

PROFILE

Firm's growth provides a measure of its leader

CEO John Hart co-founded Lumetrics in 2002 after licensing Kodak technology

By ANDREA DECKERT

In 2002, John Hart and his founding partners successfully licensed technology from the research labs of Eastman Kodak Co. and formed Lumetrics Inc. Their aim was to develop and commercialize optical measurement products.

The group has never looked back.

Hart, 61, is president and CEO of Lumetrics, as well as its chairman.

The Henrietta firm employs 25 workers. It develops and manufactures high-precision thickness measurement and gauging systems for industrial applications.

Lumetrics' OptiGauge systems are in daily use at Fortune 500 companies in the coatings, eye-care products, medical, food packaging and pharmaceutical industries.

Hart declined to disclose sales but said revenue has grown 20 to 30 percent annually. This year's growth is at the higher end of the range, lifted by a recent acquisition.

He attributes the company's success largely to its employees and the hands-on mentality apparent throughout the firm.

"I manage by walking around," Hart says. "I don't know how many books are written about this style, but sitting in the office does not work in our company, so I spend a significant amount of time walking and talking."

Area native

Hart grew up in Irondequoit, the second youngest of seven siblings, and went to Bishop Kearney High School. He attended Northeastern University in Boston, where he was a member of the school's water polo team.

Hart originally was interested in electrical engineering but discovered a great interest in mechanical engineering. He grad-

