

# INDIANAPOLIS BUSINESS JOURNAL

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## Local company launches technical think tank

*Wolf Technical Services seeks broader customer base*

By **Anthony Schoettle**  
aschoettle@ibj.com

A low-profile Indianapolis research firm is emerging from the shadows to raise its profile and grab more business.

Wolf Technical Services Inc., which until earlier this year had focused on forensic studies and accident re-creation, enlisted former University of Indianapolis President Ben Lantz last year to launch a new division that is winning contracts that focus on the future rather than re-creating the past.

Already, Wolf's new division to develop problem-solving technology has done work for IndyGo, Riley Hospital for Children and the U.S. Air Force, a big departure for a firm more accustomed to working for law enforcement agencies and law firms.

"This is a pretty uncommon high-tech company in Indiana, and they're also demonstrating they know how to work in partnerships," said John Schneider, Purdue University assistant vice provost for industry research.

Wolf and Purdue have begun partnering this year on several federal projects.

"Wolf has very good technology and very good people in applied research," Schneider said. "For a small firm, I am very impressed with their quality of people."

In late 2001, Wolf owner Michael Pepe sought to leverage the company's assets to increase revenue. He thinks the new division will boost revenue 30 percent over the next three years. Wolf, a privately held firm, doesn't divulge revenue, but Pepe said revenue has doubled since he bought the firm from founder Jack Wolf in 1989.

Pepe said Wolf's primary assets are the skills of his 31 employees, many of whom are engineers, college professors or former military project leaders. Pepe previously worked for Naval Avionics on Tomahawk cruise missile research and development.

"We think this new division fits our skill set," Pepe said. "We've not done much funded research before, but we think there's a need."

Pepe hired Lantz, the former U of I president, in March 2004 to prepare for the launch of the new division.

"They were seeking outside help to provide objectivity and push a little," Lantz said. "From what I've seen of their capabilities, I have no doubt they'll be successful in this endeavor."

Among its new jobs is development of a computer system for Riley that will identify numerous heart conditions of a fetus. And the company recently began work on a \$100,000 contract to study combat and non-combat restraint systems for U.S. Air Force aircrafts.

If the Air Force study advances to a second phase, the contract grows to \$850,000. A third phase, Pepe said, would involve commercialization.

The creative thinking that resulted in the Air Force contract is a habit at Wolf. Every Friday, Wolf's employees—from chairman to secretaries—meet to discuss the company's business.

"Everything goes on the board and everything is discussed," Pepe said.

When business slowed in late 2001, Pepe asked his employees to contemplate revenue-boosting ideas.

From the brainstorming, Wolf officials began discussing the possibility of doing more "pro-active" studies and research in addition to the re-creations and modeling they are used to. They also began exploring the possibility of landing government and military contracts through federal small-business programs.

Two-thirds of the company's business is in Indiana, but Pepe thinks the new division will boost the percentage of work that originates elsewhere.

Those familiar with Wolf's operations said the company's reputation should help in its new endeavor.

"Wolf is the largest supplier of this type of forensic expertise in the area," said Michael Langford, partner at Scopelitis Light Garvin & Hanson, a local law firm specializing in transportation issues. "I've always considered them more research-

### Wolf Technical Services at a glance

**Service:** forensic and  
investigative engineering  
consulting

**Address:** 6836 Hawthorn  
Park Drive

**Web site:**  
www.wolftechnical.com

**Founded:** 1977

**Founder:** Jack Wolf

**Chairman and majority owner:** Michael D.  
Pepe

**President:** Roger L. Park

**Revenue growth:** 10 percent annually

**Business footprint:** two-thirds in Indiana,  
one-third national

**New division:** funded research group

**Projected revenue growth for new  
division:** 30 percent over three years

**Employees:** 31

*Source: Wolf Technical Services Inc.*



Pepe

intensive than many like firms and they have excellent graphics capabilities as well as research and engineering."

Marketing and advertising remain a challenge for Wolf.

"This is a different sort of [client] relationship than we're used to," said Joseph Ward, Wolf director of client relations. "Instead of people coming to Wolf, now we're out there more actively marketing to potential clients."

But there's no mass marketing plan in the works. Instead, Ward said, Wolf will target a small number of potential clients, and "build those relationships one at a time."

"Even among the people who know us, we're not known as a think tank and problem-solving group," Ward said. "The quality of our previous work is a good springboard, but we have to help people understand our new direction." •