



Paul Gaines: "Helping to enable the global economy by providing the standards by which companies can do business across borders."

Michael Miller

The international value of uniformity >

Executive Summary:

Without Christiansburg-based Inorganic Ventures, there's no "case closed." And here's why.

By Michael Miller

If you've ever watched an episode of "NCIS" or "Bones," you have seen a depiction of how a forensic scientist uses various laboratory tests to detect a trace chemical signature that leads to the identification of a murder suspect. Case closed, show over.

But in real life that little piece of evidence might be scrutinized and challenged by a whole team of defense attorneys demanding proof that the tests were performed correctly.

That's where Paul Gaines and his team at Inorganic Ventures come in. They make the

standards used to calibrate the equipment that identifies the culprit. Without Inorganic Ventures' products, that atomic absorption spectrometer is just a \$100,000 doorstop.

In a more practical sense, Inorganic Ventures is helping to enable the global economy by providing the standards by which companies can do business across borders. In the United States, we have a system of uniform requirements that allow a candy company in Ohio, for example, to purchase sugar from a manufacturer in Louisiana with a certainty that the purity of the product will be as advertized.

But imagine if the candy company was in Belgium. How could the company be sure it was getting the quality product it needed to make those tasty Belgian chocolates? It would ask for a certificate showing the sugar was tested to meet a standard that both the Belgian and Louisiana companies understood. And the machines used to perform the test had been calibrated using an acceptable standard as well ... no doubt

one from Inorganic Ventures.

This rural region of Virginia might seem like an unlikely place to find a company so important to the success of the global marketplace and, indeed, Inorganic Ventures started life in 1985 in New Jersey, as a distributor for analytical standards that were manufactured elsewhere. In 1989 Paul Gaines, a Ph. D. chemist, was brought on board to bring that manufacturing activity in-house. Eventually, the original founder wanted to retire, and he sold the business to Paul and his wife Linda. The company leadership now includes Paul, Linda and their two sons.

Moving the company to Virginia was a long and involved process, which might not have been successful, according to the Gaines, without the tremendous

help they received from economic development officials and local governments in the region.

Realizing that the operation had seriously outgrown its NJ facilities and would need to move, Paul initially began to look around for a spot somewhere near the existing site. But one of the sons remarked that it cost the same to move down the street as to move anywhere else, so why not consider another location altogether?

Linda insisted, "I want to go to Virginia" based on vacation trips here.

Inorganic Ventures employs about 40 people in its new facility in the Falling Branch Corporate Park in Christiansburg, but double-digit growth during its first year in Virginia has forced the company to begin planning its next expansion. 



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