

TransWare Enterprises develops methods to evaluate and help with the operation of nuclear power plants. They consult on the safety operations of the plant. Mr. Dean Jones is one of the owners of the company, and he employs about 10 people in this high-tech company. They also look at the operating efficiencies of the plant for future operations. They check on radiation levels at the plant and help with maintaining the plant at optimum levels. Mr. Jones and his firm have received a patent for nuclear analysis software, also.

Mr. Jones spent his first years out of college working for two major utilities. During that time his skills were polished, but also applied to more of a consulting role for the companies than the engineering roles that he was actually hired to fill. Because of this it led him to begin working as a consultant at a firm in the utility industry.

He realized that he could actually open his own consulting firm in this industry. He said that it was scary in the beginning and he worked long hours and had lean months. He said that there is an enormous amount of knowledge that one needs to develop about running a business. Depending on the type of business that a person starts they may have to learn state and federal regulatory requirements and possibly procedures that comply with professional societies that develop special guidelines for their business area.

Once he started his business he quickly added a partner who provided the skills that he didn't have. With their contacts in the industry, work simply started to come in. As the company grew, they started preparing mission statements through their Board of Directors based on their understanding of what the industry needed.

Their business started in Silicon Valley, California, where high-tech companies were born in the Valley. In the beginning they tried to get a starter-loan from the SBA, but they did not qualify. Being self-employed, the banks wouldn't talk to us either, he said. So stories of successful businesses starting in a garage were common. They thought what the heck! They started in his 9' x 10' dining room. He lived there for 23 years in Silicon Valley when the Valley was just starting and watched his company grow.

Many nuclear power plants were now located east of the Mississippi River and quite a few of them were in Illinois. As he looked for a new location for his business he knew about the Midwest having spent some time attending the University of Missouri at Rollo where he received BS and MS degrees in Nuclear Engineering. He also had lived in the Batavia/St. Charles/Geneva area. So he was familiar with the Midwest and the DeKalb County area. Therefore, in 2006, Mr. Jones moved his operation to Sycamore, Illinois.

He said that one of the draws to moving to Sycamore was the close proximity to both O'Hare and Midway Airports, the train in Elburn and the power plants located here in Illinois. He said that the fiber optics that the County has also was a requirement for his firm and would be expected now in the area because of the accessibility of fiber optics throughout the United States.

He did not use any public or nonprofit resources when he relocated his business to Sycamore. When they were looking for a new location they were scouted by DeKalb County Economic Development Corporation. They were not given any incentives to move to Sycamore, also.

In order for a business to thrive Mr. Jones said that you need to always remain flexible. “The economy, the people you hire, the people you do business with, and your best ideas and plans for the future are continually changing. You have to change with them. And, remember, in starting and running your own business, a business that you are responsible for, there is no such thing as a “no brainer” decision, no matter how insignificant that decision may seem.” Mr. Jones continued by stating that, “your obligations are no longer just for your survival, but to those who you hire that depend on your planning and decision making skills.”

Some advice that Mr. Jones can give to aspiring entrepreneurs in DeKalb County is to “choose your profession wisely. Is there a market for your product? Is the market growing, sustainable, or phasing out? Are you really good at what you do? Do you have a client already in hand? This is very huge! And, very important – if the thing you want to do also happens to be your favorite hobby, you are ahead of the game!” His job is his hobby, and it just happens to pay him a fair wage!

Mr. Jones and his wife also own “Stomp” Shoe store and Redwing Shoe Store. They have really established themselves in the community of Sycamore and we are very happy that they have! Hopefully, we will be able to attract more high-tech firms like TransWare in the near future for the very same reasons that Mr. Jones moved here. Looking forward to seeing what other ventures Mr. Jones may have in mind for the future!

--Mary Supple, DeKalb County Coordinator