

Broad vision helps Advanced Chemical over long haul

BY DAVID GOLL

SUNNYVALE — Advanced Chemical Transport Inc. does more than its name implies, which has helped it grow its revenue over the past three years by nearly 60 percent to about \$12 million.

The Sunnyvale company has been collecting hazardous waste — including chemical, biological and low-level radioactive waste products — from hundreds of companies throughout California throughout the decade.

The company's services are more in demand than ever. In recent weeks, Advanced Chemical Transport has inked two sizable contracts, totaling more than \$5 million, with a Bay Area biopharmaceutical company officials declined to identify and a San Diego defense contractor, General Atomics. In August, Advanced Chemical Transport merged with Gen Tec Solutions Inc. — a \$2 million a year El Cajon-based company that provided some of the same services as Advanced Chemical Transport — allowing the latter to expand its Southern California operations.

It was the vision of its founder, president and CEO Walter Singer, that spurred Advanced's rapid rise and kept it on track to grow 2009 income to \$16 million.

Singer saw the emergence of the Bay Area's biotech and pharmaceutical industry prowess develop years ago as an MBA student at San Francisco State University. Singer, who earned his undergraduate degree in civil engineering from the University of Southern California, initially went into property management consulting for startups in those fields, but began noticing the growing need these companies had for improved waste disposal.

"I didn't see one company that served all the needs these companies had," he said, noting that California's stringent waste disposal guidelines provides an excellent niche for companies like his.

Singer set out to become that all-in-one company. Over the past nine years, he's built a company that provides not only transportation and disposal of hazardous waste, but comprehensive waste management, a vacuum truck service, pump truck service, and environmental health and safety outsourcing and consulting. He has opened up four offices statewide: Sunnyvale, Merced, Santa Ana and Escondido.



AT-A-GLANCE

Advanced Chemical Transport Inc.
 Headquarters: Sunnyvale
President, CEO: Walter Singer
Founded: 2000
Revenue: \$12 million
Employees: 90
Web site: www.advancedchemical.net
Phone: 408.548.5050

ALL-IN-ONE: Advanced Chemical Transport CEO Walter Singer, center, has built a company that helps its customers deal with all aspects of the hazardous waste they produce. Shown with him are account manager Jason Catalano, left, and project manager Victor Rousseu.

"Many of our clients had to deal with four different companies for what we alone can do for them now," he said.

One of them is Gilead Sciences Inc., a Foster City biopharmaceutical company.

"Advanced Chemical Transport provides services that really helps with our green initiatives," said Jason Q. Williams, environmental programs manager at Gilead Sciences. "They have found a company in Arkansas that uses our wastes to make fuel. Before, the same material would have been put into a landfill or incinerated."

Besides the company's revenue gains over the past few years, success is also measured in terms of numbers of types of clients in the biomedical, pharmaceutical, manufacturing, research, high-tech and other business sectors. Singer said his client list today numbers more than 700, including such corporate luminaries as Apple Inc. of Cupertino, Applied Materials Inc. of Santa Clara, Novellus Systems Inc. of San Jose, Genentech Inc. of South San Francisco, Western Digital Corp. of Lake Forest and Novartis AG of Basel, Switzerland.

The average annual bill run up by his clients is \$18,000, with the average pickup of

hazardous materials worth about \$1,000, according to Singer. His per-client income ranges from \$200 to \$2.5 million a year. He continually seeks a larger client base, particularly in recent years as current customers have less to pick up and recycle.

"We're feeling the effects of the economy, too," Singer said. "Our average client shipped 30 percent less waste between 2004 and 2008. Especially in the last year, many of them are downsizing and dealing with the poor economy."

Singer said future company goals include developing its own waste treatment facility and expanding operations into Arizona and the Pacific Northwest, the geographical areas where his client companies are most likely to relocate some of their business activities.

Closer to home, Williams of Gilead Sciences began doing business with Advanced Chemical Transport in June. He said he likes not only the services Advanced Chemical Transport provides, but Singer's style, too.

"He's a good guy," he said. "He's candid and will give you the straight scoop. His company is turning our waste into useful things."

VICKI THOMPSON