

BUSINESS RECORD MONDAY



ELTEK is unknown gem in St. Charles

ELTEK International Laboratories has been doing business in St. Charles for 22 years, but very few people here know this company even exists. That's too bad because it is an impressive operation, as some city officials and I learned last week during a tour of its facility at 248 Hughes Lane. ELTEK tests electrical insulation materials and systems for companies throughout the world.

Materials that are used in hair dryers, dishwashers, electric shavers and other products are shipped to ELTEK for flame-retardant and numerous other tests. Many of the materials tested aren't even in use as yet. "We're working with tomorrow's production line," company founder and CEO Edward Van Vooren said.

Only 15 people work at the four labs located in the facility, but the company has more than 400 customers, most of them located overseas. Customers include Siemens, General Electric, 3M, Du Pont and Emerson Electric. "Our customer base is by word of mouth," Van Vooren said. "More people in Germany than in St. Charles know about us."

The former physics professor said there is enough demand for his service that he easily could hire another five people. However, all training is done in-house and the training process is lengthy. "The type of testing we do is not taught anywhere else in the world," he said.

Van Vooren said it is more economical for companies to use his labs than to have their own labs that may not always be in use. He could locate his company anywhere. "We're in St. Charles because we thought it was the best place to be," he said.

ELTEK is one of those small companies that sometimes go unnoticed. But it seems to play an important part in today's global economy.

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because we thought
it was the best place
to be."**

-- Edward Van Vooren,
ELTEK founder
and CEO
