

Crosslink expanding on polymer contracts

Company recently won \$4.1 million contract to make self-cleaning fabric

BY PATRICK L. THIMANGU
pthimangu@bizjournals

Crosslink completed a \$1 million expansion of its main facilities in Fenton and is moving from research and development to delivering polymer products to the defense and commercial industries.

To reflect that transition, the company, founded about five years ago by Brent St. John and other investors, recently shortened its name from Crosslink Polymer Research to Crosslink. The modification also is part of a new branding effort, St. John said.

Since its founding, Crosslink's scientists have registered more than 100 patents for creating organic polymers. The durable materials, which can be used for purposes such as making clothing that can shield the wearer from chemical and biological agents, are manufactured through a complex scientific process of bonding molecules.

Robert Janson, a Chesterfield-based scientist and business consultant who formerly worked for Monsanto Co. and Energizer Holdings Inc., said Crosslink is getting into the conductive polymer industry at a time when usage of the material is on the rise in many sectors. That includes the aerospace industry, where a single layer of polymer, for example, can be used to line an airplane's canopy and make it more durable, he said.

"The basic polymer technology has been around a long time," Janson said. "I think we are just at the cusp, where technology is now being established and the benefits are becoming apparent."

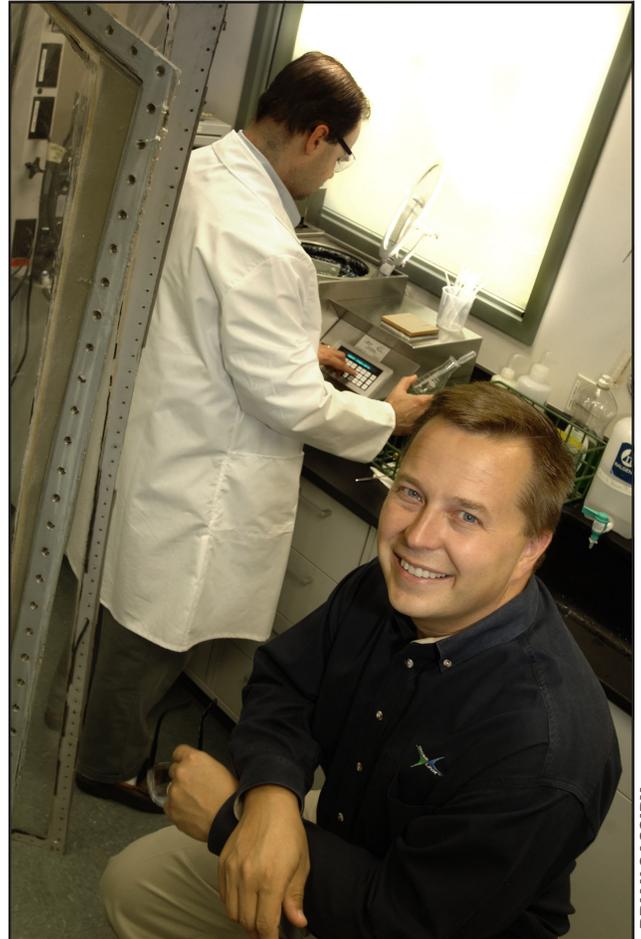
The latest construction at Crosslink's Fenton facility included adding 8,000 square feet of space to an existing plant and installing five new wet labs to develop

and test polymer materials. As part of the expansion, the company will hire about five more employees, in addition to 15 highly skilled workers the company added in the last 12 months, St. John said. He declined to disclose revenue for the company, which currently employs about 30.

The expansion at Crosslink follows a number of multimillion-dollar contracts the company won in recent months from the U.S. Department of Defense and commercial industries, including a \$4.1 million contract to develop, in partnership with Southwest Missouri State University's Center for Applied Science and Engineering, a self-cleaning fabric that's resistant to chemical and biological warfare agents.

Crosslink also is working on a multimillion-dollar contract to develop an electric light-emitting fabric for the U.S. Army Soldier Systems Center located in Natick, Mass. St. John declined to provide financial details for the project, in which Crosslink is partnering with Cool Valley-based Engineered Support Systems. St. John said the light-emitting material could be used in tents to solve the problem of installing light fixtures in shelters, especially in battle zones.

Last year, Crosslink won a \$3 million defense contract to help develop more durable cockpit canopies for U.S. Navy fighter jets. The company is working on the canopy project in partnership with South-



BRIAN CASSIDY

Brent St. John said Crosslink is adding 8,000 square feet and five wet labs to help develop new composite coatings and fabrics.

west Missouri State University's Center For Applied Science and Engineering and Rolla, Mo.-based Brewer Science. The companies are developing a composite coating material that will be used to strengthen cockpit canopies and lengthen their lifespan.

St. John said the company is landing more contracts because national defense spending is rising, and Crosslink is getting recognition for making polymer electric-conducting materials and high-performance composite coatings.