

## Case study: Applied Energy Solutions

Among Vern Fleming's Economic Gardening® takeaways: winning a new customer that has boosted his company's revenue by 30 percent.

Fleming, who is president and CEO of Applied Energy Solutions, entered an Economic Gardening program hosted by the Greater Rochester Enterprise in August 2012. Based in Caledonia, New York, Applied Energy Solutions designs and manufactures battery chargers for forklifts, pallet jacks and other transportation equipment. "One of the things we wanted to do was improve the company's brand strategy and recognition throughout our existing market and potential new markets," says Fleming.

During the engagement, Fleming worked with the National Center for Economic Gardening's National Strategic Research Team (NSRT). The researchers provided ideas for raising the company's profile through social media — and they identified several trade shows the company hadn't known about, including a battery show in Detroit. Applied Energy Solutions exhibited at



*Vern Fleming, president and CEO of Applied Energy Solutions in Caledonia, New York.*

the Detroit event in 2013, where it was able to meet and win a large customer that has increased annual revenue by 30 percent and created four new jobs. In addition to the spike in revenue, the new account enables Applied Energy Solutions to expand its geographic footprint into Europe.

At the time of its Economic Gardening engagement, Applied Energy Solutions had been transitioning its sales strategy from a distributor network to marketing directly to end users, and Fleming wanted to avoid any pitfalls that might occur during that transition. "The researchers investigated other companies that had made similar switches and helped us understand this transition a bit more," he says. "They were a good sounding board and raised some questions we hadn't thought of — and they helped investigate tools we would need for e-commerce sales."

"If we had hired consultants to accomplish what the NSRT did, it would have been very expensive — and results wouldn't have happened as quickly," Fleming adds. "Economic Gardening gives you access to high-level researchers and the compressed time frame helps you get the ball moving quickly."

There's also a "feel-good" aspect to Economic Gardening, Fleming points out: "As an established businesses in a region or state, you hear about all the activity to recruit outside companies and think, 'What about companies like mine that are already here and employing people?' To have something like Economic Gardening, a program that supports existing businesses, is a real benefit because it recognizes the contributions that we are making to the economy."