

Interview with Heikki Helava, President of Fox Group

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Fox Group: success comes out of the blue

Using its exclusive low-cost process, this young company will manufacture blue light emitting diodes at its new Québec facility, tapping into an estimated \$7 billion market worldwide.

Fox Group, from Silicon Valley, California, is the driving force behind a technological breakthrough in the manufacture of blue light emitting diodes (LEDs) used as indicator lights in wireless handsets, automotive dashboards and other consumer electronic products.

The company, which makes and sells advanced compound semiconductor devices, has developed a revolutionary and inexpensive method of manufacturing blue LEDs. “For years, scientists struggled unsuccessfully to find an inexpensive method. Now, with our exclusive technology, we’ve achieved what was considered impossible,” declares Heikki Helava, President and founder of Fox Group.

“Our technique costs a fraction of competing processes, so we expect to enjoy healthy profit margins in the LED markets, soon to exceed \$7 billion worldwide,” continues Helava. Apart from offering unlimited design flexibility, LEDs use 95% less electricity, emit

90% less heat and have far longer lifetimes than traditional light bulbs and cathode ray tubes.

“Blue is the color of the future,” asserts Helava. “It’s associated with cleanness, purity, clarity, tranquility and quality. We’re very confident that there will be a major surge in the demand for our product.” Today, red and green LEDs lead the market with their associated meanings of “stop/danger” and “safety/go”, but Helava sees that trend changing. “Research has proven that blue is the most popular color worldwide,” says Helava. What’s more, blue LED chips can be modified to make white LEDs, another burgeoning market.

Québec in the spotlight

Since its inception in 2000, Fox Group has invested over \$21 million in R&D in Québec. The company has built, equipped and recently inaugurated a first-class, 1,000 m² semiconductor manufacturing facility to bring the company’s blue LEDs to product readiness.

The company currently has seven employees and anticipates significant growth in the coming years. Fox Group plans to expand its facilities to accommodate more crystal growth machines and processing equipment.

“Québec is a natural choice for a company that is truly innovative,” affirms Helava. One of the major attractions for this growing firm was the province’s well-established infrastructure of universities and support services. “The intensive scientific activity definitely influenced our decision to come here,” says Helava. Fox Group was also impressed with the stable nature of Québec’s workforce. “People here commit to your organization and we very much appreciate that loyalty.”

In the end, Helava has every reason to be optimistic about the company’s prospects. “We will be the dominator in this market and that means a bright future for Fox Group in Québec.” ●

Ross Rogers