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INDUSTRIAL PARK: DISTek draws from decades of experience

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DISTek Integration, Inc. has quite a unique business.

Tucked in the Industrial Park since 2001, the company prides itself on inventing software to make equipment smarter.

In other words, “we make the brains that make equipment run,” said IT Manager Bob Theisen. “Ostensibly, what we do is software engineering, but the majority of our work is actually embedded software engineering.”



IT Manager Bob Theisen, checks one of DISTek's many workstations to ensure quality.

Many of the company's clients are in the agriculture, forestry and construction industries. It's DISTek's products that are embedded in the systems of many tractors, seeding machines and other heavy duty off-road vehicles.

DISTek was started in St. Louis in 1992 by current president and owner Matt Dickinson. He got the idea when an engineering manager at an agricultural equipment manufacturer recommended that he start his own business. For the first three years of operation, Dickinson ran the business by himself out of his home.

In 1994, DISTek opened an office in Carthage, Ill., which today remains the corporate headquarters. The only other physical office is the Cedar Falls location, which opened in 1999 on Nordic Drive and has since expanded three times. The rest of the approximately 90 DISTek employees work on site at customer locations.

When the floods of 2008 came and two communication hubs near the Cedar River were in danger of flooding, DISTek, a company that relies heavily on its data storage and communication, wasn't worried.

DISTek's was safely located in the Industrial Park – just a few hundred yards from a data center company that provides their data storage and serves as a data backup and communications hub for many businesses in the park.

“Being close to the data center is one of the biggest advantages of being in the Industrial Park,” said Theisen. “The fiber ring (high speed network) in the park helps that a lot, too.”

Theisen said the most interesting part of his job is working and keeping up with changing technology.

“It’s neat to have gotten in the business at the right age, where I could see all the developments in IT, dating back to Microsoft DOS (Disc Operating System),” said Theisen.

Although DISTek has an abundance of loyal clients, they are always looking to the future. Currently, the company is exploring making the move to cloud computing, a fast-growing trend among IT companies. Cloud computing allows users to access business software and information located externally from any type of device and from any location.

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