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## Q&A with Raymond P. Sharpe, CEO, Cookson Electronics

**Circuits Assembly:** Briefly describe Cookson Electronics' new "Shared Intelligence" message. Is this plan a response to the theory that customers now expect suppliers to solve their technology problems and R&D issues?

**Ray Sharpe:** Lisa, this is much more than theory; we did our homework in coming up with our Shared Intelligence message. We spoke with over 300 customers and stakeholders in our business. One comment that resounded throughout our discussions was the fact that original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) and electronics manufacturing services (EMS) providers had cut both R&D and testing services staff and that they would be looking to vendors to support these activities in the future. We also learned that our people were seen as sources of expert process knowledge, and that, when we engaged customers at this level, we were seen as being at our best.

What we are passionate about as an organization is the advancement of technology that supports the fabrication and assembly of electronic products. The challenges of investing in research and understanding the road ahead are priorities we feel will allow us to continue to participate in this market with our unique position to create low-cost, high-yield process solutions.

**CA:** Speaking of Shared Intelligence, Cookson's launch of its laboratory CE Analytics sounds very promising. Give us the background of this new facility and how you expect it to improve the development of future technology requirements for the electronics manufacturing industry.

**RS:** CE Analytics came together as we began to see the critical need for highly specialized analytical services in our customer base. We made a substantial investment in people and capital with the sole purpose of providing process solutions. Then, we took our brain trust of scientists and analysts that were spread out around the globe and brought them together to work with our customers on a broad range of reliability and failure mode analysis. We then saw the need to extend this service offering to include assisting in product development, process engineering, application engineering and technical service.

This group of well-known scientists is making Shared Intelligence a reality for our customers and the industry. We make the non-proprietary work available on our Website in the form of application notes and datasheets. And we are continually publishing white papers and technical bulletins that we share with the industry in the form of articles and association paper presentations. A great example is our work on lead-free processes.

**CA:** Let's talk about the sale of Speedline Technologies to KPS Special Situations Fund II that was announced late last year. We interviewed Speedline's president and CEO Pierre de Villemejeane in last month's *The Fine Pitch*. Now it's your turn. Give us an update on the current relationship between Cookson Electronics and Speedline Technologies.



**RS:** We successfully completed the sale of our equipment group in the third quarter of 2003 and restructured our business around our core products. The sale went well, and we continue to have a cooperative relationship with Speedline in developing and improving future process technologies for our customers.

**CA:** When Speedline was part of the Cookson family, Cookson Electronics appeared to want to be known as the "one-stop shop" for electronics manufacturing, encompassing a full line of equipment, materials, process knowledge, etc. through itself and its partners. Now that Speedline is no longer a part of Cookson, has your message become confusing to your customers?

**RS:** We never viewed ourselves as a "one-stop shop," rather as a company that specializes in process knowledge. We provide trusted materials specified by the electronics and semiconductor packaging markets globally. We offer a world class R&D and technical organization, and our enabling products and technology deliver leading-edge capability to a broad range of customers.

As we move into 2004 and beyond, our focus will remain on being the global market leader in core materials supply, service and support for the electronics industry and to meeting the manufacturing challenges our customers face everyday. We continue to ask our customers what they expect from us, and, as I stated earlier, it is our process knowledge that excites them.

**CA:** What's next for Shared Intelligence and the process knowledge coming from CE Analytics? What other types of products are on the horizon for Cookson Electronics?

**RS:** Lisa, what gets my team excited and to work each day is the anticipation and challenge of what customers will be looking to do next. We are currently working hard to develop no-lead and green products that will help customers move and respond to the demands that legislation will bring to the industry. We are deeply involved in looking at unique and new printing techniques that will lower the manufacturing costs of semiconductor packages. We continue to research and develop our plating technology to accommodate the wafer-level applications of tomorrow.

We invested substantially in Asia in 2003, opening two new facilities in southern China and expanding capacity in several other locations. This year, we've reached a major strategic milestone in that region, with the Asian market now representing more than 33 percent of our total revenue.

Not only have we invested overseas, but we continue to build our North American business. We are nearing completion of a significant expansion to our Polyclad facility in Elk Grove, California, and expanded our laminates portfolio with the acquisition of GETEK. Additionally, we have opened a new Specialty Coatings System plant in Indianapolis to cater to the medical device market, and we also established a state-of-the-art semiconductor high-volume chemical manufacturing site in Connecticut.

We talk to customers everyday and take our development direction from them; our job is to create materials and process that will increase their yields, improve the quality of the products manufactured and lower their cost.

—Lisa Hamburg Bastin, Editor-in-Chief

Are you an electronics assembler or industry supplier who would like to be featured in an upcoming **The Fine Pitch**?

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