

RBR Ltd.

RBR designs and manufactures innovative oceanographic instruments that satisfy customer budgets and applications. The company offers sensors capable of tracking various water parameters, data loggers, and a variety of accessories for its products.

Headquarters	95 Hines Road, Ottawa Ontario, K2K 2M5
Year Established	1976
NAICS	334512 - Measuring, medical and controlling devices manufacturing
Employees	50
Major Expansions	2011
Exports	US, Asia-Pacific, EU, South America, Australia, New Zealand
Parent Company	N/A
Other Locations	N/A

Located in Ottawa, Ontario, RBR Ltd. designs and manufactures customizable oceanographic instruments. By listening to customer needs and feedback, RBR creates the right instruments for all of its customers, satisfying their specific budgets and applications. Additionally, the company offers high-quality support services to its customers throughout their product purchase, deployment, and maintenance. RBR is recognized within the industry as an innovative product developer and technological leader, and the company heavily invests in research and development (R&D) to maintain this reputation.

RBR was established in 1976, initially providing electrical design services on a contract basis to a number of government departments. The company began operations in the basement of a single house, but expanded into three adjacent houses as it experienced growth. To avoid the business fluctuations that accompany contract-based work, RBR became a product-based company in the early 1980s. Since then, the company has used its accumulated experience from manufacturing oceanographic instruments to become a leader within the oceanographic industry. RBR moved into its current building in Ottawa in 2011 to address the increasing demand for its products and services.

RBR's most basic oceanographic instruments can be purchased off the shelf, but the firm also offers more complex instruments that are customizable to the user's needs. The modular platform that RBR uses to manufacture its products easily permits custom configuration upon customer request. The company's most valued products are its various data loggers. RBR offers compact loggers, which have a large storage capacity while being lightweight and versatile, as well as standard loggers, which can be configured to measure up to 10 parameters. The company also manufactures sensors that measure water properties such

as salinity, dissolved gas, pH levels, temperature, depth, and many others. The sensors manufactured by RBR lead the industry in accuracy, stability, and power consumption, which is why customers often purchase both data loggers and sensors from RBR. However, it is possible for customers to use third-party sensors with RBR data loggers if they prefer.

Given that the majority of RBR's sales are custom orders, the company begins manufacturing most of its products after they have been ordered. Rather than attempting to build everything in-house, RBR uses other high-quality manufacturers to purchase materials and circuit boards. Machine assembly, as well as product testing and calibration, then take place in-house, allowing RBR to ensure the highest product quality before sending an order to the customer. The company's international reputation as a premium brand highlights the efficiency and quality of its supply chain. RBR's brand recognition and worldwide network of sales agents has greatly contributed to its growth, with 85 percent of sales in 2017 being exports. Most of these exports are to the United States and Asia, but some are to Australia, New Zealand, Europe, and South America as well.

RBR's customers are primarily government or university oceanographic researchers who publish research papers and derive policy implications using the data collected by RBR products. The oceanographic research community is extremely small, which is why customer satisfaction and reputation are so important to RBR. In addition to offering free software upgrades and regularly communicating with customers to ensure they are satisfied with the product, RBR uses customer feedback and input to guide its future R&D initiatives. This open communication between RBR and its customers is the main reason the company is capable of innovating faster than its competition, and is also a benefit that customers certainly appreciate. RBR's positive relationships with its customers, which directly contributes to the company's ability to innovate, has resulted in a great deal of repeat business.

At present, RBR employs 50 workers, many of whom have been with the company for more than 20 years. These experienced employees are able to share their industry knowledge with new hires, thus assisting with their internal development at the company. The level of employee education varies from high school graduates, who are members of the assembly team, to product designers with PhDs. Thirty percent of RBR's workforce comprises engineers, and relocating to its current facility in Ottawa's technology hub has given the company valuable access to a larger pool of qualified engineers. RBR's diverse team enables the firm to complete product design and assembly in-house, and to offer technical support and rapid prototyping. To find suitable workers, RBR uses its customer network and an internal referral program that compensates employees for referrals that ultimately lead to hires.

In terms of supporting the local community, RBR is a proud sponsor of grassroots conservation charity Ottawa Riverkeeper, and provides the group with oceanographic instruments when required. Partnering with the Riverkeepers and other local institutes benefits RBR as well because it allows the company to observe industry trends. The firm also donates a percentage of its total annual sales to charity, and matches up to \$1,000 per employee in donations to a registered charity of the employee's choice.

Selling products to more tenured researchers has been a challenge for RBR at times, because these researchers may be skeptical of the capabilities of RBR's advanced technology, and the possibility that this technology may invalidate their previous conclusions. However, RBR has had great success selling its products to younger and more innovative researchers who understand and appreciate cutting-edge technologies. As a company that exports 85 percent of its sales, another significant challenge for RBR is the uncertainty surrounding the continuation of free trade between Canada and the U.S. Yet the company is confident that its strong relationships and open communication with foreign customers will help it find a

positive solution if a problem arises.

RBR has experienced double digit growth annually over the past three years, and plans to continue this pace of growth by developing new products that satisfy customer needs. Given that the company enjoys a positive relationship with the government, RBR will continue using government programs to further its R&D initiatives; in the past, the firm has successfully used the Industrial Research Assistance Program and the Scientific Research and Experimental Development Tax Incentive Program. RBR intends to keep focusing on developing new products for the niche oceanographic market, rather than diving into additional markets as it grows. By focusing on RBR's area of expertise and using customer feedback, the company's management team believes that it can remain an innovative leader at the forefront of the industry.

In the short term, RBR plans on offering a data-hosting service in response to customer feedback. Due to the nature of the industry, many customers require a location to store large collections of data, and management believes the company is capable of satisfying this customer need. A long-term goal of RBR is to partner with firms that manufacture gliders, boats, sailboats, or autonomous water vehicles; doing so would allow the company to integrate its sensors and data loggers into these vehicles, providing customers with a new range of capabilities. However, because RBR will only partner with firms that manufacture extremely high-quality vehicles that can be smoothly integrated into the company's supply chain, this plan may take some time. This commitment to product quality and customer service is just one of many indications that RBR will continue to experience success for years to come.