

CRAIN'S DETROIT BUSINESS

SALUTE TO ENTREPRENEURS WINNER: Urban Science

Award Category: \$51 million and up

By Daniel Duggan

November 14, 2010

While the news about local car dealers has been about ways to cut the size of the dealer network, it's been a different story overseas -- especially in growing countries.

That growth is what **Urban Science** looks for.

The 450-person firm got its start in 1977 doing site selection work for Cadillac in Chicago. It has since grown to a firm that also uses data to help businesses operate and grow.

Company revenue has grown as well, from \$84.5 million in 2009 to a forecast \$105 million this year.

Urban Science recently opened its Russia office, following the opening of offices in Spain, the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, France, Australia, China, Mexico, Japan and India.

It is also expanding its Detroit presence, growing its office in the Renaissance Center from 64,000 square feet to 80,000 square feet.

The company operates three business lines: analysis of site selection for car dealerships and other retailers, individual store analysis of business performance, and lead management -- finding ways to convert leads to sales.

"Our two new products involving lead management and dealer business management (have) driven growth of 24 percent (above 2009)," said founder and CEO James Anderson.

The company also keeps a list of all current car dealerships and tracks sales performance used for consulting work with OEMs.

In working with the foreign offices, Anderson said, the company has a chance to help guide the growth of dealer networks in China and India, using the mistakes of the United States network and the latest in data analysis tools.

"The only thing we've learned from history is people don't learn from history," Anderson said.

He said overseas work has been growing as the firm also works with China-based OEMs to build dealer networks across the country.

Anderson expects to do business in 60 countries, a jump from the roughly 38 it currently works in.

As for a revenue goal, Anderson has been citing \$100 million for many years. Asked to revise that goal, he hated to say the word "billion."

"That 'b' word isn't in our near future, but I can see it on the horizon somewhere," he said.



URBAN SCIENCE™