

Andy's healthy dose of ambition

BY PAUL GOSLING

ANDY Barr admits to a bout of over-confidence when he started the Marturion company back in 2001. His firm conducts research and product development for medical devices and nine years ago corporations felt these were core activities that could not be outsourced. Happily for Dr Barr and his Lisburn business, corporations take a different view today.

"I had been on a programme called Leaders for Tomorrow," recalls Andy. "It was held at Harvard and I was there for seven weeks in 2000. I was inspired by the many companies I visited in the Massachusetts region that needed help with innovation. And I was inspired because that was something I could do.

"But in fact the reality was different because innovation was something people had difficulty getting their heads around. The idea of outsourcing innovation made companies nervous. We had a daily battle over this — but it's a different world these days."

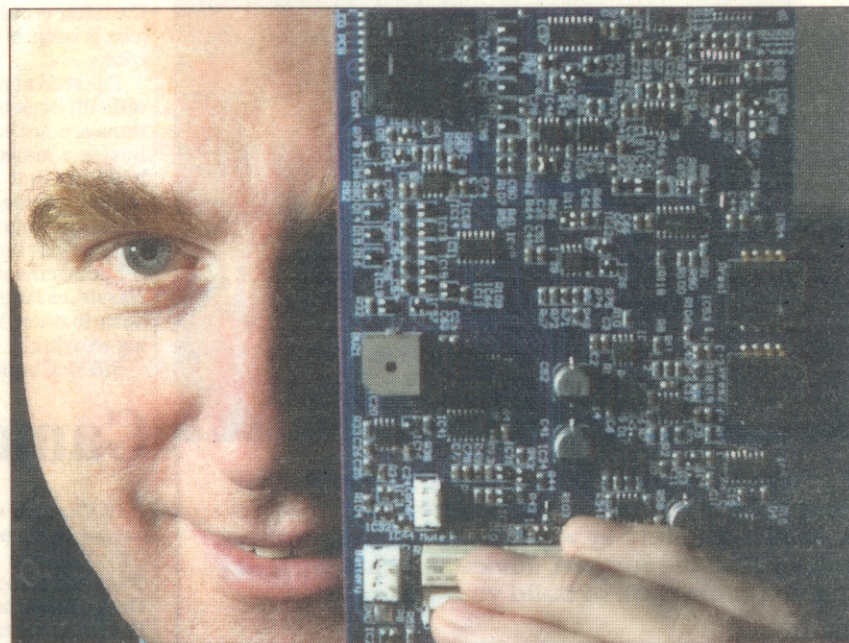
The concept of outsourcing much of their business operations no longer caus-

es even large companies any anxiety. As a result, demand has grown and inevitably the firm expanded as well. Nine years ago, Andy started in the living room of his Lisburn home. A few weeks later he moved into an industrial unit, and then moved up to a larger unit. A period of gradual growth speeded up over the last few years, so that there are now 32 employees.

"Over the last three years we have seen our turnover double each year," explains Andy. "It's scary. That rate of growth puts a stress on the cash flow. It's been an exciting period, though not an easy one."

Until last year, the firm relied on partnership arrangements with design companies in the United States and England to win contracts for Marturion. Those arrangements have proven very profitable, but the company now feels the confidence to win contracts directly — a responsibility for the recently appointed marketing executive.

RAPID GROWTH



Confident: Andy has ambitious expansion plans for Marturion, he aims for the firm to be designing and manufacturing its own medical products in the near future

Marturion has other exciting ambitions. "Our immediate goal is to expand from innovation and development to early stage manufacture," says Andy. "We see an opportunity for niche manufacturing for the products we have designed. This is for clients who have never had any product development expertise. We will do that for

about four or five products and after that we want to see our own products on the market."

Andy is able to finance expansion without needing to call on outside investors. It is just one of many indications that the business has been run with a clever mixture of caution and, of course, innovation.

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