

Tessera Increases Sales by More Than \$1 Million with Help from N.C. State

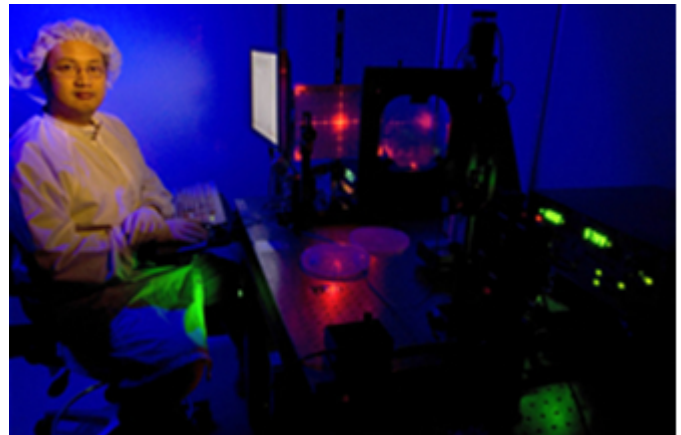
By *Melissa Stanz*

Charlotte, NC—Generating over \$1 million in economic impact is an admirable feat, especially for a group of fewer than 100 employees. But that’s exactly what Tessera’s Charlotte facility (formerly Digital Optics) achieved by earning ISO 14001 registration, an internationally recognized certification for Environmental Management Systems (EMS). The \$1million-plus in economic impact was based on increased sales from new markets and retained sales from customers requiring suppliers to be ISO 14001 certified.

North Carolina State University’s Industrial Extension Service calculates economic impact as part of services they provide and Tessera acknowledged them as a valuable partner in this accomplishment.

Tessera designs and manufactures micro optics products used with laser-based applications such as bar code scanning as well as optics for the semi-conductor industry. They recently introduced OptiML™WLC, a wafer level camera technology for use in cell phones that reduces camera size by up to 50 percent, and reduces costs by up to 30 percent; this technology is cutting edge and highly competitive.

Achieving the ISO 14001 registration was critical for this super-clean, quiet, 100,000 square foot facility due to the competitive markets they serve. The internationally recognized certification essentially means that Tessera is appropriately managing its environmental issues and demonstrating a commitment to environmental improvement. It’s a statement that says the company is managing its environmental obligations properly so that huge international companies don’t take on additional environmental risks.



Tessera manufactures micro optics used in laser based technology including bar code scanning, semiconductors and cell phones.

N.C. State environmental engineer Charlie Parrish worked with Tessera to provide important tools that helped the company achieve ISO 14001 registration. He spent two very full days at the company working with its Environmental Management System (EMS) team, helping them identify and prioritize the most important environmental issues. “Charlie gave us a very good overview of ISO 14001, and we found it was really helpful to have document and form templates to fit our needs,” said Betty Baggett, process engineer at Tessera who led the EMS process.

“Betty and Brian (Tessera managers) had everything basically figured out and asked me to come in and facilitate the remaining tasks in EMS development. I conducted our Jump

Start program,” said Parrish. “They had a very enthusiastic team of eight people and were easy to work with.”



Obtaining ISO 14001 shows a companies' commitment to handling environmental issues responsibly.

After the Jump Start program, the eight-member environmental system implementation team divided up the duties, and each took several sections. Within three months the system was in place, and defined and documented in accordance with ISO 14001 and their Environmental Management System (EMS), including identifying environmental aspects

(issues to manage), creating improvement goals, training employees on environmental procedures, and monitoring performance and compliance issues. Both the Quality Management System developed for the ISO 9001 standard and the EMS include requirements for internal auditing so that improved performance is maintained long term.

“The Tessera team also had an experienced perspective in auditing—a critical component of any ISO system. After the Jump Start program, they developed an audit schedule and actually jumped right into it. This allowed them to continue on and complete the EMS development—without balking at the auditing obstacle, which many companies find difficult,” said Parrish.

Once the system was in place, Parrish returned to conduct an ISO 14001 gap analysis to identify gaps between Tessera’s EMS and the ISO 14001 standard. The company performed well; only minor items were noted. The registration audit was conducted a few months after the gap analysis and the company received its registration within six months—a fast-track process. Betty Baggett said, “If we had started from scratch it would have taken us a lot longer. N.C. State was quite helpful.”

Brian Harden, quality manager at Tessera, agreed. “We did not need the full program or intense consulting. We simply needed the jump start; so their program is aptly named. We were able to mesh our two systems easily.”

The company has worked with N.C. State since 1998, and Harden said that N.C. State specialists helped them implement their first quality system—ISO 9001—that gave the business a common language and framework and established its credibility. “We have a

good relationship with N.C. State, and they are cost effective and provide a good value. They point us in the right direction and listen to our needs,” he said.

Having ISO 14001 registration is an important asset for Tessera. “We have many international customers that wanted us to have this registration – companies that were already registered, so it was a credibility issue,” said Harden. “Now, all we have to say is we’re ISO14001 registered, and the questions regarding environmental issues are minimized.”