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Applied Technology & Management expands on the water

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Applied Technology & Management is a company that knows how to grow.

Take, for instance, the company's move to downtown Charleston from Mount Pleasant. The new space didn't merely supply adequate offices for an increasing numbers of employees; it was three times the previous space and arguably had the best waterfront view on the peninsula.

And when ATM, a marine, coastal, environmental and water resources engineering, design and consulting firm, was acquired a year ago by Island Global Yachting, it continued to specialize in marina and waterfront development, coastal engineering, hydrological modeling and other water-related projects while adding a huge undertaking: creating "destination" marinas for mega-yachts.

Finding the new office space was critical to growth. Tony Maglione, ATM's vice president for the South Carolina/Georgia coastal region, said with 29 employees squeezed into 4,500 square feet, in some cases three or four people to an office, along with limited parking, it was a problem if everyone showed up to work at the same time.

"An even bigger problem was that we had a need to hire more people, but we had nowhere to put them," he said. "We staggered the working hours to fit everyone in, but we knew we had to get into somewhere bigger."

With ATM now occupying the entire third floor of the Fountain Walk building next to the S.C. Aquarium, Maglione said the company finally has "breathing room." In fact, of the 13,500 square feet available, ATM takes up 8,500 square feet and plans to allow the remaining offices to be used as "incubator" space with short-term leases for small startup companies.

"That way, if we grow enough to need more space by the end of the lease, we'll have it," said Maglione.

As for the prime location, which is between the Columbus Street Terminal and the Maritime Center with a view of the Ravenel bridge, Maglione said that came about "by the stars aligning properly."

One part of that alignment happened when Universal Solutions vacated the space and Maglione mentioned to Ernest Andrade, executive director of the Charleston Digital Corridor, that ATM was looking for space.

“Ernest told us about this place when our company president happened to be in town,” Maglione said. “We had looked at other spaces in town and on Daniel Island, but the president took one look at this and said, ‘Grab it.’ And now this is the flagship office for the company.”

With 110 employees companywide, ATM is headquartered in Gainesville, Fla., and has additional offices in Cocoa Beach, Jacksonville, Tallahassee and West Palm Beach, Fla.; Savannah, Ga.; Charleston and Hilton Head, S.C.; and Newport, R.I.

Founded in 1984, ATM solves water resources problems through innovative planning, engineering and management solutions. Its services include beach restoration and renourishment, management of large-scale developments, environmental permitting, hydrological modeling, wetland permitting and management, and corporate financial and information technology management.

The company serves public and private clients throughout the United States and international locations such as the Caribbean, Latin America, Europe and the Middle East.

According to Sam Phlegar, director of the Coastal and Marina division, 95% of ATM’s projects are outside South Carolina and 50% are outside the United States.

The company’s latest venture—developing and operating mega yacht destinations across the world—was the vision of Andrew Farkas, president of IGY.

“This is not just a marina concept,” said Phlegar. “It’s branding a marina in a way like a Four Seasons hotel, complete with concierge service. It’s incorporating infrastructure into a marina with bells and whistles.”

Island Global Yachting hired ATM as a consultant for one of its projects five years ago and made the decision to buy ATM last year when the company took on a project in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

The Dubai project involves dredging waterways and creating islands into shapes—two shaped like palm trees and one set of islands shaped like a map of the world—that will comprise destination marinas.

“You couldn’t do this project in the United States or in most places in the world,” said Phlegar. “Just the studies and permitting would take forever. And you wouldn’t find anyone for funding.”

The project is funded by the government of Dubai, which Phlegar said is looking beyond that country's current revenue stream of oil and trying to brand itself a destination for the wealthy.

The concept is to be a place where mega-yachts go, Phlegar said.

"It's a great business model," he said. "There are only about 9,000 of these mega-yachts in the world, but they bring in a lot of revenue for a marina that can handle them. A charter purchases about \$10,000 a week in consumables."

ATM's projects are "cool, challenging and one-of-a-kind. And we're able to work on these because we're a group of niche-oriented specialists. There are lots civil engineers and environmental engineers out there, but it's important to be niche-driven. We have very specialized skills in what we do," Maglione said.

Among ATM's local projects are the development of the City Marina, the S.C. State Ports Authority's environmental impact statement and the recent documentation that helped the SPA find a resolution to the shipping dilemma posed by the Northern right whale.

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