

SIGA Brings Green Products From Europe To United States

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ADA — Going green can be a complicated process for companies. But it begins with simple awareness.

Take, for example, Airleader, an air compressor management system that helps bring awareness about the energy wasted by compressor systems. Airleader is marketed in the United States by SIGA Green Technologies, located in Ada.

"What happened is, in the past, compressors were turned on and as long as nobody in the plant was basically screaming, 'I don't have enough air,' they stayed on. So, very often, parts of many compressors were running.

"This system (Airleader) basically matches demand with supply. It balances the system," said Jan Hoetzel, managing partner of SIGA Green Technologies.

"Whatever I don't need is shut off, and that's where the efficiency comes in to play."

Hoetzel and his family moved to West Michigan in 2003, and when Hoetzel parted ways with the German supply company that had brought him to West Michigan, "the family didn't want to move," he laughed. He formed SIGA in 2005 to market the Airleader, which was produced in Germany by a company run by a long-time friend. Hoetzel, skeptical about the product at first, was quickly convinced of its merit and gained the exclusive North American rights to it.

SIGA supports green technology by connecting green European products to the United States. In the upcoming 12 to 18 months, SIGA will begin marketing a second product in North America that Hoetzel said is in high demand in Europe. He did not want to name the product, but said one aspect is that it works as insulation for buildings, improving the thermal envelope from all sides — including from the roof and, most uniquely, between the building and the ground. The product comes out of technology used to create "passive houses," homes that require little energy for space heating or cooling, making them

extremely low-energy.

Hoetzel said he is always on the lookout for U.S. technologies to market in Europe, as well, but so far has not been able to find a product that is suitable. He believes the main reason products have been hard to find here is because the U.S. has received relatively little pressure to move to renewable energies compared to Europe.

"Having energy costs very high has put more pressure on Europe to improve efficiencies years ago. I see now a lot of momentum here in the States," said Hoetzel.

He noted that while buildings in the U.S. aren't getting any smaller, they are getting more efficient. The Airleader is one way they can do so. Popular mostly with manufacturers and companies running multiple compressors, the Airleader not only manages a company's air compressor system, it also gives in-depth feedback on key data such as air flow, power usage and system pressure.

The Airleader has been on the German market for more than 20 years, but is just now making its way to the U.S. In its first installation in America, the Airleader saved the company 31.1 percent in energy costs: a total of \$34,839. For that particular company, the expected return on investment was 6.9 months. The average savings for a company that SIGA has seen is 20 to 25 percent.

Despite the product's proven record, Hoetzel said it hasn't garnered the support he hoped it would here in West Michigan, although it has been well received along the east and west coasts and near Mexico.

"I do not have as much traction as I would like to have here in West Michigan, but states with more energy costs have a totally different approach to it," said Hoetzel, who is adding a YouTube promotional video as well as a newsletter to help the marketing campaign.

SIGA has offices both in West Michigan and Germany and hopes to bridge the gap between European and U.S. green technology as Americans experience a stronger push to find energy solutions to cut down on costs.