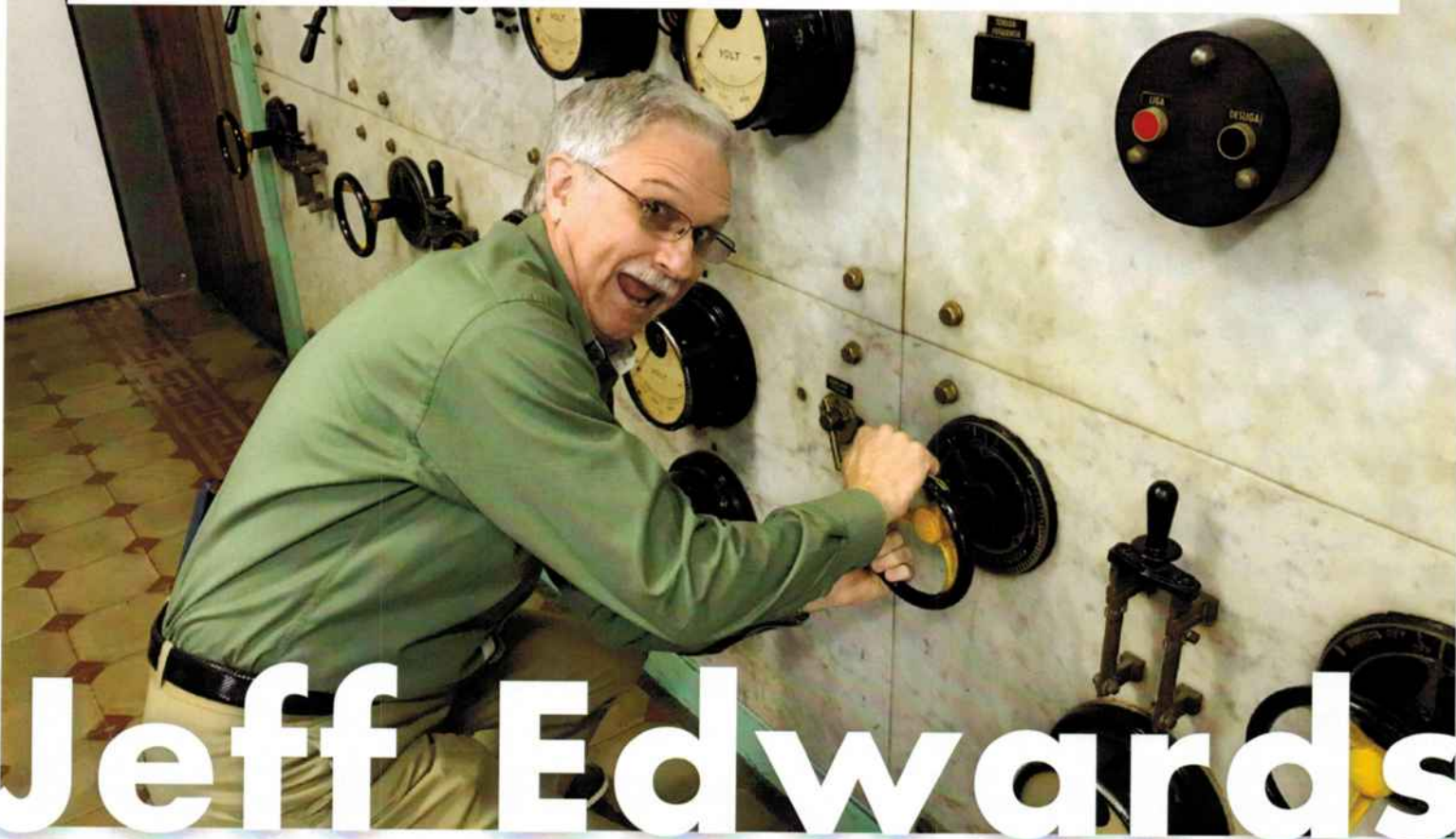


Meet Jeff Edwards of Energy Control Systems in South East Fort Worth



Jeff Edwards

September 2017

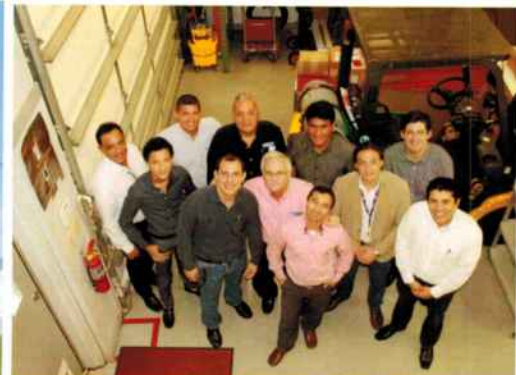
VoyageDallas

Today
we'd
like
to
introduce
you
to
Jeff
Edwards

Jeff, let's start with your story. We'd love to hear how you got started and how the journey has been so far.

