

TAILORED SOLUTIONS FOR MARINE, FRESHWATER AND THE ENVIRONMENT

OSIL

OSIL (Ocean Scientific International Ltd) is based in Hampshire, UK, and provides essential products and solutions-based services for the marine and freshwater environment. The company was founded in 1989 as a buy-out from the Institute of Oceanographic Sciences (IOS). Taking over operation of the IAPSO Standard Seawater Service, OSIL came into being and began business with an exclusive focus on Seawater as its first point of sale.

Starting out with only a handful of employees, the company has developed its products and services over the years to secure its current status as a multi-million pound business. In addition to its main focus on seawater, today OSIL provides instruments, systems and services for aquatic environmental monitoring, the majority of activities being centred on the marine environment. These cover a comprehensive distribution of third-party manufactured instruments, integration of systems, manufacture of equipment (mainly under licence), and customer site installations and consultancy services.

Seawater Foundations

Lead by executive chairman Paul Ridout, OSIL rapidly excelled in the supply of Standard Seawater for high-precision calibration. The Seawater range soon expanded to include standards for nutrients and dissolved oxygen. As well as supplying the seawater, the OSIL team became well known for their skills in calibrating, servicing and repairing instruments for marine scientists (with ISO 9002 accreditation). Today the seawater business is still thriving, and thanks to the internet scientists can simply order online from an OSIL seawater store, www.seawatersolutions.com. The Service and Repair department now holds over a thousand instruments on its books for regular maintenance.

From Lab to Field

With such wide-ranging knowledge of instrumentation and scientific expertise in the environmental and oceanographic sector, becoming an equipment-solutions provider was a natural progression for OSIL. The company now supplies top-quality products from leading manufacturers in the industry including YSI Instruments, SonTek, Guildline Instruments, Applied Microsystems Ltd (AML) and Bowers & Connelly, as well as supplying its own range of equipment for laboratory and metocean use. Products are also customised in-house to meet a strict brief and specific project requirements.

Philosophy and Skills

OSIL has built on a philosophy that has seen the company evolve and expand over the years. Understanding client requirements and the provision of on-tap consultancy is central to this philosophy. OSIL aims to provide its clients with expert information, appropriate products, and high-level after-sales support. Senior managers ensure that customer requirements are determined and met with the aim of enhancing customer satisfaction and learning from feedback. The company employs a healthy combination of scientists, engineers and technical sales and marketing professionals. In addition to the "on-the-ground" staff, OSIL also employs management specialists to problem-solve and oversee projects, administrators to co-ordinate projects, and a solid financial team to keep budgets on track.

Paul Ridout is widely known within the marine community for his varied contributions to marine committees and as chairman of the Association of Marine Scientific Industries (AMCI). Paul oversees the business strategically whilst day-to-day management is headed by Dr Richard Williams, OSIL Sales & Operations Director. The company also benefits from the input of non-executive directors: ex-Fugro GEOS M.D., Dr Ralph Rayner with his commercial expertise in the marine community, Graham Page and his wealth of marketing experience, and John Oddy, who contributes to the financial direction of the company.

Market Performance

With its head office in the UK, OSIL operates on a global basis. Its clients include scientists and technicians from research institutes, universities, the military, government agencies, oil companies, harbour authorities, local councils, instrument manufacturers, energy providers, surveyors and civil-engineering consultants all over the world. Organisations such as BP, Halliburton, Safegre, Esso, ABP, SOC, Scripps, WHOI, Ifremer, Navocean, UKHO and Thales choose OSIL for its ability to provide skills and services without geographical limitations. Based on a strong work history, capabilities and work ethic, the company has gained a reputation as a trusted solutions provider. Its technical knowledge and project experience equips the company to provide the most appropriate products or packaged systems for any given job.

Equipment is typically supplied for field applications such as water-quality monitoring, currents and tides, wind and waves, water flow and turbidity. The OSIL range of sampling equipment extends to water samplers, sediment corers, scientific trawl nets and deep-water cameras. Lab-based instruments are also provided, such as salinometers, water baths, flow and pressure sensors.

Current Business

Current OSIL business is driven by clients' need to monitor environmental conditions (particularly marine) in relation to construction, legislation, economy and academic research. There is considerable growth in many of these market sectors, for example in offshore oil

exploration, water-quality monitoring, renewable energy, port construction and climate-change research. OSIL has positioned itself in such markets to exploit potential growth wherever possible. The company has partnered with key manufacturers of monitoring equipment to consolidate this move, and invested its expertise in promoting products and services for a wide range of applications.

Financial Results

OSIL's year-end results to June 2005 demonstrated growth of over 65%, bringing the annual turnover to £3.2m (US\$5.8m). Investment in the development of the instruments-and-systems side of the business brought much success over the year, with OSIL securing its largest contract to date, valued at £1.2m (US\$2.2m). This project will combine problem solving with product supply to provide eight fully integrated monitoring buoys for the Middle East. Other high-profile projects have included calibration equipment for fisheries research in Vladivostok and current profilers for climate-change studies in the Atlantic.

Future Plans

OSIL plans to nurture and develop its instruments and systems division. By building on new skills and expertise within the company the business is expected to again expand and evolve. Whilst the seawater products continue to make an important contribution to core profits, the expansion in instruments and systems shows significant growth, representing around 90% of turn-over. Yet OSIL will be returning to its original focus, with a new venture involving seawater in 2006. The company will be putting its extensive knowledge in this sector to good use by applying it to an entirely different market for consumers. OSIL has developed a new range of seawater-based consumer products through a wholly-owned subsidiary called Ocean Pure Ltd. This offers an exciting new dimension to the business that could significantly increase turnover in the future. With management projections predicting a three-fold increase in turnover totalling £10m (US\$ 18m) per annum over the next decade, the future looks a promising and exciting time for OSIL.

<https://www.hydro-international.com/content/article/osil-3>
