
technology



ozone. They're used in commercial buildings to monitor indoor air quality, measure efficiency and keep an eye on heat, cooling and other expended resources.

By placing plenty of these sensors, companies can get a more granular picture of how efficiently their buildings are heated or cooled, where the trouble spots are, and whether the energy-saving measures they're taking—such as dropping the temperature after working hours—are really working. For example, if the temperature in one building is routinely higher than others, someone might be overriding the temperature drop, or using a space heater.

PureChoice wasn't always in the monitoring business. The privately owned Burnsville company started out in 1992 in air and water filtration systems. "That was when you could still smoke in society, and we installed a lot of filtration systems in casinos and restaurants," says Bryan Reichel, president and founder of the company.

But in 1996 PureChoice began changing direction toward monitoring environmental information over the Internet. In 2008, the company released its PureTrac software, which organizes the information the sensors gather and provides a dashboard for users to monitor and report on their buildings' health, efficiency and well-being. And now Reichel and his chief operations officer, Kevin Kuhne, think that the stage is set for PureChoice to get a lot bigger.

PureChoice had 18 employees in October. Now they have 22, and they hope to double their employee count by the end of this year. A combination of direct sales people and value-added resellers (VARs) have always sold Pure-

Trac and the Noses to go with it, but Kuhne explains that more resellers will take PureChoice where it wants to go. "Companies with multiple buildings are the best sales opportunities for us, and we're building our distribution channel with resellers," he says. The company hopes to triple its reseller base just in the first quarter, and grow it a lot more for the rest of the year.

Another, more important source of business may come from government. PureChoice got the GSA (General Services Administration)'s attention initially with a pilot project at the Bishop Henry Whipple Federal Building at Fort Snelling. Next up is a project to help green the Ford House Office Building in Washington, D.C. "We think we'll be in a direct line to get a lot of government business from that," Kuhne says.

Building performance management is not new, and PureChoice is entering a crowded field. They're competing with established names like Honeywell and Siemens, which have had

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«The Nose, and many of them, being inspected by PureChoice's Keith Schupp.
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Nose Job

PureChoice is changing the face of commercial air filtration, one Nose at a time. **BY HOLLY DOLEZALEK**

BIZBRIEFING

PURECHOICE, INC.

Headquarters:

Burnsville

Inception: 1992

Description:

PureChoice makes hardware and software to monitor indoor air quality in commercial buildings.

Website:

purechoice.com

PLASTIC SURGEONS THEY'RE NOT, but PureChoice hopes the Nose will help them grow 200 percent this year.

The Nose isn't really a nose; it's a network appliance that connects to an IT network and gathers information from installed sensors. The sensors report on measures like temperature or humidity, or the presence of carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide or

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—BRYAN REICHEL, PRESIDENT AND FOUNDER OF PURECHOICE

building control and monitoring systems for years, but they’re also competing with similar products that were originally developed for data centers, which have to monitor temperature and humidity to protect expensive computer equipment. Those vendors have begun to take their wares to other markets, and one of those markets is commercial building space.

But Kuhne explains that building management systems are usually tied to equipment that has to be installed, and that sometimes means significant costs in older or larger buildings. But, he says, “Even if you’ve got a 45-year-old building, you might only have to install one Nose and five sensors, and you can upgrade as you see fit.”

As for the IT competition, PureChoice hopes to pre-empt them rather than beat them. “We expect extensive growth in the IT sector, because we have companies that sell hardware in that space looking at offering our software as warranty extension,” Kuhne says. For example, server manufacturers might install the software during manufacture for customers who want monitoring capabilities built right in to their equipment.

A 200 percent jump in revenue might sound ambitious, or unrealistic. But Reichel says it’s been many years in the making. “We’ve done a lot of work to get the dam built up,” he says. “We’ve been refining PureTrac, talking in the marketplace, and getting into new verticals as we sign up new VARs. When we can tell people that some of our customers have seen 20 percent in annualized net savings by running more efficiently, it’s not hard for them to see the value proposition.” 