

Ceralink takes first technology to market

The Business Review (Albany) - by [Pam Allen](#)

Ceralink Inc. is now marketing its first wholly owned technology, marking a major shift in the company's growth.

The woman-owned and run business has moved from consultant to developer of its own processes, and expects to grow revenue 20 percent over the next two years by selling licensing rights and generating royalties.

The company has brought additional lab space online at the Rensselaer Technology Park so it can perform in-house the testing, demonstration and quality control work it previously had done with a partner in Kentucky.

A two-year \$400,000 grant from the **New York State Energy Research and Development Authority**, which Ceralink and several of its strategic partners will match dollar-for-dollar, will be used to smooth the commercialization process and buy new equipment for the lab.

"We plan to develop more and more products that belong to us. This is the first step in that direction," CEO Patricia Strickland said.

Holly Shulman, founder and president of the company, said she anticipates "tremendous growth in revenues as we develop more technologies."

A patent on the FastFuze technology, which uses radio frequency waves to laminate glass for automobiles, military vehicles, solar panels and other high-strength uses, is a couple of months away.

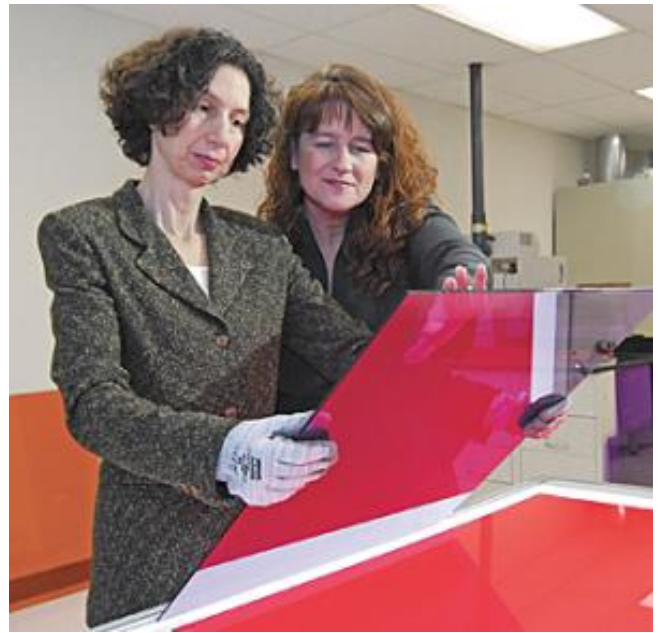
Driving the business

Shulman, an **Alfred University** graduate who earned her doctorate in materials science from the **Swiss Federal Institute of Technology**, founded Ceralink in 2001 in Alfred's business incubator. She moved the business to the Rensselaer Technology Park in 2004 to access a larger pool of scientists and engineers.

Whenever possible, Shulman hires Alfred University and **Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute** graduates who have interned at her company.

Shulman admittedly favors lab work over book work. She hired Strickland, another Alfred graduate, as the company's business manager in 2002 and promoted her to CEO in 2008.

"I knew somebody else would have to drive the business," said Shulman.



Holly Shulman, left, founder and president of Ceralink, and Patricia Strickland, CEO, project increased revenues as the company commercializes its technology, which uses radio frequency waves to laminate industrial glass.

Before it developed its first technology, Ceralink's revenue came from consulting fees, shared patents and licensing rights. Ceralink has generated commercial income since its first year in operation, she said.

Ceralink's resume includes a patent with General Electric Co. on a microwave brazing process. It also holds North American licensing rights to a microwave technology for industrial ceramics that was developed in the U.K. Ceralink licensed the technology to Harrop Industries Inc., an Ohio-based kiln manufacturer.

"We never tried to pigeon hole ourselves, but that was our platform then," Strickland said.

More in the pipeline

Three years ago, the company started developing the lamination technology after receiving a \$250,000 U.S. Department of Energy grant. It started testing that process with companies about a year ago.

And there is more technology in the pipeline.

Ceralink recently was awarded its first federal Small Business Innovation Research grant. The \$150,000 grant will be used to study a technology that uses ultra-high temperatures to process flat ceramics and glass for military armor. It will cover six months of research that will start in January.

If the process is feasible, the company will apply for a second SBIR grant to further develop and market that technology. Second-round SBIR grants can run upwards of \$1.5 million.

Shulman emphasized the company's focus on "lean and green" technologies, and noted that its lamination process uses 95 percent less energy than traditional methods.

Ceralink's technology uses high temperatures to heat only a portion of the glass; traditional autoclaving, which uses steam heat, requires heating all of the glass. Microwave lamination takes minutes, while autoclaving takes several hours, she said.

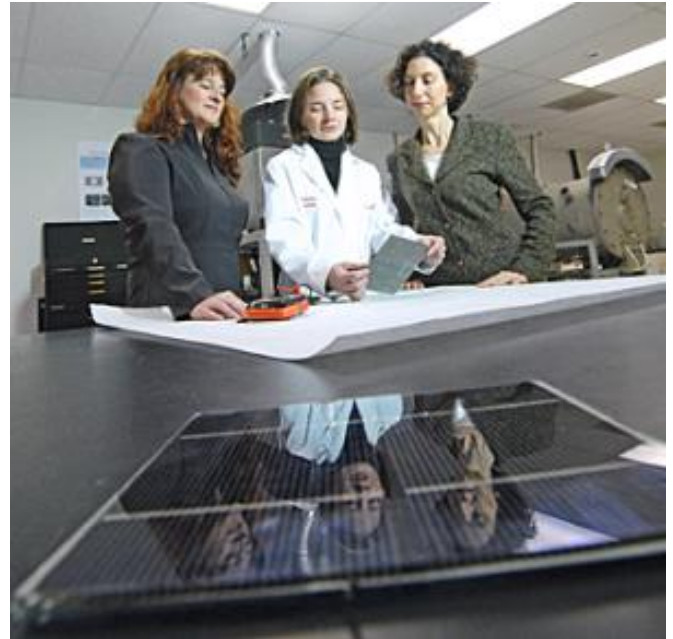
"Ours represents both time and energy savings," Shulman said.

Ray Lund is president of **Thermex-Thermatron Inc.** in Kentucky, one of Ceralink's strategic partners.

Lund plans to install the new technology in some of the industrial equipment his company manufactures.

"Our hope all along in the relationship is that we would be building industrial equipment equipped with their technology," he said.

Strickland said the two companies are discussing several options for the agreement, including licensing rights and royalties.



From left, Patricia Strickland, CEO, Morgana Fall, operations engineer, and Holly Shulman, president, demonstrate solar cells laminated using Ceralink's FastFuse process.