In April of 1987, I received a phone call from a friend of mine who told me that some fellow was coming to their office to talk about some electrical product that we might be interested in selling, and that we could make some money. I agreed to come by that evening and listen to the CEO of the company give his pitch on what I learned was selling transient voltage surge protectors. I had no training in electricity but did use some surge protectors in my business telephone company. After some discussions with my future partner and convincing my father in law to co-sign a note at the bank to borrow money for the inventory, we officially launched the company on June 15th.

It was quite comedic for a number of months. I had never sold anything really in my life, for sure nothing technical, and neither had my partner. Our first hire had only sold radio advertising in Tennessee. We quickly realized that most people thought transients were burns down at the bus station. Early on we added a couple of other lines of equipment to supplement our surge/lightning protection business. As we worked to mature ourselves in the business of on the job power quality equipment training, we began to find our niche in a number of industries. In doing so, we began to get recognition by our two primary lines as top performers. We had decided to focus the majority of our efforts on building re-seller networks in some of our niche markets like Broadcast and CNC Machine tool shops.





As the internet began to get quite popular in the early nineties, we were one of the first our type of companies to post a website in our industry. For several years many searchers thought we were the manufacturer of a variety of products we sold, due to our online presence. After explaining who we were, business proceeded. Out this presence on the web came numerous inquiries for surge/lightning protection in South America.

We capitalized on this and soon found ourselves recognized by our manufacturer as the international experts. This aligned with my desire to one day have our sales reach 60% USA and 40% International. As we slowly added to our international distributors in South America and Asia; our factory gave us exclusivity in South America. We began building a network in Peru, Chile, Colombia, and Argentina. In 2001 I hired the product manager from our distributor in Peru as VP of International Sales.

In 2004, we introduced our own branded surge product under the name of Sinetamer. In the subsequent years we continued adding to our network in Latin America that currently covers 98% of the territory south of the Rio Grande. In 2010 following a trip to South Africa for the World Cup Soccer tournament we launched into Africa.

We did achieve the 60/40 sales ratio I was shooting for, but it ended up becoming 60% International and 40% USA sales. In 2016 we hit 75/25 International to USA sales. In recognition of our international growth we have been recognized by the Department of Commerce for the Presidents E Award for Export Excellence and E Star Award in 2012 and 2017.

It is quite a challenge to collapse 30 years into a dozen paragraphs. Suffice to say that we have been very fortunate in finding success in such a niche that globally has become a billion dollar industry. Our next goal is producing distributors in 50 countries, we are currently at around 42.

Great, so let's dig a little deeper into the story – has it been an easy path overall and if not, what were the challenges you've had to overcome?

Is entrepreneurship ever a smooth road?

The greatest struggle we had initially is growing the business without borrowing any capital. There were a number of years where our sales people earned more than the owners. However, the advantage that gave us was that we worked extremely diligently to insure that every sale we made, we collected on. It was more than 20 years before we had a non-collectable debt.

As we moved into more of an international company we discovered quickly what happens as the USD gets stronger and weaker. We also suffered through the rise and fall of oil and commodity pricing as many of our territories rely heavily on those areas for their GDP.

Please tell us about Energy Control Systems.

Energy Control Systems is an electrical power quality solutions provider. Our focus is on surge protection, battery backup systems and service and harmonic mitigation. Our corporate culture has evolved into one of extreme customer service. Virtually every week we receive comments from clients and potential clients thanking us for the quick/timely response. I thought every business operated that way, but obviously not. We translated this internationally by continually having our area managers in the field with distributors and customers up to two weeks every month.

On the international side of things, I am very proud of our awards from the Department of Commerce. Of the thousands of exporting companies that can make application for these 2 awards, our little company has received both the E Award and E Star Award for Export Excellence.

Product wise, our surge protector is the best performing product on the planet that I have yet to encounter. Our product is made in the USA and the majority of the time is the most expensive solution, but it works and provide a true ROI. In addition to this, other manufacturers have told us that we are the number one surge product in South America.

Do you look back particularly fondly on any memories from childhood?

A difficult question, but the one that jumped out at me was when my father asked me to go on a business trip with him to Abilene. I thought I had died and gone to heaven. It was a slight let down when I realized we were not flying, but it didn't last long.