PROFILE

AWS TRUEPOWER

By Russ Willcutt

Already known for its expertise in wind-farm site assessment, online weather mapping, and next-day forecasting, this company broadens its market focus.

AS IS THE CASE with many successful companies, the early years are spent following lucrative opportunities that present themselves along the way. Without pausing to develop a strategic plan, however, that forward momentum can sometimes lag, with the company never quite realizing its full potential. That won't be happening with AWS Truepower, which recently changed its name from AWS Truewind as a reflection of its roadmap into the future.

"When the company was established in 1983 it was known as Associated Weather Services, and soon after that AWS Scientific. It focused mainly on air quality and designing and conducting analyses of wind and solar projects," according to Michael Brower, chief technology officer. "My background is in physics, and while I was working as an independent consultant in the late nineties I began developing ideas for improving wind-resource modeling. I discussed them with Bruce Bailey, AWS Scientific's president, and we decided to bring in an atmospheric scientist, John Zack, and form a partnership called Truewind Solutions. We ended up mapping wind resources for the entire United States and several other parts of the world, and the maps were much better than anything else that was available at the time, so we decided to capitalize on that success by merging the two entities into AWS Truewind.

"The current rebranding actually signifies a return to the company's roots, in a way, since it had always intended to be involved in all aspects of renewable energy," he continues. "We want to take the suite of products and services we've developed for wind and tailor them to benefit related markets."

Those services are quite expansive, including resource assessment, energy assessment, project consulting, independent engineering and due diligence, operational assessment, and forecasting and grid management, all of which are available with the necessary modifications to both the wind and solar sectors. The company works with professionals involved in project development, investment and finance, grid management and integration, plant operations, and government planning. The products it has developed for wind include openWind®—wind farm design software offered in both a free community version and advanced "enterprise" version for engineers and scientists to use—along with eWind®, a wind forecasting service, SHARP, a plant operations assessment software, and windNavigator®, the online siting and assessment service that delivers proprietary high-resolution wind data and reports to help subscribers analyze business opportunities.

This service in particular marked a departure for the company. "Developing windNavigator was really our entry into the area of information services," Brower explains. "Until recently most of our business, except for wind forecasting, was on a traditional consulting model. We decided that it was time to expand into selling map and data products on a subscription basis. We approached this opportunity in a very deliberate way, and it's been tremendously successful for us. We're planning to begin extending our services globally, in fact."

Although most of the company's clients are currently found in North America, its international portfolio is expanding rapidly. Two years ago it established a joint venture in Barcelona, Spain, for instance, and its success has led to similar activities in Latin America and even India, with similar positive results. Wherever the location, AWS Truepower's wind and solar clients—which may expand into areas such as wave and hydro technologies in the coming years—will benefit from the detailed data the company compiles.

"One of our strengths is that a great deal of the site assessment information comes from a common source, and the same goes for forecasting," Brower says. "So we're able to efficiently provide solar forecasts because the same set of weather forecasting models drive both solar and wind forecasts."

The company's data also contributes to overcoming the challenges associated with the large-scale deployment of both solar and wind power on electric facility operations. "Take the Eastern Interconnect, for instance, which is a large area of the U.S. where there's a lot of wind and solar development taking place," he explains. "The questions being asked include how this influx of energy from renewable sources will affect system operators and the different power plants they manage. What's going to happen with the power flow to the transmission grid, and what new transmission lines will be needed? The solar and wind data that we provide through our modeling services is central to finding the answers to these questions."

Although Brower points out that wind remains the company's main line of business, he and his colleagues look forward to providing integrated solutions to a wide range of site developers. "It was time to take a close look at where we come from and what we've learned along the way, because that's the only way you can determine where you'd like to go in the future," he says. "And for us that involves rebranding ourselves as a full service, knowledge-based sustainable energy company."

Call (518) 213-0044 or go to www.awstruepower.com.