

Medical device group expands

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In phase one, he worked on his own in the basement, doing engineering consulting.

Phase two had David Dorner moving the business into its own facility, winning contracts to do project work and growing to more than 30 employees.

As DornerWorks Ltd., an electronics consulting company in Grand Rapids, enters phase three of its business plan, it aims to begin developing its own products, perhaps through alliances with other companies around western Michigan that are involved in the medical sector.



Photo courtesy DornerWorks
David Dorner, founder of DornerWorks, is growing his electronics consulting business.

"It's a completely different paradigm from our service-based industry," said Dorner, who hopes to leverage his company's capabilities with others through its involvement in a consortium that links local players in the medical-device industry.

DornerWorks is one of the latest companies to join the fledgling West Michigan Medical Device Consortium (wmmdc.org), which, since its creation last summer, has grown from seven founding members to 22.

Linda Chamberlain, executive director of the [West Michigan Science & Technology Initiative](#) that coordinates the consortium, is aiming for 40 members by year's end.

Members have spent the formative months getting to know each other and their capabilities and examining "how do we make a difference for each other?" Chamberlain said.

One way is the formation of a new business to collectively commercialize intellectual property.

The new venture would provide participating members a vehicle to collaborate, leading to a faster product-development process by keying on the core capabilities of each participant, Chamberlain said.

"It's hard to build that (product development) infrastructure independently," she said. "If we look at doing that as a collective, nobody's stretching themselves to a point that it gets to be an overburden on the business."

The new venture could launch by the fall, Chamberlain said, and "we would like to have a slate of medical-device products that we're advancing by the end of the year."

The opportunity to gain awareness within the sector and align with others on product development is what drew DornerWorks to join the consortium, Dorner said. He sees the group as a way to further diversify into medical devices.

"There's just a lot of things (in product development) that are different for us to try to take that and do it ourselves," Dorner said.

At the same time, he added, "Maybe we can get with another company that has a new idea and they don't know anything about engineering, but we do."

DornerWorks, which recently moved into a new facility on the east side of Grand Rapids, recorded 2007 revenues of about \$3.5 million, split evenly between medical and aerospace work.

Plante & Moran projects medical device manufacturing in the United States to grow at an annual compounded rate of 12 percent through 2011, to \$118.1 billion.