

2004
Year East Tech Co. started

30,200
Number of square feet
in new plant

36%
Sales growth in 2006

East Tech opens plant, grows

Tool design, manufacturing operation invests \$4 million at Centre South

By MIKE PARE
DEPUTY BUSINESS EDITOR

East Tech founder and chief Roger Layne says business has doubled at his Chattanooga company every year since he started it in 2004.

The force of that growth has prompted him to invest over \$4 million in a new building and equipment at Centre South Riverport, where he expects his work force to reach 35 people by year's end.

"January was the best in the history of the company," Mr. Layne said at the 30,200-square-foot facility that houses the custom tooling design and computerized manufacturing operation.

Three times the size of East Tech's old location at South Creek Road, the new site will help his business handle rising sales, he said. Sales were \$2.6 million last year, up 36 percent, and are expected to climb between 30 and 40 percent in 2007, the CEO said.



Roger Layne

"We could have had a better year if we had enough space," Mr. Layne said about 2006. "The fabrication side of the business has picked up."

Mr. Layne has added new customers, including Komatsu America Corp. and Alstom Power Inc. and, he said, TVA sales doubled and helped power East Tech's top line.

"That was huge," Mr. Layne added, as the utility performs major overhauls of its hydroelectric plants.

David Barker of Tennessee Valley Authority said East Tech provides quality and service.



STAFF PHOTOS BY ANDY McFEE

These turbo drill bits are on display in East Tech's recently completed facility in Centre South Riverport,

"He makes a lot of parts that are hard to get from the manufacturer. He'll work through the night to get stuff for us," he said.

Larry Kemp of Westinghouse Electric Co. said he has done business with Mr. Layne since 1991 when the East Tech owner worked for another business in Chattanooga.

"When I walk in, you'd think I was his main customer," Mr. Kemp said. "He treats everybody like that."

Roy Dunn of Chattanooga

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— David Barker, TVA

asphalt milling equipment maker Roadtec Inc. said it's buying more from East Tech as it tries to keep up with its own growth.

"We wouldn't be where we are today without Roger," Mr. Dunn said, adding that East Tech has fast turnaround times.

Karl Andrus of Alstom Power

said Mr. Layne's company has been involved in research and development for his business.

"It has offered us high-tech solutions to the issues we face," Mr. Andrus said. Innovations offered by East Tech have cut shop costs for the Riverfront Parkway company, he said.

"It has been a tremendous plus for us," the Alstom official said.

Mr. Layne said plans are to double East Tech's growth in

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Factory: East Tech gains

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two years. The company built the new facility on 4.5 acres at Centre South off Amnicola Highway and has room for a future expansion later this decade.

Mr. Layne worked for Tennessee Rand Co. for two decades before setting out on his own and starting East Tech with a \$1.2 million investment about three years ago, including \$700,000 for equipment.

East Tech's state-of-the-art machinery helps in terms of productivity, he said. Computerized numerical manufacturing lets operators program computers to run the machinery.

Mr. Layne said the equipment "takes operator error out of the programs."

Archie Layne, East Tech plant manager and Roger's brother, said Chattanooga State Technical Community College has helped the company as the business searches for workers to fill slots.

"We've been hiring people out of Chattanooga State to



East Tech machinist Neil Goins operates a manual lathe at the Centre South Riverport facility.

train," Archie Layne said.

He said the opening of the new facility is "the most exciting thing that has ever happened to us."

E-mail Mike Pare at mpare@timesfreepress.com