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7

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Local environmental firm takes its business global

Photo 1 of 2 | [Zoom Photo +](#)

Arthur N. Mabbett:(right) shakes hands with Susan Neiheisel Contracting Officer, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency acknowledging the signing of a five year services contract.

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By **William A. Moniz**

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Like politics, most environmental consulting firms consider all business local.

Not so for Mabbett and Associates, to them the opportunities are global.

Founded in 1980, the Bedford, Mass.-based firm which recently opened a Rhode Island office, now employs 55 professionals, 20 of whom operate out of the company's European headquarters in Glasgow, Scotland.

"My competitors thought I was nuts," said CEO Arthur N. Mabbett of his 1996 overseas expansion, "but since we were already doing business with globally operating companies in the United States, I said why not?"

With about 35 percent of the company's business flowing through the UK foothold, Mabbett has been proven right.

"When we're talking with people in the European units of companies like General Electric, Raytheon, or Wyman Gordon, there's a comfort factor that we're already working with their stateside counterparts," said Mabbett. "In the late 1990's the United States environmental regulations were more stringent than those of the European Union, so it was relatively easy for us to meet or exceed our new clients' expectations."

The firm prides itself in being a "one-stop-shop", providing integrated environmental, health and safety, and energy consulting and engineering services to industry, institutions, and federal, state, and municipal agencies. Company staff include certified hazardous materials managers, licensed asbestos inspectors, industrial hygienists, and a professional geologist/licensed site professional.

While continuing to nurture his international initiative, Mabbett is intent on also extending both the company's national and regional reach. The firm recently opened its newest offices in Pawtucket, R.I. preparing to expand its base of clients in that state as well as Connecticut.

"We're here for the long-term," says Mabbett, "our goal is to become the premier environmental and energy services company around."

Mabbett, a professional engineer with a masters degree in environmental science, previously served as environmental sciences officer at the U.S. Army Environmental Hygiene Agency, and the U.S. Army Academy of Health Sciences.

As a major in the Army Reserve, he was special assistant for Occupational and Environmental Health in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army, Washington, D.C.

At age 62 he remains deeply involved in the day to day operations of the business. "I have no plans to retire," he says, "I'm having too much fun."

In 2004, President George W. Bush issued an executive order establishing new federal small business categories in support of veteran owned companies. As a result of Mabbett's service connected partial disability, and his majority ownership of the firm, Mabbett & Associates was certified as a Service Disabled Veteran Owned Small Business.

Very few even know the classification exists, according to Doug Glenn, publisher of Pollution Engineering, whereas the more popular minority-owned, woman-owned and 8-A economically disadvantaged small business classifications are widely known.

Today, Mabbett's company is the oldest continuously operating environmental services firm on the U.S.'s Central Control Registry for procurement. The company is eligible for participation in federal projects specifically set aside for SDVOSB firms.

"Fully 3 percent of federal annual spending is earmarked for veteran owned small businesses," said Mabbett, "In 2008 only slightly over 1 percent was expended, so the growth potential is there. Obviously we have to be qualified to perform the work, but it does give us an advantage with agencies like the Department of Defense, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Army Corps of Engineers."

"Up until 2007, 98 percent of our business was in the private manufacturing and commercial sectors," said Mabbett, "We now do over a third of our volume with various federal government agencies."

Among ongoing projects are contracts for training and annual safety and health reviews at every Veterans Administration facility in New England, and at all Job Corps centers nationwide. "Training is an integral part of our business," says Mabbett, "We once responded to a client who had been cited for regulatory violations by re-training all 300 of their employees within 48 hours."

Mabbett & Associates also sees a bright future for its renewable energy initiatives including solar, wind, and tidal power generation. The company is currently involved in a wind turbine study in Scotland aimed at establishing the largest wind farm in Europe.

"Inevitably the cost of oil will go higher," said Mabbett, "making these alternative energy sources even more cost effective."

[HOME](#)