager without getting me involved. He knew what he needed to do.”

Campbell says he was able to do all that because of the ongoing relationship he has with Williams and Synergy Systems. “The fact that I understand this business now - having looked at it from a number of different viewpoints - has given me a lot of information about it so I can focus on strategy. We have developed a cumulative level of knowledge that goes back in time. I’ve seen this company grow in its capabilities and have an appreciation for the direction that management wants to take it.”

Campbell acts as a facilitator, doing some original research, and works with the team of Synergy System executives who will not only develop their growth plan, but will have to implement it. He has helped them develop a staffing strategies plan, a capital expenditure program, and a plan to add additional space. “I feel like I’m a part of their organization,” he says.

He is also responsible for offering his several decades of business experience to the process to help ensure any hurdles that get in the way can be overcome. “If I saw something that didn’t make sense, it would be my job to say so,” says Campbell, who has worked to aid businesses for more than 20 years. “That’s why it’s important to have people you work with who have been through business cycles, who can see issues on the horizon that others might not otherwise see.”

For Synergy, Williams explains, it’s either grow or die. He appreciates being able to turn to BRG for expertise in other areas, like risk management and insurance, when needed. “We are a cool little company, but it’s hard to grow a cool little company doing prototyping.” With BRG’s help, Williams is working to grow Synergy’s abilities to do more limited-run manufacturing projects. Synergy is already well on its way. It not only made the prototype head-hugging rubber swim caps for the United States and Canadian women’s Olympic swim teams, but it manufactured all of the actual swim caps as well.

Today it is turning single-piece prototypes of medical devices and high-tech hardware into limited production runs of complicated, multiple-piece products.

And just as Sealaska is proud of Synergy, Williams is proud of its owner. Sealaska is a certified minority business, 100 percent owned by Native Alaskans. One day, Williams hopes – as its growth plan is implemented and Synergy continues to grow - that more of those Sealaska shareholders will eventually work for him.