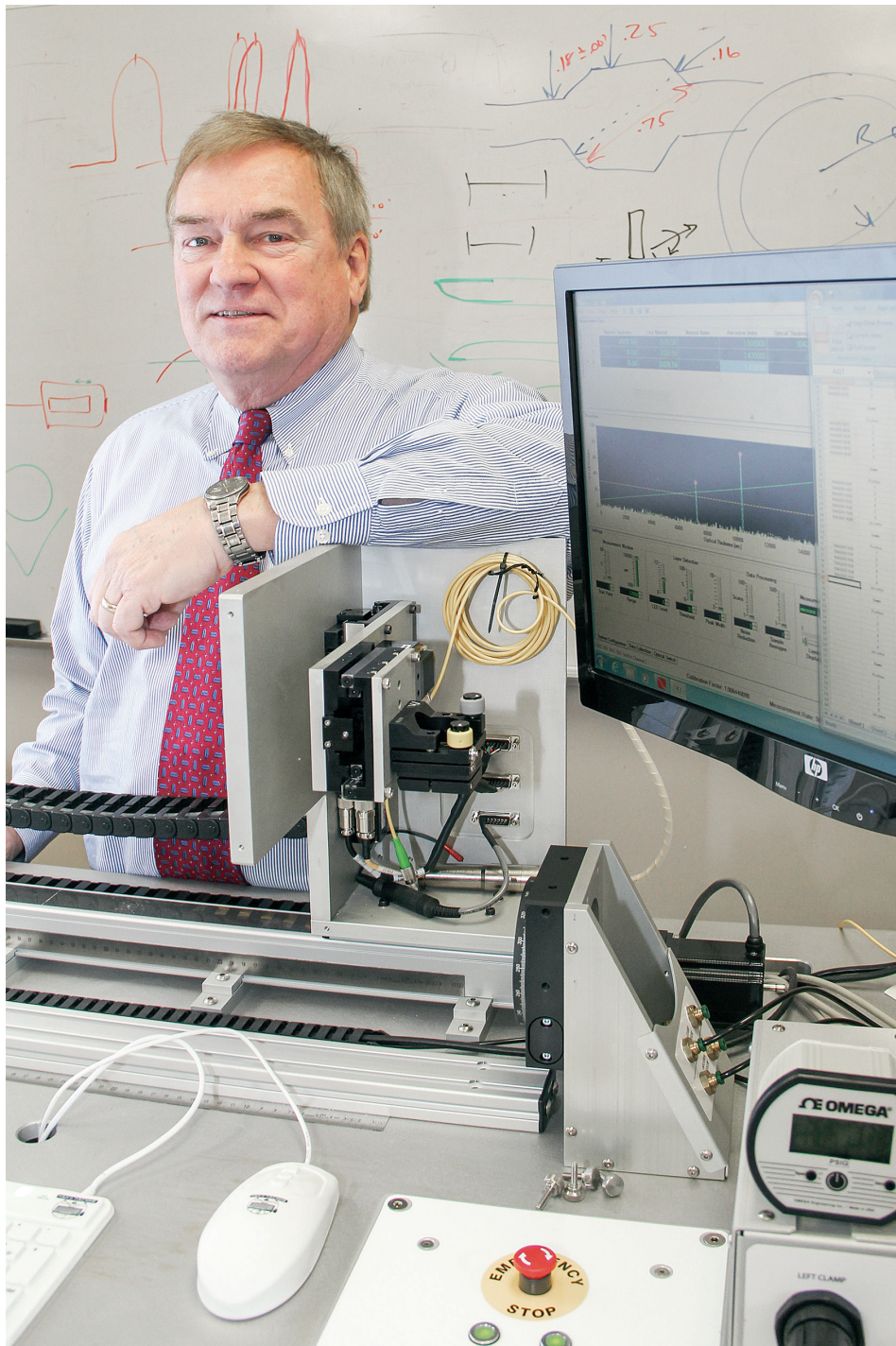


Photo by Kimberly McKinzie

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uated with a bachelor of science degree in mechanical engineering in 1974 and started his career as a mechanical engineer at Bausch & Lomb Inc.

Hart worked his way up the management ladder at Bausch & Lomb with experience in manufacturing, engineering and new business development.

Then he was recruited to Long Island and became the general manager of Allergan Inc., a contact lens manufacturer. Hart was responsible for a large portion of an Allergan business unit.

It was at Allergan that he developed an interest in expanding beyond engineering and moving into business entrepreneurship, though he notes that aspects of forming a new business were not part of the experience.

He increased his new business development experience after Allergan, working as a general manager at Holotek Ltd., a precision optical scanning business, and Rochester-based ASE Instruments Inc., where the focus was on optics product commercialization.

Those jobs created an interest in a field Hart would later pursue with his own firm.

"I developed my interest in optics from most of my work experiences," he says.

Hart built upon his interest in startups and optics, co-founding Lumetrics with a group that included Steve Heveron-Smith, Lumetrics' vice president of business development and marketing, and Christopher Cotton, general manager of Henrietta-based ASE Optics Inc., which is now part of Rochester Precision Optics.

Lumetrics was formed to address untapped markets for precision measurement.

Using the Kodak technology, Lumetrics created OptiGauge, which can measure a range of materials, including flat films, tubing, glass products such as automotive windows, and contact lenses.

The business, originally housed at the Lennox Tech Enterprise Center of High Tech Rochester Inc., continued to develop new markets, and in 2011 it moved to the Eagle's Landing Business Park. Relocat-

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ing to a 10,000-square-foot facility gave Lumetrics needed space and allowed for the expansion of manufacturing, research and development, and product engineering.

Management style

Hart's leadership style is straightforward: Hire good people, let them do their jobs, support them with the tools and assets they need, and keep things understandable and simple.

"I specifically do not insert myself into the management (decision-making) of a department, but if something needs attention, a simple 'Let's go get (someone) and solve the problem,' seems to move things along smoothly," he says.

He learned some of that style from his father, who had a management position at Kodak.

"Although I never observed his management style, I did see his level-headed approach in his daily activities and heard from many of his colleagues and employees over the years who constantly reminded me how he always remembered their names and family and how he was always very fair," Hart says.

A manager Hart had known at Bausch & Lomb, Walt Thomas, had a similar style.

"He emulated many of my father's traits and taught me to get out of the office and see what is going on in operations," Hart says.

Heveron-Smith describes Hart as calm under pressure.

"He doesn't get flustered," Heveron-Smith says. "He looks at things from a factual (perspective) and takes the emotion out."

Hart also is willing to discuss issues and challenges with other people at Lumetrics, rather than always providing an answer.

"He lets everyone do their work and doesn't jump in on their jobs," Heveron-Smith says.

