

Ozark Biomedical Inc.



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puts Personalized *SPIN* on Centrifuge Business

Some might consider it serendipitous how Bruce Pursell and Bruce “Beemer” Yokley came to own Ozark Biomedical and put the laboratory centrifuge products and services business on the fast-track to success.

Working together since 1994, the two came across a classified ad in 1998 announcing the sale of Ozark Biomedical – a small, struggling company founded in 1978 that rebuilt centrifuges and sold brushes and salvaged used parts. Cautiously intrigued, the two investigated the prospect and discovered that the company, despite its ups and downs, had a firm customer base and a huge potential for success. Because both Pursell and Yokley had similar backgrounds as biomedical technicians and clinical engineering support staff, the purchase of Ozark Biomedical made perfect sense. Their insight and expertise allowed them to take a struggling mom and pop company and convert it into a substantial – and truly international – business that now serves all 50 states and 22 countries abroad.

Today, Ozark Biomedical offers new and refurbished centrifuges, new and used circuit boards and parts, serves as a repair depot for motors, latches, circuit boards, and centrifuges, and offers free technical support to its customers. The company also prides itself on its enormous in-stock parts inventory for most centrifuge brands.

Despite its comprehensive centrifuge product and service offering and big-business-type growth (in which many business owners strive), Pursell and Yokley contend the secret to their company’s success is their commitment to sticking to the laboratory centrifuge business – as opposed to trying to be all things to all people – and making quality customer service the foundation of Ozark Biomedical. Pursell and



Yokley have managed to maintain the personalized, friendly approach that customers might come to expect from a small, family-run business, while meeting the vast needs of a truly international customer base.

“Everyone who works here lives within a few miles of our facility,” said Yokley, referring to quaint Beebe, AR, which serves as Ozark Biomedical’s headquarters. He credits much of Ozark’s success to its team of 25, which is like a big family. “We care for one another and for our customers. We take a real team approach to caring for each and every customer.”

Here Pursell and Yokley discuss their rather humble beginnings with Ozark Biomedical, the formula for the company’s loyal customer following and impressive, consistent growth, and why – despite a most certain bright future – Ozark Biomedical and the team that’s driving its success will never outgrow their small-town customer-centric business approach.

What is the primary focus of your business and the markets it serves?

Pursell: Our sole and singular focus is laboratory centrifugation. That’s our strength and our area of expertise. Whether it’s a medical laboratory, a university lab, food processing lab, pharmacology facility, veterinarian facility, the petroleum industry, or any facility that uses centrifuges in a clinical, research or processing environment we can meet their needs. We have had many opportunities to diversify our business within the medical equipment industry. We have chosen not to. First of all, that marketplace is too dilute and secondly, the phrase ‘Jack of all trades, master of none’ comes to mind. Our business is focused on one thing, we do it very well and we do it better than anyone else.

Another critical focus for us is customer service. Everyone touts their version of customer service as ‘the best,’ ‘superior,’ etc., and we’re no exception. Our entire staff is regularly indoctrinated on customer service skills. We fully realize how im-

portant every customer is to our business. We have learned a tremendous amount over the years about our customers needs. We continually strive for improvement in the customer service area, as a matter of business. Our customers' needs and expectations are paramount in importance and we feel we can go toe to toe with any customer service organization out there.

Where did you want to make the biggest difference with your company?

Yokley: Before acquiring Ozark, Bruce and I spent years as clinical engineering staff and field service technicians working for hospital laboratories and OEMs. We've been where our customers are. We've walked their walk. We know how serious a down instrument is. We know how important it is to be able to get a part delivered overnight or to get some immediate tech-support to help troubleshoot a problem. That's how we treat centrifuges and that's where we shine. We want the BMET to look like the hero they are. Our objective is to provide them with top-notch technical support and fast, accurate diagnosis of problems. We know centrifuges aren't a focus until they go down. We also know what it's like to stand in front of an instrument you may not be familiar with. That's where we come into play; they don't have to be the experts because we are and we're just a phone call away. By making a simple phone call we can save them significant time and money.

What sort of growth have you experienced from a facility and staff standpoint?

Pursell: When the business was purchased in 1998, we moved it into a two-car garage. It was the two of us running the operation, plus the previous owner (who is still with us today) helping us with production. From there, we instituted tech support and the board and latch repair aspects of our business. In no time we outgrew that site. In August 1999, we moved into our newly constructed 8,000 square-foot facility. Today, Ozark Biomedical occupies three different facilities approaching 18,000 square feet, with an additional 15,000 square feet on the drawing board. We now have 25 full-time employees. The growth has been huge and the rewards are incredible, but



we still have that two-car garage drive and ethic.

What do you think have been the keys to the success of your business?

Pursell: Our biggest success is directly attributed to our employees. Without the high standards and commitment of the 'family' we work with, none of this success story would be possible. These are the front-line people. Our employees share the responsibility of ensuring our customers are fully satisfied. We take that responsibility seriously. No one here will sacrifice his or her quality commitment for the sake of an invoice, nor will they allow a product to leave the facility in less than optimum condition. Even our used parts go through a rigorous assurance process before they are ever packaged. Without a top-notch staff to guarantee quality products go out the door we would not be in business.

Yokley: Ozark Biomedical also provides outstanding support service to clinical engineering departments and BMETs; at no cost. Our goal is to make life easier for those of who need our help. The folks in the trenches are the ones catching all the grief and pressure to service these centrifuges in a timely and cost-efficient manner. We offer our products at huge savings compared to the manufacturer – often as high as 50 or 60 percent compared to the OEM. In this day and age economics come into play more than they ever have. Everyone looks for a way to shave expenses from their operating budget and we can satisfy that requirement in every aspect, from reduced shipping costs to deeply discounted quality repair parts and free tech support that allows us to reinforce the al-

ready huge savings. Aside from offering products that will perform in a way that meets or exceeds original manufacturing specifications, we also offer warranties that meet or exceed the OEMs'.

Having been in the dedicated business of centrifugation for ten years, what is your secret for steady growth?

Pursell: Maintaining our high standards in every aspect of our business life. We refuse to jump out and over market ourselves. Our biggest fear is having to tell a customer 'No,' or 'We can't help you there.' Since we model our business based on customer demands we find it difficult to have to turn away a customer. We are dedicated to our customers needs whether it's new technology or old, or whether it's a fuse or a hard to find rotor. Whatever the case, we have managed to meet those needs and gain customer loyalty in the process. We have been able to control growth in a manner that will allow us to stay in business for the long haul. To do things any other way – for example, grow faster than we can manage – would compromise our business plan and have a severe impact on our customer base.

What are the future plans for your business?

Yokley: We will continue to support our broad instrument base and maintain a stock of parts and equipment to meet our customers' needs. We want to get the word out that centrifuges don't have to be disposable. Along with that, we will increase our staffing levels as needed and we are looking forward to breaking ground on an additional production facility this year. We will continue to be customer-driven and strive to meet the demands put upon us. Ozark Biomedical is currently working toward ISO certification and that will greatly enhance the customer's experience. These things are a part of growing a thriving business, but more importantly, it will enhance the customer experience. After all, isn't that what we all want?

For more information on Ozark Biomedical please call 800.457.7476 or visit www.ozarkbiomedical.com.