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Houston-based SolArc Helping Bridge IT Gap for Energy Firms

Like ocean waves, the good news for Houston-based SolArc just keeps rolling in.

Over the past several weeks, the independent IT — information technology — company has landed contracts with Westport Petroleum and Gaselys to provide software support for their commodities side of their energy businesses.

The news ties back to the company's founding, said Chief Executive Brad Anderson during an interview with *Natural Gas Week*.

"When the company was founded back in 1991, we helped companies do the typical IT work," Anderson said. By 1994, though, the company began building a suite of products that help companies manage everything from capacity books to shipping operation, as well as the commodities end of the business.

"It's been a very productive time for us," Anderson said. "We have had some of our customers now for 10 years; and besides energy companies, we've also been opening up doors into the airline industry where a lot of the same issues are found."

In developing its products, SolArc found a niche with programs that help companies keep track of the transactions and business end of the industry, said Mark Crosno, vice president of Sales and Marketing - Americas.

"In the post-Enron era, there were a lot of compliancy issues," Crosno said. "What we found were that companies had systems in place, but they weren't standing up to audits. Our systems do."

The software package that SolArc has, Anderson said, "is a pretty aggressive out-of-the-box product that we can customize to fit our client's needs. In our world, it's pretty important that everyone have a basic foundation, and it's very critical that everyone in a company is using the same system."

For Gaselys, the decision to go with SolArc and its TIES II software was a fairly simple business decision, according to Chief Executive Thierry Daubignard. Gaselys

is a joint venture of Gaz de France and Societe Generale. Westport Petroleum also picked SolArc for its RightAngle software as its comprehensive energy trading management package.

"Gaselys has selected SolArc TIES II solution for its ability to cope with the growing complexity of the European natural gas and power physical system and trading environment," Daubignard said, noting its open architecture and high degree of functionality.

Anderson said SolArc has prepared enhancements for its TIES II suite that includes upgrades in capacity management, both booking and trading; hourly balancing and nominations, and calorific value measurements. The company, he said, was faced with working with natural gas and power companies from different nations, which have different needs and requirements depending on the countries involved.

"First and foremost, we are software company that is focused on the commodities market with energy being our prime industry," Anderson said. "We are looking to expand our footprint outside of energy by looking at companies that consume large quantities of energy as one potential market and the investment banking industry as another potential market."

Account Executive Chuck McClure said the company's strategic goals were to follow these new opportunities.

"In the past, systems like ours were seen almost exclusively as accounting systems," McClure said. "That has changed. The systems of today help our clients by being tools that help give them the information they need to support their decisions. Our systems help traders make better decisions."

Anderson said the advances in technology, particular computer technology, will play into their strategic planning at SolArc.

"The new technology allows clients to do more and they require faster input of information," Anderson said. "We plan on being there for them to help provide that service."

John A. Sullivan, Houston