



# CORPORATE PROFILE

## MEDEQUIP BIOMEDICAL: EQUIPPED TO MEET YOUR PATIENT MONITORING NEEDS

**I**n 1996, Mike Balakonis and Mike Lipson founded MedEquip Biomedical, a worldwide, independent depot repair center and third-party provider of equipment and parts for patient monitoring. The two had an idea that would greatly increase the efficiency of a certain kind of repair. They began repairing PCBs and modules for patient monitors. The program became popular immediately because it provided a cost-effective alternative to going to the OEM for repairs, “and it grew from there,” Balakonis says.

After fully realizing the strong need in the marketplace, Balakonis and Lipson set out to grow the company into the nation’s first multi-vendor service company for patient monitors.

MedEquip Biomedical was an industry first in many ways. The company was the first multi-vendor third-party patient monitoring company, and the first ISO 9001-2008 certified third-party patient monitoring company. It was also the first sponsor of the biomed forum, BiomedTalk – one of many ways MedEquip supports the biomed community.

MedEquip has been a sponsor of several state biomed associations and regularly attends MD Expos and small shows around the country. For ten years MedEquip Biomedical sponsored the South Florida Association for Medical Instrumentation (SFAMI) annual kickoff casino night in January, previously sponsored by Philips. The event, famous as one of the more fun nights in the biomed community, typically hosts more than 200 SFAMI members.

The company is insistent about remaining active in the biomedical community, especially with the next generation of biomed. MedEquip has established and maintained a strong relationship with various universities, colleges and technical schools. They’re currently working out the terms of an internship program that will allow students to work and learn about patient monitoring equipment at MedEquip while earning course credit.

In addition, Lipson serves as a board member of the Service

Industry Association, an organization that serves the high-tech and medical equipment service industries. MedEquip has been a member for 10 years, alongside Fortune 500 companies such as IBM and Northrop Grumman. “It’s a great networking experience,” Lipson says, “and a forum for new ideas.”

But as involved as they are, the company has not been without its challenges. As medical technology advances have changed the game in recent years, MedEquip has faced the challenge head-on, evolving its competencies with the new technology, while retaining vast knowledge and capabilities for repairing older models of equipment. Today, all new patient monitoring equipment is proprietary software driven. Because of that fact, repairs have become extremely difficult, and discerning the inner workings of a piece of equipment has taken on a new set of challenges. “We’ve undertaken a big expense doing reverse engineering,” Balakonis says. “We have to figure out the schematics from a bare circuit board via reverse engineering.”

The company's talented team includes a variety of employees with specialized skill-sets, many who have been with the company for more than a decade. MedEquip's staff includes OEM-trained biomedes, electronic technicians and engineers. Most employees are experts in specific product lines.

As a multi-vendor sales and service company, MedEquip Biomedical is able to provide a comprehensive service solution, including parts, repairs, sales, rentals and leases of a wide range of equipment from many manufacturers. The company has fair and accommodating warranties and is one of the only companies in the industry to offer a one-year warranty, which includes free technical and clinical applications support. In addition, MedEquip offers a one-month evaluation trial period on all equipment it sells. It also offers free loaner equipment when customers' equipment is out for depot repair. The company can repair equipment as old as 30 years, all the way up to brand-new.

Medical Dealer sat down with Balaknois, President and Co-founder, to find out a little bit more about how this unique company is able to do it all. The interview transcript is below.

### **Please share a little bit about your company's history and how you achieved success.**

**Balakonis:** I spent nearly 20 years in hospitals working as a technician or managing biomedical departments before starting MedEquip in 1996. Through my hospital experience, I realized that at almost any given time, a patient monitor was broken. In many instances, there was no alternative but to go to the manufacturer for parts or service. The idea to form a specialized multi-vendor service company was born from those days in the hospital environment. In the beginning, my co-founder, Michael Lipson, and I did everything, from packing and shipping to billing. Now, both of us dedicate our time to strategic planning and development, and overseeing the daily business functions of the company. MedEquip has grown tremendously throughout the years and will keep growing as our customer base seeks a cost-effective, quality alternative to OEM parts and service.

### **What products and services do you offer?**

**Balakonis:** We offer depot repair services, parts sales, complete system sales and rentals for patient/physiological monitors. This includes telemetry systems and transmitters, single and multi-parameter modules, flat panel displays, CRTs and anesthesia gas monitoring. We cover products manufactured by HP-Agilent-Philips, GE-Marquette-



Mike Balakonis was once a biomed himself, so he understands his customers' perspective.



