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NJ Business Owner SCORES Some Advice on Product that is Helping Fight the War on Terror

When it comes to research Dr. Gordhan Patel is tops in his field. But when the owner of JP Laboratories, Inc. was looking to market a new product that detects the levels of radiation, he had to turn to SCORE – Counselors to America's Small Business.

The small Middlesex-based research company has been around for 24 years and under Dr. Patel's direction has found success in licensing the products he has developed to other companies. For instance, it was Dr. Patel who developed a sticker that can detect if food or medical vaccines have gone beyond their expiration dates. The sticker turns from green to red when the food products or vaccines have expired.

Dr. Patel came to this country in 1973, as a post-doctoral researcher at Baylor University in Waco, Texas. One year later, he went to work for Allied Signal (now Honeywell) where he spent eight years in research and development. In 1983, he opened JP Laboratories, Inc. He credits the U.S. Small Business Administration's Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) grant program with helping him obtain millions of dollars in research grants from federal agencies interested in new technologies.

"Through the SBIR program, the SBA ensures that the nation's small, high-tech, innovative businesses are a significant part of the federal government's research and development efforts," said SBA New Jersey District Director James A. Kocsi. "Eleven federal departments participate in the SBIR program and give small businesses like JP Laboratories the opportunity to compete for research grants."

"We are a small lab with a narrow focus in research, chemistry, physics and metallurgy," said Dr. Patel. "Over the years, the SBIR program has helped us to grow."

Fast forward to 2007, Dr. Patel finds himself coming back to the SBA for assistance. This time, Dr. Patel utilized the services of the SBA-sponsored SCORE business counseling program, where former and active business owners volunteer their time to helping small business owners like Dr. Patel, by providing them with free business counseling.



Dr. Gordhan Patel of JP Laboratories, Inc. checks on the production of his Self-indicating Instant Radiation Alert Dosimeter. The small plastic card can detect levels of radiation.

Over the last four years, Dr. Patel has been busy developing SIRAD (Self-indicating Instant Radiation Alert Dosimeter) a small plastic card that can determine a person's exposure to radiation. His first thoughts were that this is a product that could help fight the war on terror. The SIRAD could detect the amount of radiation that soldiers and first responders can be exposed to from nuclear and dirty bombs.

Despite receiving a contract from the Department of Homeland Security's Combating Terrorism Technology Support Office for U.S. soldiers and first responders to wear the SIRAD on the battlefield, Dr. Patel needed some advice on how to bring his product to market. That's when he turned to SCORE. Through SCORE Chapter 15 in Newark, Dr. Patel was introduced to counselors Warren Jacobs, Paul Steck and Howard Baker.

"Dr. Patel needed a little guidance," said Jacobs. "It is very difficult to bring a new product to market today. The biggest challenge Dr. Patel faced was finding reputable distributors he could trust to help him get the SIRAD out to market. We basically told Dr. Patel what characteristics to look for when searching for a distributor and we even identified some distributors that were familiar to us."

The SCORE team also went over manufacturing procedures and accounting practices to make certain that Dr. Patel's company had the capacity to meet production demands of the SIRAD and that he could turn a profit. "We really looked into every aspect of JP Laboratories," said Jacobs. "Each counselor provided his input and made recommendations that should help Dr. Patel launch SIRAD."

Dr. Patel believes that SIRAD can be successfully marketed to the military, law enforcement, civilian emergency first responders, hospitals and nuclear power plants. The card is useful in detecting harmful levels of radiation. When the card is exposed to radiation, a chemical reaction changes the strip from clear to blue; the darker the blue, the more exposure to radiation. According to Dr. Patel, the business counseling he received from SCORE will help him focus on these markets.

"The medical market is very interesting," said Dr. Patel. "Hospital workers and patients exposed to radiation from X-Ray machines and CT Scans can determine how much radiation they have been exposed to."

Today, JP Laboratories has three employees and is poised for additional growth. "I owe a great deal to the members of SCORE for their guidance," said Dr. Patel. "I believe the advice that I received on production, developing a distribution network and the marketing of SIRAD will take JP Laboratories to the next level."

After 34 years in research and development, and with over 50 patents to his name, Dr. Gordhan Patel is set to score the success of a lifetime.