

it's all about the e's

WE'RE SALUTING AND ENCOURAGING ENTREPRENEURIAL, EMERGING AND EXPANDING TECHNOLOGY BUSINESSES IN THE LEXINGTON AREA.

Hensley, Elam & Associates (HEA) has been a Kentucky leader in the software engineering industry when it comes to applying new technologies for businesses. In 1999 HEA released its first Wireless Warehouse Management software using Microsoft WindowsCE®, the predecessor to the Microsoft PocketPC® operating system commonly found in PDAs now. HEA, through its partnership with Cisco Systems, is using the latest Voice Over IP (VoIP) phone technology. When HEA clients call into HEA engineers, their phone messages are forwarded through e-mail or listened to through their Microsoft Outlook 2003 email clients.

According to HEA Senior Systems Engineer and CEO Russ Hensley, Voice Over IP is just the latest capability for a company that has built its reputation on creating tailored technology solutions to match its customers' goals and expectations.

"Often companies try to use slightly modified, off-the-shelf software. They find they have to work around the limitations of the product, and it ends up creating more problems for them," Hensley said. "Our customers realize they need something at a higher level with more flexibility. We create high-level customized software designed specifically to fit our clients' needs."

As a custom software development partner, HEA offers professional services in software engineering, internet presence development and document imaging. In its six-year history, the company has developed systems to help major airlines manage images of their accounting records, to let aviation mechanics update and access maintenance logs, to assist

golf courses in managing the condition of their landscaping, and to allow food distributors to share their most current sales information with employees. The company was co-founded in 1998 by Hensley and Senior Software Engineer Sam Elam, while they were working on related projects in Lexington and studying at UK's College of Engineering. Sam Elam is from Monticello, KY and a graduate of Wayne County High School, while Russ Hensley is from London, KY and a graduate of North Laurel High School.

HENSLEY, ELAM & ASSOCIATES

ENGINEERING BUSINESS SOLUTIONS

Founded without any outside loans or investment, HEA has grown to serve more than 200 clients, including ATA Airlines, Sony, Johns Hopkins University and the National Institutes of Health. Although HEA's customer base now includes small businesses, government organizations and multinational corporations in 21 states, Hensley estimates that 80 percent of the firm's business comes from Kentucky-based companies. All of HEA's new business, both local and national, is the result of direct referrals.

"As our projects have gotten bigger, we've had to find new ways to get bigger," Hensley said. "Our people are really professional-grade, and we use a detailed vision process to evaluate a client's business requirements before we even start a project, to make sure that we keep our clients happy. We implement software engineering process management processes for our clients that are traditionally only found in corporations performing internal development projects."

Hensley continued, "Good software is not born overnight. Complex applications require the experience and patience that can only come from an engineer with an extensive background like Sam's. Over the years, we have seen many clients who try to cut corners initially with easy solutions. Their projects usually fail or require thousands of dollars in debugging later, and often the projects end up with us."

The company employs eight engineers but no marketing professionals, because, according to Hensley, HEA's most effective self-promotion comes through direct communication with easily accessible senior management and an unwavering dedication to client satisfaction.

The company has also launched recent initiatives to bring its own intellectual capital to the market. Following a year of successful implementation, it released the software package Chattel Mortgage for County Clerks in 2002. Another product recently released and reviewed in the December 2003 edition of Aviation Maintenance Magazine, Logbook X, is currently authorized to serve as an FAA-approved record-keeping tool for aviation maintenance. HEA also has two additional software products currently in its pipeline.

In the community, both partners are active with community services projects. Hensley chaired the General Aviation Committee for Blue Grass Airport in 2003 and is a board



Senior Systems Engineer and CEO Russ Hensley (left), and Senior Software Engineer Sam Elam.

member with Central Kentucky Riding for the Handicapped. Elam is active in the Civil Air Patrol as Mission Scanner and its Glider Program, which supports youth activities for cadets in the program.

Terry Burkhardt of Commerce Lexington noted: "As the number of technology-reliant businesses in Lexington continues to grow, innovative business partners like Hensley, Elam and Associates are essential in giving them the tools they need to be competitive, on the local level and especially on the national and global level. In addition to serving their clients, they improve Lexington's overall business environment by enlightening us to the latest technological possibilities."



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➤ If you know of other entrepreneurial, e-type ventures in the Lexington area that deserve to be featured in this series, please e-mail Terry Burkhardt at tburkhardt@lexingtonunited.com.