Mike Lipson's industry involvement is remarkable - he serves on the board of the Service Industry Association, among other roles.

Datex, Spacelabs, Siemens and Datascope. MedEquip offers a one-year warranty on most of our products.

### **What is your company mission?**

**Balakonis:** MedEquip Biomedical's mission is to provide the health care and biomedical service industries cost-effective physiological monitoring systems and service parts, backed with responsive and knowledgeable service, support, and a guarantee of quality.

### **What are some advantages that your company has over the competition?**

**Balakonis:** We were the very first company to specialize in multi-vendor patient monitoring parts and service. That gives us a much broader range of experience than our competitors who have copied our business model. In 2002, MedEquip became ISO registered. Having a quality management system in place for 10 years has put the company on a path of continuous quality improvement. Also important is that the company is owned and operated by biomedical professionals. This allows us to view problems from our customers' perspective.

### **How have you overcome challenges over the years?**

**Balakonis:** From the start MedEquip has faced technology hurdles and challenges. Most modern medical equipment comes with no electronic schematics, and almost everything is software-driven. There are proprietary issues with manufacturers not wanting anyone but themselves providing aftermarket service and support. To overcome this, we developed the in-house capability to reverse engineer a printed circuit board and create our own schematics.

### **What product or service that your company offers are you most excited about right now?**

**Balakonis:** The Philips IntelliVue product line has really taken off well and is accounting for over 50 percent of our sales. On any given day, we have between 15 and 25

Philips MMS modules being received or being sent back to our customers repaired.

### Please describe your facility.

**Balakonis:** In 2005, MedEquip purchased a 12,000 square-foot building in Doral, Fla. The building was previously owned by a telecommunication firm and served as its hub to the Caribbean. To say the least, it was wired about as high-tech as a building could be. Besides having more than enough room for over 12 electronic work stations, the building also has the amenities of a lobby, technical library, conference room and offices.



The entire MedEquip team had a great time sponsoring SFAMI's casino night in 2007.

### Please share a company success story—one time that you “saved the day” for a customer.

**Balakonis:** MedEquip has not only “saved the day” but we also have “saved the night” for our customers. We provide key hospitals with service parts kits on consignment. There is no up-front fee for this and the customer only pays to replace an item that is used. The advantage of the consignment kit is that if a biomedical technician on call is looking at a dead ICU monitor or Central Station at 2:00 AM in the morning, we want to be there for them.

### Where do you see the industry heading? How do you think MedEquip Biomedical will adapt to these trends?

**Balakonis:** The writing is on the wall. In the future, almost every medical device will be tied into the IT back-

bone of the hospital. More and more wireless technology will be employed and biomedical technicians will have to evolve in their jobs to survive. MedEquip will stay educated in all ways regarding the technology side of the market, and we will always have our niche with our ability to service one or more subsections of a patient monitor. MedEquip will adapt by utilizing our strong engineering team to stay current with technology.

### Please describe your team.

**Balakonis:** The employee base of MedEquip is primarily made up of biomedical and electronic technicians. In addition to the electronic engineers, we have a quality manager and the normal complement of office staff you would find at any company. In August of 2011, MedEquip created the position and hired Paul Raffaelli as the Director of Business Development. Paul's focus has been to fine-tune the business operations and create a national sales force.

### What are the company's plans for the future?

**Balakonis:** Our mission is our plan for the future. With that, MedEquip Biomedical is always striving to enhance its technical expertise and range of services. As we grow so will our technical strengths and resources to better serve our customers. We are also slowly expanding our services into Europe, Asia and South America. We plan on being a worldwide source for third-party service parts and monitor sales. With increased growth in the U.S. and overseas, we plan to remain easily accessible as a strong resource for Biomedical departments in technical support, service parts, depot repair and monitoring sales. MedEquip Biomedical looks to remain true to its mission.

### Any parting thoughts?

**Balakonis:** We will strive to provide the biomedical community with cost-effective, comprehensive equipment planning and service solutions. Continuous enhancement of our quality system and valued-added services set us apart from the competition. Our existing customer base knows that many miscellaneous items are free for the asking. We will also continue to support and sponsor biomedical associations nationwide. Ultimately, it is feedback and open communication with our customers that drive MedEquip. As owners, Michael Lipson and I will always remain accessible to our customers and suppliers no matter how large we grow. **MD**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION** on MedEquip Biomedical please visit [www.medequipbiomedical.com](http://www.medequipbiomedical.com) or call 877.470.8013.