



MANUFACTURING & TECHNOLOGY

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For Ag Software Firm, Glendale's Attractive

PickTrace relocates from NoCal to follow ServiceTitan model.

By **MARK R. MADLER** Staff Reporter

In an office building in downtown Glendale once occupied by the Museum of Selfies, there's now a software company for the agriculture industry.

PickTrace moved to the San Fernando Valley less than six months ago from Emeryville in Northern California and the sales office in Colorado.

Harrison Steed, co-founder of the company along with his brother **Austin Steed**, said that Glendale fit a lot of the criteria the two were looking for when it came to a new location.

"When Austin and I came out here, we saw how the east side was less congested, we saw the infrastructure was well maintained, there were 130 restaurants in a half-mile radius and there was major freeways onramps on all four sides of the city," Steed said.

Also playing into the move was the fact that **ServiceTitan Inc.**, a software company for electricians, plumbers and other home improvement professionals, was located right up the street.

While conceding that ServiceTitan is further along than PickTrace, Steed said there were similarities in the backgrounds of both companies. Just as the Steeds came from a family that operated citrus farms near San Diego, the founders of ServiceTitan came from a background in residential contracting businesses.

"They started and focused on a very un-sexy industry and they maintained that and built out a fantastic product," Harrison Steed added. "It was definite a draw to see that here."

PickTrace employs about 24 workers, with most being in Glendale. Six are based out of Mexico. The company, which the brothers started in 2014, is looking to bring on a dozen employees by the end of the year, primarily on the software engineering side of the business.

"If a good candidate comes in the door, we will hire them no matter what even if it wasn't a planned hire," Steed said.

The staff develops workforce management software for more than 100 large farming companies in California, Oregon and Washington. It tracks how much produce an individual picked and where it has been picked in real time.

"We make sure the growers are compliant with labor laws," Harrison Steed said. "We also make help them to make sure their payroll is timely and accurate."

Additionally, the software can look for inefficiencies in the farming operations.

"If there is a bottleneck in the supply chain in the field, we try to alleviate that," he added.

The brothers divide up the duties of running PickTrace. Harrison Steed handles sales and operations while he described Austin as being the technical guru who puts together the software.

The future of the company is focused on apple growers. In the next year or two all of the software development will go toward apples "with the intention that as we grow and get sales we'll expand to other categories. It is super critical for us to be focused to make as many of our customers happy and successful as possible without diluting our efforts," he added.



Newcomers: Austin, left, and Harrison Steed.



Lab to Deliver Custom Scans For Refineries

H2Scan builds facility next to Valencia headquarters.

By **MARK R. MADLER** Staff Reporter

H2Scan commissioned last month an expanded Environmental Conditioning Lab for use on a line of its hydrogen analyzers.

The Valencia company manufactures sensors that measure the amount of hydrogen in the oil inside transformers used by utilities, petrochemical companies and nuclear power plants.

The conditioning lab replaces a remote lab that H2Scan staff could use for its standardized products. The new lab gives the company the capacity to deliver customized products to refineries and petrochemical facilities.

H2Scan designed and built the new lab to its specifications in a secured facility adjacent to its corporate offices.

Mike Nofal, vice president of sales and business development, said the conditioning lab makes H2Scan one of the most agile players in the market and it has room to expand as the company grows.

"This expanded lab has already paid dividends in increasing production and streamlining our product delivery process, allowing us to cut our backlog and shorten delivery times," Nofal said in a statement.

The lab will be used for the Hy-Optima line of hydrogen analyzers. These detection devices are used in process applications to ensure production optimization of oil and petrochemical products.

Each Hy-Optima sensor is calibrated for background monitoring of hydrogen in the presence of hydrogen sulfide and carbon monoxide gases with no interference to the H2 reading. The lab was designed to make sure that the sensors are conditioned to provide accurate hydrogen indication in the presence or absence of these gasses.

Three models of the Hy-Optima products will be conditioned in the lab – the 740, 1740 and 2740. All have been available for more than 10 years and can measure hydrogen concentrations ranging from 0.5 percent to 100 percent in the presence of carbon monoxide up to 20 percent concentration and hydrogen sulfide at up to 3 percent concentration.

The company is currently testing a new Hy-Optima model that can measure hydrogen in the presence of 50 percent carbon monoxide. Another new product in development will measure hydrogen in tail gas treater units at concentrations of 5 percent hydrogen sulfide.

Somesh Ganesh, director of the lab and senior director of advanced development, said the lab will give H2Scan the flexibility to develop products that is unmatched in the industry.

"The ability to certify hydrogen sensing in the presence of 50 percent (carbon monoxide) and 5 percent (hydrogen sulfide) is unheard of in the industry and means new alternatives for our refinery and petrochemical customers," Ganesh said in a statement.

Commissioning the lab follows by two months the start of testing on the new fifth generation Hy-Alerta hydrogen gas safety monitor. Production of sampling volumes will begin in the third quarter with high volume manufacturing expected by the end of the year.

H2Scan's customers include **General Electric Co.**, **Exxon Mobil Corp.**, **Shell Oil Co.** and **Proctor & Gamble Co.**

SBA Recognizes Saalex With Prime Award

Camarillo tech operation serves Ventura County Navy bases.

By **MARK R. MADLER** Staff Reporter

Saalex Solutions was recognized last month with the Small Business Administration's Region 9 Small Business Prime Contractor of the Year award.

A division of **Saalex Corp.**, in Camarillo, Saalex Solutions was nominated for the award by the NAVAIR Office of Small Business Program, Department of the Navy at Patuxent River, Md.

The office commended Saalex for its "hard work, innovative ideas and dedication" to the community and "driving our nation's economic growth." Region 9 serves Arizona, California, Guam, Hawaii and Nevada.

Saalex Chief Executive **Travis Mack** said the award was the culmination of the company's effort with the SBA, which previously had previously given it awards for veteran-owned company of the year and small business contractor of the year.

"We think it points to our credibility, we think it points to the service value that we bring to our customers and our overall effectiveness as a company," Mack said in an interview with the Business Journal.

Saalex, through its two divisions, provides engineering, information technology and test range operation management. It has between 150 and 175 employees working in Ventura County in Camarillo and Naval Air Station Point Mugu, and an additional 300 to 350 employees at Naval Air



Smiles: Saalex's Travis Mack.

Weapons Station China Lake, near Ridgecrest.

Mack, who served in the Navy and is a disabled veteran, founded Saalex in 1998. The company started as an IT consulting firm until it got the opportunity to support a Pentagon contract.

"I would be lying if I said I had this grand vision of becoming a Department of Defense contractor," Mack said. "You take the path that is given to you and you go from there."

A recent path for the company was in becoming employee-owned as of June 28.

The status as an employee-owned business gives Saalex a boost as it grows from a small business to a larger one and in being attractive to potential new employees, Mack said.

"It places the ownership in the hands of the folks that are doing the heavy lifting on a day-to-day basis," he added.

The company has been in a hiring mode. In April, for instance, the company said it would add 50 new employees in engineering and analyst positions to support two contracts for the U.S. Navy out at China Lake.

But Mack said Saalex was having a tough time finding enough people, so it is looking at different ways of hiring and growing its own workforce by collaborating with area colleges.

"We are trying to be creative on filling the hiring gap," he added.

More employees are needed as the company makes changes to its operations as the needs of its military customers change. New capabilities that have been added include data analytics and predictive analytics efforts, Mack said.

"We are doing a lot of cyber security support as well and really trying to continue to add value to our customers," he added.