

# Monterey County BUSINESS

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"We're an industrial product, but it has some of the appeal of a commercial product. It's a feel-good product. They (customers) like the design."

— Bob Steinberg, Sage Metering Inc. CEO



VERN FISHER/The Herald

Bob Steinberg, left, CEO of Sage Metering Inc., and Mark Crawford, vice president of logistics, look over meters at the company's Ryan Ranch facility in Monterey.

## MAKING IT BETTER

SAGE METERING RESPONDS TO SALES REPS' SUGGESTIONS

By LANE WALLACE  
Herald Staff Writer

Sage Metering Inc.'s sales of thermal gas-flow meters were going well, but the company wanted to know how to make a better product.

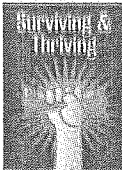
So four years ago, the Monterey company asked its sale representatives, and from their suggestions Sage made a number of changes, making a meter that is lighter, yet sturdier and easier to read.

Now, the Sage Prime, introduced in 2007, "is 90 percent of our sales," said Bob Steinberg, CEO of the company, which makes meters at its Ryan Ranch

facility.

The Sage Prime, Steinberg said, improves upon what the company has been doing since it started in 2002: producing a meter that combines "the precision of digital performance and the performance of analog."

The meters "have fast response time and sensitivity," said Steinberg, who said he isn't aware of competitors marketing such a hybrid. Steinberg has been in the industry for 25 years and has worked for Sage's competitors.



An occasional series chronicling local businesses that continue to be successful in challenging economic times.

The Sage Prime has what is called an organic LED, which can be read in sunlight. A graphic display has been added, along with the numerical display. The Sage Prime has no moving parts, Steinberg said, which eliminates replacing bearings and prevents undetected accuracy shifts.

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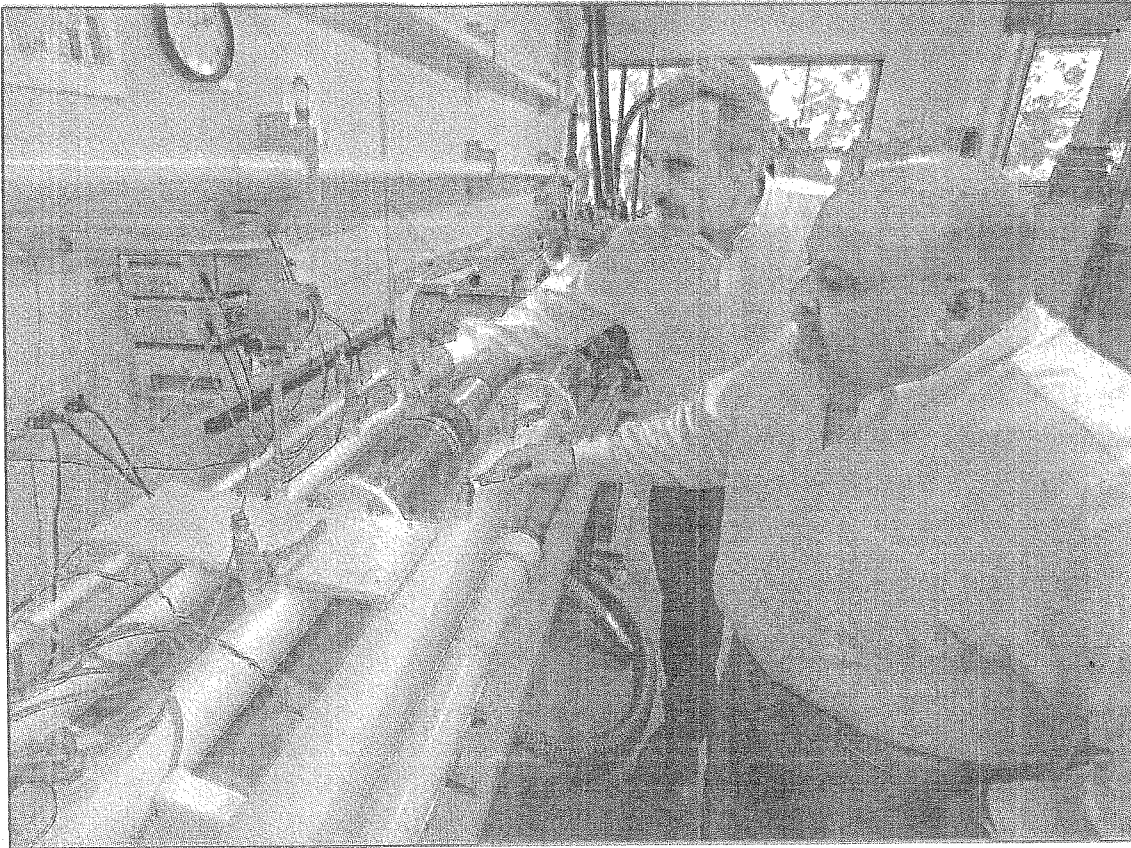
Thermal gas-flow meters are used to measure the flow of gas in industrial production and commercial buildings.

A different type of transmission system is used for the gas that goes into homes, and homes are too small to warrant use of flow meters.

The digital meters, which cost about \$3,000, were designed by Robert Trecott, the company's vice president of engineering.

The meters are used to measure methane gas coming out of landfills, which can be harnessed and

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VERN FISHER/The Herald

**Bob Steinberg, left, and Mark Crawford check on production at Sage Metering Inc. in Monterey.**

## Sage

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converted to an energy source. The Monterey County Waste Management District uses Sage's meters.

As costs have risen, Steinberg said, companies are more interested in measuring and controlling how much gas they're using.

There are more environmental concerns that require more gas flow meters.

"The government is trying to reduce greenhouse gas emissions," Steinberg said.

Thermal gas-flow meters are inserted into a valve in the gas pipes.

Sage was growing steadily until early 2009, about the time the economy in general was at its worst.

When sales suddenly dropped, the company cut its

14 employees' pay by 10 percent. Two months later, Sage was doing well enough to restore workers to their previous pay rate.

Two months after that, "we paid them back for all the lost wages during the pay cut," Steinberg said.

Sales for all of 2009 were up 17 percent for Sage, which is averaging 30 percent growth since its inception.

This year, Steinberg said, sales are up 60 percent, and the staff has grown from 14 employees to 19 employees since December.

Most orders are for a few meters, but Sage sometimes gets orders for 25 to 50, Steinberg said.

*Lane Wallace can be reached at 646-4478 or [mhbusiness@montereyherald.com](mailto:mhbusiness@montereyherald.com).*