

Movers & Shakers interview with Mohd Hijaz, General Manager / Partner – Eagle Electromechanical Co. L.L.C.

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Mr. Mohd Hijaz

On the sidelines of Frost & Sullivan's Growth, Innovation and Leadership (GIL) Conference 2009, Vivek Gautam, Industry Analyst with Frost & Sullivan's Environment and Building Technology Group had discussions with Mohd Hijaz, General Manager / Partner – Eagle Electromechanical Co. L.L.C. The Company won the Frost & Sullivan 2009 Entrepreneurial Company of the Year Award for Middle East Water and Wastewater Treatment Market.

Established in 1985 in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Eagle Electromechanical Co. L.L.C. (EECO or Eagle) has become a major Environmental Engineering player specializing in custom design, supply, construction, operation, and maintenance of a range of water and wastewater utilities and associated ancillaries.

Eagle has demonstrated excellence in executing a variety of water and wastewater treatment projects with reputed clients such as Nakheel Corporation, Dubai Sports city, Dubai Motor City, Dubai Aluminum Co. (DUBAL), Dubai Electricity & Water Authority (DEWA) and so on. The company is approved by most authorities in the UAE such as Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Sharjah municipalities, the Ministry of Public Works and Housing, Jebel Ali Free Zone, etc. and has worked with most of the reputed international consultants.

As a company, Eagle is committed to creating a green environment for present and future generations by designing and operating wastewater treatment plants aimed at waste reduction and water reuse.

The ongoing economic slowdown has made market conditions tough for most players. What have been some of the visible impacts of this, on the growth of water and wastewater treatment industry?

The long term infrastructure work for water and wastewater is still on board and it is in the evaluation stage for construction. The ones which have been affected are the private or semi-governmental type of works.

With Dubai's debt problem surfacing, the trouble for Real Estate sector doesn't seem to end any time soon. Since Eagle has a good presence in the sewage treatment plant (STP) market, in what ways is your company trying to reduce the impact on business.

As number of wastewater facilities had already been put into operation in several areas, we are trying to maximize their utilization in order to serve other developmental projects where some of these services are not covered. Having a strong presence in this area provides us with a steady stream of revenues which is less affected by the economic slump.

What are some of key trends you have observed in Sewage Treatment Plant (STP) market, technological or commercial, within the UAE?

In recent years, we have observed a trend towards over-sizing, overestimation, non-coordination

between the involved authorities and a fashionable approach to technology selection while designing STPs. This is a discomfoting approach as it leads to sub-optimum outcome for invested capital.

In last few years wastewater recycling and reuse has been strongly advocated. Do you see this as a big business opportunity? How is Eagle Electromechanical geared up to capitalize on opportunities arising in this area?

Treated wastewater is an extremely valuable commodity, which has huge potential for reuse in numerous applications, having a very important social and economic bearing, especially in the water scarce Middle Eastern region. The opportunities are endless and it could be applied for agriculture, landscaping, groundwater recharge, industrial and non-potable purposes. We have successfully implemented reuse options in several projects, such as reusing treated sewage water for district cooling for the Dubai Electricity and Water Authority (DEWA), but numerous reuse options are bound by public acceptance and local regulations. The greatest prospects in the market are for water reuse for agriculture, horticulture and industries. However, in the former two areas, regulations dictate the extent to which treated wastewater can be reused. Eagle is in a very strong position to generate the product or quality desired for any application as our solutions are flexible, cost-competitive and technologically customized (from activated sludge through to membrane bioreactors) to meet the desired criteria.

How do you see growth prospects for provision of water and wastewater utility services like O&M contracts, annual maintenance contracts in the regional market? Do you see some key trends in this space?

One of our key strengths and pillars of success is our execution of operations and maintenance services for our clients. This is an area, which is essential to the success of a water and wastewater treatment facility and our extensive list of references has gained us the market's confidence. As a company, we feel that market for such services in the Middle East will continue to grow.

Dubai Sports City's wastewater treatment plant is a prestigious project. What are some of its unique features?

The plant's discreet design, quiet operation, and no odor make it inconspicuous to bystanders. The Membrane Bioreactor (MBR) is completely enclosed within a building, architecturally blending in with the setting. A very small footprint of 4,000 m² houses the entire process plant. The operation of the system is highly automated and the housing ensures no odor emission and consequently negligible environmental nuisance.

The plant's design and operation is aimed at waste reduction and water re-use. Reverse Osmosis (RO) treats 10 percent of the MBR product water system generating drinking water quality, as per the DEWA standards. This water is reused as sweet water make-up for the 84,000 m³/day Canal Filtration project at Sports City, also executed by Eagle. The balance is recycled within the development for irrigation use. The latter reuse water has a superior effluent quality compared to standard treatment systems with regards to suspended solids and bacteria removal. Solid by-product or sludge from the plant is also minimized through the plant's long solids retention times.

In a relatively short period of time Eagle has established itself as a prominent player in the market. In your opinion, what has helped Eagle accomplish such great success?

Our wealth of experience and stable and strong growth is driven by our vision and dedication. Eagle never compromises on quality and has a dedicated team of staff, which is geared for results and customer satisfaction.

In the near future, is your company contemplating expansion outside the UAE?

Definitely, the time is right to broaden our scope. We have been active on a small scale in North Africa; we are expanding into Libya and Bahrain. We also see large potential in the Saudi

market.

Finally we would like to congratulate you on receiving the Frost & Sullivan 2009 Entrepreneurial Company of The Year Award. How does this recognition encourage your business?

Recognition in the international arena at this stage is an important gesture from the public affirming that our platform is sturdy and we can take it to the next level.