

Detail the company's economic impact on South Carolina:

- **Demonstrated growth in new jobs, corporate revenues, capital investment in the state, etc.**

Automation Engineering Corporation (AEC) is a high skilled employer manufacturing automation equipment, systems, and controls. Upstate South Carolina has been striving to bring manufacturers into the area. One of the keys to the success of the Upstate has been a labor pool for the manufacturer. For most manufacturers it takes a mix of a great product, great labor, and the top technology in their production process. The third item is where Automation Engineering helps provide an excellent location in Upstate South Carolina.

Automation Engineering implements the cutting edge in technology in their systems. This allows our customers to become more efficient, reduce costs and produce a higher quality product. This access to technology is just one of Automation Engineering's many contributions to South Carolina.

The requirement of manufacturers to be on the cutting edge of technology requires having the highest caliber of employees. Automation Engineering helps keep the most talented South Carolinians in South Carolina. Specifically attempting to hire locally, Automation Engineering employs top level Electrical, Mechanical, and Software Engineers.

During the economic downturn AEC pursued a growth strategy to be able to come into the upswing fully prepared for added business. The strategy has worked and AEC has increased its skilled professional work force by over 100% in the last two years. In addition to these new hires, Automation currently anticipates further increases to this work force by another 50% in the coming two years. This employment also reflects the caliber of individuals employed by having an average annual salary of \$84,029 compared to the Upstate average of \$32,410 according to the 2003 National Compensation Survey.

In addition to the added employees during the downturn, Automation Engineering wanted to expand in facility and equipment as well. In 2002, AEC moved into their present 30,000 sq/ft, \$1.2 million location off Pelham road in Greenville, South Carolina. Quickly gaining new local business to fill out the new space, AEC started construction on an additional 30,000 sq/ft high bay manufacturing facility adjacent to the current building at an estimated cost of \$1.2 Million. The additional space will help AEC continue to serve its South Carolina customer base and keep the Upstate a prime location for manufacturers.

With the growth of the facility and employees Automation Engineering has also experienced excellent growth in revenue. Over the past six years revenue has grown by an average of 25% a year and over 30% annually in the past three years. This growth has been phenomenal for Automation Engineering and has completely supported the ongoing growth management has undertaken.

Detail the company's commitment to the workforce:

e.g.: Programs that have improved the quality of life for its employees, such as...

- **Employee education programs (personal development programs, tuition reimbursement, etc.)**
- **Diversity Awareness programs (multi-cultural workshops, diversity programs, etc.)**
- **Employee Recognition programs (employee-of-the-month, profit-sharing, attendance awards, rewards and bonuses, etc.)**
- **Employee Assistance programs (company-sponsored child care, flex-time, unique health and safety programs, etc.)**

Automation Engineering understands that their greatest resource is their employees. To help our employees in their goals AEC created several programs. AEC created a tuition reimbursement plan that allows the employee to take classes at local colleges and technical schools as well as seminars. The reimbursement applies to both the class and any books that may be needed.

New hires may have trouble entering a new workplace and coming up to speed with policies and methods specific to AEC. To help ease the transition, AEC has started a mentoring program where new hires work closely with an experienced employee. This has helped employees become more productive faster and has the added benefit of reducing stress on the employee during their first few months.

In addition, Automation Engineering has several programs found mostly in larger size employers such as a flexible spending account, Personal Time Off (PTO), medical and dental insurance, employee loans, a SIMPLE IRA retirement savings plan with corporate match, health club membership reimbursement, and purchasing assistance for some of the higher priced items our customers produce.

In searching for a way to motivate employees further, Automation Engineering created a profit sharing program. The program looks at the successes of the company at the end of each quarter and pays a percentage of profit to employees. Since profit sharing has been initiated, employees have had a more team oriented outlook toward every activity. Team building, company awareness, and attention to detail has all been attributable in part by AEC's profit sharing program.

Automation Engineering also understands that there will be situations in employee's lives that AEC does not have the knowledge or expertise to help with. To help employees in these instances AEC recently started an Employee Assistance Program or EAP. This program helps employees with a wide spectrum of services including psychological professionals, legal consultation, financial planning, childcare, eldercare and adoption.

While these programs have all been beneficial to the employee and to AEC, there is always room for improvement. For this reason AEC has started interviewing employees

on a regular basis and with complete confidentiality to find out what improvements can be made to programs or policies to make for a better working environment. Interviews have led to simple items, such as the creation of a map of information on internal servers, to complicated issues such as the complete re-structuring of training methods to better convey the training to employees.

All of these items have come about because of the core culture at Automation Engineering. In 2002, AEC underwent a self evaluation to better understand its goals. During this re-evaluation of the type of company Automation Engineering wanted to be, management decided that they wanted a company that worked together toward its goal and the first step towards that end would be to include all of the employees in the evaluation. The inclusion of all workers has been beneficial in that employees become a part of the decision process and feel more comfortable giving their input as to where they would like to see the company go. Employees have reported that they were amazed that the company was so open, and listed it as one of the main benefits of working at AEC.

Detail the company's involvement/contributions to the community:

e.g.:

- **Community Volunteer programs (Adopt-a-Highway litter prevention, United Way sponsorship, support for Rotary, Kiwanis, Lion's Club projects, etc.)**
- **Community Environmental Programs (hazardous waste issues, programs geared to recycling, wastewater treatment, land conservation, renewal, air quality, etc.)**
- **Educational partnerships (scholarships, equipment donations, school volunteer projects, etc.)**

Automation Engineering has a long history of giving back to the community. Each year, AEC selects local charitable organizations that have gone above and beyond to receive a reward for their service. This award has historically been 15% or more of net income each year. Past awards have helped a full range of organizations from Meals on Wheels G-C-M which brings meals to the elderly and Greer Relief which helps to pay the power bills of those who cannot afford it, to Blue Ridge Marching Band and Greenville Technical Charter School.

As an organization focused on education, AEC makes several smaller donations to area schools each year as well. Donations of cash are a fairly common occurrence, but donations of time and resources have been well received by schools as well. Laser printers, drafting boards and computers have helped students as well as regular speaking events by employees at area schools. It has been the hope that being able to speak with those in the industry will inspire area youth to pursue careers in a technology field. For some advanced students, AEC has provided after school jobs that give them the chance to get a hands on look at the industry and working environment.

Because of the quick advancements in technology for the industry, it would be difficult for any school to keep up to date. Automation Engineering has helped secondary education by providing advanced technology for the classroom. This has helped students learn about, and on, the equipment they will be using in the field after graduation.

Automation Engineering is also part of the March of Dimes Walk America. AEC donates employee time for the organization of fundraising events and has several company sponsored events to raise funds for the March of Dimes and premature babies.

Since the founding of Automation Engineering nearly 25 years ago, giving back to the community has been a top priority. To support and encourage employees to give back as well, AEC started a new program that would match employee contributions to their favorite charities. This program has fostered an increase in giving among employees who feel they can make more of a difference with the company's support.