

## Upstart engineering company tops list in employee growth

In less than two years in Houston, energy engineering firm Xodus Group has doubled its employee count and increased revenue five-fold. Lawrence Lambon, the firm's Houston operations director, said Xodus doesn't plan to stop there, with designs on doubling its headcount again by the end of the year.

Lambon joined Xodus in 2005, moving to Texas from Scotland, where the company is based. Xodus has built up its regional offices around the world with a strategy of seeking big growth within a short time, he said. Xodus had its second-straight appearance on *HBJ's* Largest Houston-area Energy Engineering firms list at No. 25, with 37 workers and \$5 million gross billings, reporting the largest percentage of employee growth on the list.

Lambon spoke with *HBJ* reporter Deon Daugherty about what's driving the growth at Xodus and what's next for similar companies in Houston.

### **Xodus' headcount grew by 61 percent from 2011 to 2012. How will you manage this kind of growth?**

Fundamentally, we believe in the company's strategy, which has played well in other regions. Our growth is only supported by our

clients. If they don't buy into our integrated approach, we won't grow. We believe if the message is good, if the product is good and if we're hiring the right people, the market will respond. Luckily, that's been the case.

### **What's generating this growth?**

A couple of things — the workload, but also our corporate attitude toward growth, which is if you get good people, the work will follow. A lot of companies are trying to prospect for work, then hire rapidly, and then, at the end of the project, they may or may not let those people go.

We're moving in to Houston with a real long-term vision. We want to be a big player here, and, in this market, it's all about the people. We're selling experience, so we go and get the people, and we're fairly confident the work comes after that.

### **Given the market dynamics — and scramble for workers in the energy sector — has it been difficult to find the right people to do the work?**

I'd love to tell you that for every open position, we've got 20 guys. It just makes it a challenge. There are a lot of experienced guys, especially in Houston, which has a really active



Lawrence  
Lambon

talent pool. That was one of the reasons we were drawn to Houston.

You have to differentiate yourself from the competition. We are never going to do it on a straight salary basis. Although we pay well, that doesn't help build a long-term vision. We pay a good salary, but they can get a good salary somewhere else and then leave.

It's a real integration of service that (we think) sets us apart. We've got subsea guys sitting next to flow assurance guys. They all get a sense of what drives each others' discipline. It's a good experience for them, and they have direct input into everything. It's the culture that keeps people, not a salary.