



COULD YOU GIVE US A BRIEF HISTORY OF YOUR COMPANY?

Certainly. Availon was originally known as the SSB Companies, and it was launched in 1972 in Germany. It began as a specialty electrical shop, and one day in the early nineties they were approached by a company that was manufacturing what eventually became the GE 1.5MW wind turbine, which is now the workhorse of the U.S. wind fleet. They first asked SSB to provide the pitch motor for the system, and they liked it so much they eventually asked them to build the entire pitch system, including the controls. So we've been involved in wind throughout Europe ever since. We entered the North American market in 2009, and we've grown according to a three-phase plan. First we just provided parts for pitch systems, and then we moved into full-tower parts. We then entered into what we refer to as our "high-tech services" phase, conducting end of warranty inspections, engineered solutions, and product upgrades. In the third phase we became a full-service O&M provider, handling scheduled and emergency maintenance, uptower gearbox repair, blade inspections, and 24/7 remote condition monitoring. Shane Sterling is our director of O&M business development, and he's been traveling the country in recent months making our existing clients aware of this new capability and introducing ourselves to potential customers, or partners as we like to think of them. We specialize in MW-class turbines, and we work with OEMs including GE, Vestas, Siemens, Suzlon, Gamesa, Nordex, and many others. Actually, we're the only GL-certified independent service provider for both Vestas and the GE 1.5MW turbines. So we provide full-tower parts, high-tech engineering, end of warranty inspections, and complete O&M services.

END OF WARRANTY INSPECTIONS ARE SO IMPORTANT, ESPECIALLY AT THIS POINT IN TIME THROUGHOUT NORTH AMERICA. WHY DO YOU REFER TO IT AS "HIGH-TECH," THOUGH?

That's because our engineers are involved in these inspections, actually going uptower and performing the work themselves. I'm a mechanical engineer myself, so I know how engineers relish a challenge, so when ours detect a problem we encourage them to follow the links all the way to the solution. This has obvious benefits, of course, because an engineer is equipped to detect problems others might not see, so we can alert the owner in case the same problem is occurring in other turbines, or even OEMs so they can check their design specs. Quite often, if you find a problem in one turbine, you'll start to see the same thing in others of the same make and age, so you can really save a lot of money and frustration by addressing it as soon as possible. Another thing our engineers do is upgrade turbines that are experiencing systemic problems, or that have dated technology or components. They will actually design parts that correct these problems, which is an incredible asset to our customers. And we have an exchange program with our German counterparts where we send our technicians and engineers to work with them for six to eight weeks, and they send their engineers to visit with us for that long as well. One reason that's so important is because the European wind industry is about 10 years ahead of us here in North America, so we want to take advantage of their expertise as a knowledge resource.

I WOULD THINK ALL OF THIS WOULD GIVE YOUR CUSTOMERS A GREAT DEAL OF CONFIDENCE IN YOUR ABILITIES. YOU'RE CLEARLY TAKING IT VERY SERIOUSLY.

We definitely are, and we wanted to enter the renewables market in the right spirit, as well. Our North American operations are based in Rochester, New York, and we have a satellite location in Sweetwater, Texas. In Europe we have sites in Germany, Italy, and Spain. We our best to source the products that we can from local sources in order to lower our carbon footprint. At the same time we're always looking to expand our product line and service offerings. We were just named a distributor for Schunk Graphite Technology in North America, so it's all about becoming a "one-stop shop" for our customers. My job is to get out there, learn about the challenges they face, and then come back with a solution that will help them to achieve their goals. And one of those goals is to maximize the return on the investment our partners have made. If the average service life of a wind turbine is 20 years, and we can extend that by five years, then a certain portion of that uptime will be clear profit. So between Shane's expertise in finance and business development, mine in mechanical engineering and sales, and the expertise of our wind technicians and engineers – along with our excellent products, of course – we're an excellent resource for our partners in the wind industry. ↵

To learn more: Call (515) 986-9101 or visit www.availon.com.