

BUSINESS REVIEW

West Michigan



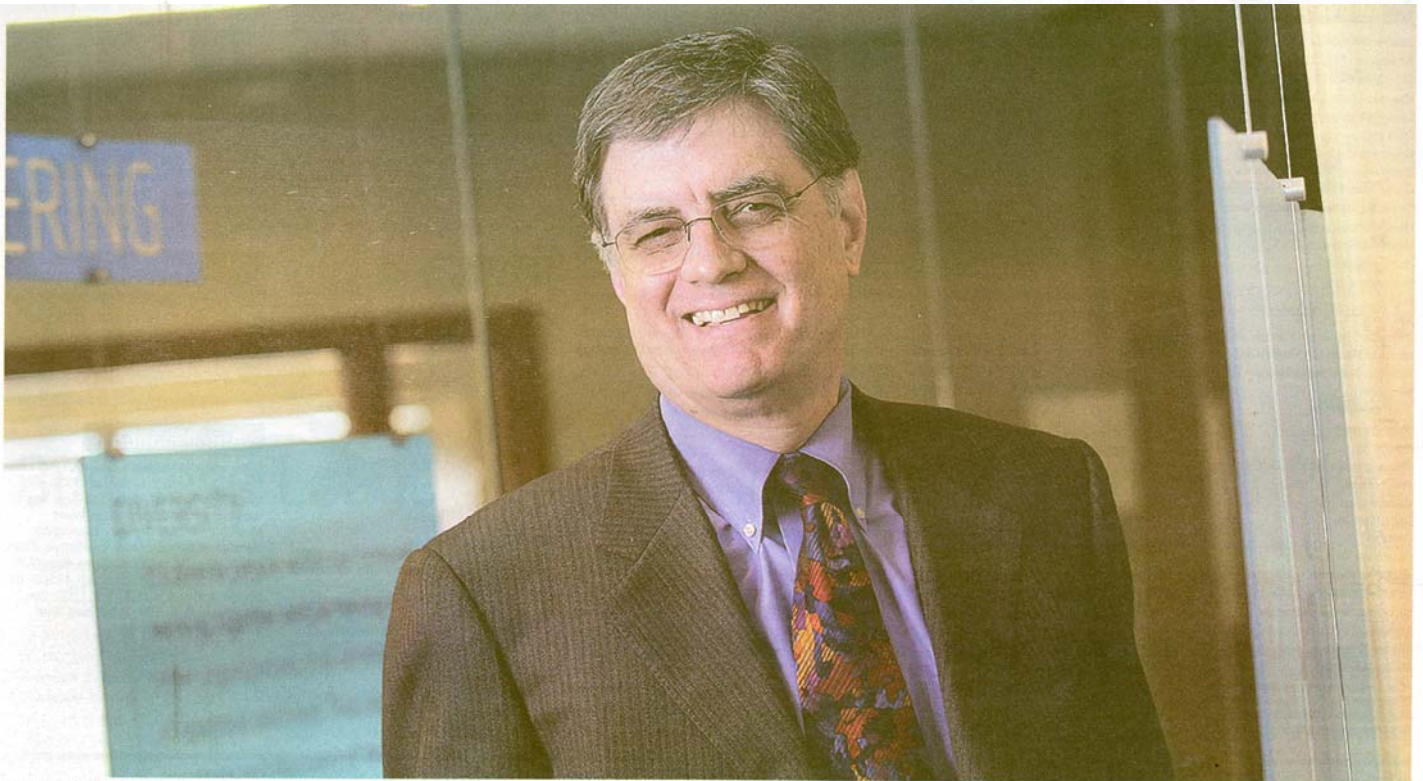
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FRED KELLER, CHAIRMAN AND CEO OF CASCADE ENGINEERING. PHOTO BY JOHNNY QUIRIN

Building a new model

Partnership with Windquest moves Cascade Engineering to the 'front end,' Keller says

In its new joint venture with **Windquest Group**, Grand Rapids-based **Cascade Engineering** has moved beyond manufacturing into marketing products on a global scale.

Through the joint venture, Cascade

acquired the license and intellectual property for a water filter developed by **International Aid** in Spring Lake — a product Cascade manufactured for the last two years. Taking ownership of the

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HydrAid(r) BioSand water filter allows Cascade to expand its role and business model, said Chairman and CEO Fred Keller.

Because the filter is designed to create safe water throughout the developing world, the new venture positions Cascade globally. The company, which has produced 25,000 of the filters so far but has capacity to create 250,000 a year, will work to engage a local network of entrepreneurs in developing countries to offer maintenance and distribution.

Keller spoke to *Business Review* Editor B. Candace Beeke about the new venture.

How did these two groups come together?

International Aid announced in the spring of 2009 that it was going to discontinue operations with the HydrAid(r) water filter. That started the process of us looking how to utilize our investment we'd made.

We were making it and had invested in the mold and engi-

neering to make that. We were a supplier of the product but did not have the front end, the go-to-market (side).

We talked to several people, including Windquest.

The new business will be actually taking this product to market but could also take other products, as well.

What are the logistics of the new company?

Think of it as a strategic marketing organization. It's probably just going to have a couple (employees) to start.

The object is to encourage entrepreneurs in local regions (of other countries) to develop their markets.

So, at Cascade Engineering, what business are you in?

Our basic (focus) is around the idea of innovation and sustainability. If you think about the things that are going to be around long term and important, not only of a financial interest but also the social and environmental interests of the world, we find those

very intriguing.

The other thing we're working on as an organization is to be more involved in the front end, marketing side of the business. We're also manufacturing products for that channel.

We're excited about it. For us it's a real leading-edge

approach to the market.

(We'll) have entrepreneurs in developing countries — working with them to improve their skills as entrepreneurs and help their economy grow ... and also enabling them to be more economically secure.

Is it leading-edge or bleeding-edge?

There's no question there's business risk here, but the need is so great This is a smart business model, but there's not a lot of examples of it out there.