

A Matter of Principles

Service and Technology Corporation operates on time-honored values

By Mike Wilt

Concern for employees' health, faith and families. Rewarding achievement.

Operating on the basis of trust.

These are just a few of the guiding principles that have helped Service & Technology Corporation (STC) grow from a small shop of 16 at its founding in 1986 to an immensely successful business entity that now boasts a workforce of 70.

Through good times and bad times this Bartlesville-based consulting engineering firm has stuck to its core beliefs and has prospered in doing so.

But to appreciate STC's success at present one must look to the past.

K. Vasudevan (or Vasu as he is known) hails from the southern tip of India. He completed high school and then earned a diploma in electrical engineering. The year was 1955. He was 17 years old. He worked for Tata Iron & Steel Company – then and now one of the largest steel producers in India.

“Tata was an admirable employer,” says Vasu. “But I knew to better myself and my career I couldn't wait to acquire seniority.”

So, he ventured to the U.S. and in 1963 graduated with an electrical engineering degree from the University of Arkansas. He found employment with a Pittsburg, Kansas-based manufacturing company that put him to work, ironically, in India.



K. Vasudevan founded Service and Technology Corporation 23 years ago in Bartlesville with an eye toward quality work and caring employees.

He was chief electrical engineer and one of four who designed and built five first-of-their-kind industrial projects including a five-mile-long conveyor system that carried 800 tons of coal per hour.

In 1970, Vasudevan migrated to the U.S. with his wife and two young children, and went to work for another Pittsburg-based company. In 1976, America's bicentennial, the family made their own history when they became proud U.S. citizens.

Vasudevan came to Bartlesville in 1979 to join an engineering consulting outfit that had one primary client — Phillips Petroleum Company. Business was good ... until 1986 when Phillips was fighting an unsolicited buyout by oilman **T. Boone Pickens**.

But Vasu had already begun planning a business of his own. So, when the firm closed, he started his own engineering consulting firm — Service & Technology Corporation.

“I came from 12,000 miles away,” says Vasu. “Where was I going to go? What was I going to do? I wasn't sure staying here was going to work, but I thought there was a possibility it would work.”

It did.

For 23 years, STC has provided a wide array of services to companies throughout the world and has been involved in numerous remarkable projects: the first major pipeline for ARCO Petroleum; a pharmaceutical chemical feedstock plant (STC's largest project); a gas-to-liquids plant at the Port of Catoosa near Tulsa. For that project, STC and its wholly owned subsidiary, SMC, earned a prestigious award, and a replica of the Nellie Johnstone — the state's first commercial oil well.

STC's sales volume in 1986 was less than \$750,000. In 2008, STC recorded sales of over \$10 million. But making money is not what drives the staff of STC.

“We do not conduct our business in order to make money; we make money in order to conduct our business,” Vasu says.

STC conducts its business at 105 SW



Service and Technology Corporation established a scholarship fund honoring the past life of its facility, which previously served as Lincoln Elementary School.

Penn in the former Lincoln Elementary School. The company purchased and remodeled the structure. The firm's presence has been embraced by its neighbors.

In 2005, Vasu stepped aside as president/CEO to devote more time to his many civic interests. He handed the reins to his son-in-law, **Kumar Krishnan**.

Kumar was raised in Bombay (now Mumbai), India. The son of a successful pharmaceutical salesman, Kumar earned a printing technology degree after which he worked as chief printer for his town's first newspaper.

In 1987, Kumar met Vasu's daughter, **Sujatha**, who had returned to India to visit. The two married and attended Wichita State University. Kumar earned a mechanical engineering degree while Sujatha earned both a bachelor's degree and an MBA.

Having interned with Phillips Petroleum, Kumar hoped to work there after college. But a hiring freeze led him to accept employment with AAON, a Tulsa-based HVAC — heating and air conditioning — manufacturer.

“I wanted to gain valuable experience working for another firm,” Kumar says. “Now, they're a client.”

In 1998, Kumar joined his father-in-law at STC. But his arrival was a bit more significant than simply going to work with family.

“The main purpose for my joining STC was to send a message to our employees, our customers, and the community that this business plans to continue past Vasu's time here,” Krishnan says.

Looking back, Vasu is quite proud of the company he founded and is glad he stayed in Bartlesville.

“I've always liked the area. I didn't want to move away,” he says. “I thank God I am here.”

Despite STC's many accomplishments with them at the helm, both Vasu and Kumar know the secret of their success.

“Our employees are the reason we are successful,” says Kumar. “They are everything to us.”

Call it a matter of principle. **B**