Hart gets to the office on most mornings around 7:15 and stays until 6 p.m. Most of his travel is to trade exhibitions where Lu-

metrics products are demonstrated. He interacts with customers, sometimes using video conferencing for live product measurements.

The best part of the job is daily interaction with everyone in the organization, he says. The worst part is the drudgery of paperwork.

"Many of our customers require quality surveys, company summaries and, as our engineering projects grow, user requirements specifications," Hart says. "I recognize the importance of all of these; I just don't like doing this type of work. Fortunately, many in the company are exceptional in this area."

Because many of Lumetrics' customers are medical device companies, the firm's quality system challenges and manufacturing control demands are increasing. Meeting these documentation requirements can be daunting and requires extra effort by the entire staff, Hart adds.

Lumetrics has grown with a significant amount of intellectual property, Hart says. The company has 31 patents in its portfolio and five copyrights.

"Developing and defending our (intellectual property) is a growing challenge as competitors sometimes use the technology claimed in our patents without our permission. So enforcement becomes difficult but is vitally necessary," he says.

In the summer of 2012, Lumetrics acquired the assets of the former WaveFront Sciences Co. LLC in New Mexico from Abbott Laboratories.

WaveFront Sciences supplies sensing metrology. Its ClearWave and CrystalWave products are used for the production of contact lenses and intraocular lenses.

The deal allowed Lumetrics to expand its service offerings and sales, Hart says.

The firm is continuing to look for complementary products, he says, and has formed partnerships in Europe for co-development of advanced measurement systems.

Off the job

Hart and his wife, Margie, live in Pittsford. They have three adult children: daughters Kristin, 30, and Sara, 28, and son Matt, 23.

In his free time, Hart enjoys golfing and fishing, as well as renovating a summer home in the Thousand Islands. He is especially interested in environmental stewardship of river wetlands.

Other pastimes are watching Buffalo Bills football and Boston Red Sox baseball.

Hart remains involved in the optics, photonics and imaging industry in other ways. He is president of the Rochester Regional Photonics Cluster and chairman of New

John Hart

Position: President and CEO, Lumetrics Inc.

Age: 61

Education: B.S. in mechanical engineering from Northeastern University, Boston, 1974

Family: Wife Margie; daughters Kristin, 30, and Sara, 28; son Matt, 23

Residence: Pittsford

Activities: Golfing, fishing, renovating a summer home in the Thousand Islands, watching Buffalo Bills football

Quote: "I manage by walking around. I don't know how many books are written about this style, but sitting in the office does not work in our company, so I spend a significant amount of time walking and talking."

York Photonics, a statewide organization that helps guide university and company growth.

He also was chairman of the Infotonics Technology Center in Canandaigua. Originally a state center of excellence created in 2001 to encourage rapid commercialization of scientific breakthroughs, the Infotonics Center struggled to meet its financial and job creation goals.

It has since changed its focus and in 2010 merged with the SUNY College of Nanoscale Science and Engineering in Albany. The local site has since been named the CNSE Smart Systems Technology & Commercialization Center.

Hart is pleased that the center remained active and is growing, focusing on innovation and manufacturing of smart systems and devices. He credits many people involved in the organization for keeping it from going under. Among the items in his desk at Lumetrics is a letter the Infotonics board sent to employees, thanking them for their efforts to keep the operation afloat.

Paul Tolley has worked with Hart since 2006 on the RRPC board as well as the former Infotonics Center. Tolley is vice president of disruptive technologies and executive director of the Smart Systems Technology & Commercialization Center.

He says several qualities make Hart a

strong business leader.

“He is a very adept listener, and he uses this skill very effectively to gather data to drive decision-making,” Tolley says. “He is also intellectually very flexible. If the data points in a direction opposite from conventional wisdom, he is open to truly understand that direction.”

Hart also understands risk, Tolley says.

“You cannot lead effectively with a constant fear of what potential pratfalls may exist,” Tolley says. “In the world of technical product development and manufacturing, you have to understand and be willing to develop a strategy to maneuver and deal with risk.”

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