

Green wave, fuel costs improve Eco-Edge fortunes

Devices touted to raise mileage

by *Patricia Bathurst* - Aug. 14, 2008 12:00 AM
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No tree-hugging, card-carrying, starry-eyed uber-environmentalist, Debra Johnson was a clear-eyed CPA when she first encountered a device designed to improve fuel economy and reduce emissions from automobiles.

She was also a mother with a child who has asthma.

Starting a company to distribute that combustion-catalyst system, made by Emissions Technology Inc., six years ago put Johnson on the road to Eco-Edge, a Chandler-based company that offers a growing array of products and services focused on helping companies with diesel fleets improve profits and reduce environmental impact.

"As a CPA, I could see the value in saving companies money," said Johnson, the president of Eco-Edge. "And I have children, one of whom has asthma. This (product) just fit with who I am."

Initially founded as Emissions Products

International, the company changed its name to better reflect the increasing number of products and services it offers.

"It took us four or five years to develop an identity and see who we are," Johnson said. "We kept looking at the products, and I knew I wanted the business to go beyond that."

Her participation in the APS Academy for the Advancement of Minority and Women-Owned Enterprises (a two-year mentoring program for small businesses) helped Johnson clarify the focus of the company. Now, she said, "over the last 18 months, we've finally defined who we are. And I love it."

Devices to promote fuel economy have been available for gasoline-powered engines for years.

Most are highly ineffective, with claims dismissed by most scientists and engineers as "snake oil."

The primary combustion-catalyst system Johnson distributes was initially designed to work on a gasoline engine, then re-engineered by Emmet Cunningham of Ahwautukee to work with diesel engines.

"This is an old concept," Johnson said. "It's just that Emissions Technology finally got it right."

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Moving beyond a single product offering, she said, allows Eco-Edge to offer customers custom assessments of how to reach fuel economies, to say, "here's the solution and here's why."

Since then, the company has added a system designed to extend oil usage through high-tech filtration, along with several other catalyst- and fuel-filtration systems.

Additional products and services are being evaluated, with the intent of adding between two and four new devices or services a year. All will continue to target diesel-fleet operations in the Southwest and in Mexico.

The business, Johnson said, is doing well, literally fueled by diesel prices.

"Our growth for next year will be incredible," she said, adding, "it's been a long haul. I'm excited and relieved to see things coming to fruition, and getting past the chasm of disbelief.

"In this business, there are lots of people, lots of products and lots of claims. Most companies we deal with have tried one or more products and been disappointed. They're very skeptical. We are more of a customer advocate, not a manufacturer's rep.

"What I want to be sure of is that everything

we do for a customer adds value and has a positive impact on the environment," Johnson said.

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