

Crain's Small Business

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The voice for small business in Southeast Michigan

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Entrepreneurship is right environment

Derek Gideons admits that fear and uncertainty plagued him during the start-up phase of his environmental business.

There was the fear of leaving his secure, full-time job and the nagging uneasiness with each decision he made.

Eventually, he got comfortable with his discomfort.

"Now I realize that you're never really sure about a decision," Gideons said. "It's normal to not be sure of a decision. You just have to act and react to what's facing you."

His confidence has grown, along with the recognition for his Detroit-based Envirolytic Group, an environmental business that specializes in air analysis and cleanups of contaminated sites.

The company recently was awarded a \$10,000 grant by AT&T Capital and the American Association of Certified Public Accountants for "combining a socially responsible mission with a sound business plan."

Gideons, 32, started Envirolytic in August 1994 after spending several years with various environmental companies in Lansing and Detroit. The success of the Lansing company hatched entrepreneurial aspirations in Gideons, a Cleveland native who now lives in Detroit.

"I saw that go from the basement of the owner's home to a \$5 million company. . . . Then when working for the Detroit firms, I saw a niche, a scarcity of labs that analyzed air samples," he said.

Gideons, who has a bachelor's degree in biochemistry from the University of Dayton, spent \$30,000 and eight months getting Envirolytic off the ground. He now employs two full-time workers.

Envirolytic, based at the Michigan Center for High Technology near Wayne State University, has about 20 clients, mostly in Michigan, Indiana and Ohio.

Envirolytic's 1995 revenue was about \$50,000, and Gideons predicts sales of about \$125,000 for 1996.

Because the company specializes in air analysis, customers of Envirolytic are optimistic about its future.

"They are very unique in that respect," said Nick Chuey, a project manager with Delta Environmental Consultants Inc. in Farmington Hills. "I've yet to find another business like theirs." **CSB**

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■ HEY, TO THE CHIEF?

Vice president is calling? Well, yes. Yeah, right

BY JEFFREY McCracken
Crain's Small Business

Derek Gideons figured that some friend was pulling his leg when the caller said he was from Vice President Al Gore's office.

A 30-minute phone conversation and several questions later, Gideons had been told he'd be contacted again and might meet President Clinton on the president's next tour of Detroit.

"They said they might request my

presence if he comes to town," said Gideons, a Cleveland native who now lives in Detroit.

Gideons, the owner of a growing company called the Envirolytic Group, was profiled in January's *Crain's Small Business*. Apparently an issue of *Crain's* wound up at Gore's office and prompted last week's phone call.

"I think they were looking for what they considered success stories and

saw the story about me in *Crain's*," Gideons said.

"Maybe if I get to hang out with Bill, I'll go buy a new pair of running shorts so he and I can go jogging."

If nothing else, Gideons figures an opportunity to hang out with the president could help business.

"I think I'll ask Bill if maybe he can help out my company, send some business my way," Gideons said.

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