



*Barbara Dick, PSR VP and Phone Room Supervisor, works with a caller on a recent telephone survey.*

## POWER SYSTEMS RESEARCH (PSR)

*Another in Our Series of EGSA Member Company Profiles*

### POWER SYSTEMS RESEARCH (PSR)

[www.powersys.com](http://www.powersys.com)

Power Systems Research (PSR)—established in 1976 - is the leading source of data, analysis and forecasting on global engine production and related applications. One of its databases, OE Link™, includes numbers down to model level for OEMs in key market segments, such as Power Generation. PSR's global research network includes nine offices and stretches across 200 countries and four continents.



*Power Systems Research headquartered in St. Paul, MN, has additional locations throughout the globe*

This is the story of a 40-year-old company that carried on and succeeded following the sudden and tragic death of its Founder and President last year. Early in 2015, George Zirnhelt, the dynamic and creative Founder and President of Power Systems Research (PSR), passed away from injuries sustained in an accident while vacationing in Mexico.

The PSR global team rebounded from this loss, immediately implementing a crisis operations plan and a management transition program that were both already put in place. Instead of losing ground, the company finished 2015 strong, by following through on several strategic tasks that George had initiated and implemented to position the company for future growth and expansion. Already in Q1, 2016 revenue was the best in more than a decade – a sign that the company is moving forward despite tragic loss.

PSR is an internationally-recognized leader in the collection, analysis and forecasting of production information for engines and equipment used in power generation and many other applications.

Its global reach spreads from the firm's headquarters in Minnesota to offices in Detroit and Brussels, from Beijing to Tokyo, India and Brazil. PSR's representatives gather key data from more than 200 countries for its portfolio of world-class clients.

"George's death was a tragedy for our family, our company and many of the close contacts he held in our industry," says Joe Zirnhelt, COO at PSR, and a member of the company's executive

committee. "But he had prepared the company to move ahead successfully without him, and we've been able to do that. It shows how valuable emergency action and transition plans can be. Without them, we certainly would not be in the position we are today."

### Recovering from Tragedy

How does a company keep its global network functioning smoothly and continue to successfully serve its client base built up over 40 years in the time of tragedy?

The story is a classic example of the way a company can react and succeed if they are prepared to move quickly when disaster strikes.

First, the PSR Management Team, working around the world, immediately connected through regular conference calls to address important issues, answer questions and deal with client needs.

Second, the company launched its crisis communications plan and told employees, clients, important suppliers and news media, about the change in leadership, what it meant and where the company was headed.

Third, within the first week, the management team quickly began implementing the long-term transition plan put in place by Zirnhelt. This included expanding the board to include an outside director and re-evaluating the direct and functional reporting



PSR Around the Globe with office locations in Minneapolis, MN; Ann Arbor, MI; Brussels; Beijing; Tokyo; Pune; India; Sao Paulo; Brazil; Moscow and Riyadh.

responsibilities that would suit the company best moving forward.

"Within days, we were able to adjust to the new reality and begin to successfully operate in a new way because of George's previous planning," says Dennis Huibregtse, PSR C.E.O.

#### 40 Years of Innovation

In 1976, a young mechanical engineer living in the small town of Grantsburg, WI began collecting information on engine production. Twenty-nine-year-old George Zirnhelt, working in his basement, organized this information in a database he called EnginLink™.

Today, EnginLink™ is the only all-inclusive source of global engine production, forecast and specification data down to the model level of detail. This resource is regularly used by manufacturers producing 92% of the world's engine horsepower. It is used extensively by leading engine manufacturers, OEMs, component suppliers, associations, agencies, regulators, financial analysts and more.

In 1981, PSR began operations in Japan, and in 1985, it moved to its present location in Eagan, MN. That was a big year for the company: it launched two more databases—OE Link™ and PartsLink™—and converted all of its database publications to diskettes for use on personal computers.



Dennis Huibregtse, left, and George Zirnhelt, PSR founder, chat during the early days of the company



PSR sponsors STEM projects at two high schools in the St. Paul, MN area. Looking at an award-winning car built for the Shell EcoMarathon are (left to right) Joe Zirnhelt, Chris Fisher and Marilyn Tarbet. The car was built by students at St. Thomas Academy and was entered into international competition in London in July 2015.

PSR now was communicating with its clients in the digital realm.

Today, PSR clients can access data 24/7 from anywhere in the world. Subscribers define the scope of data they need, and pay for only what they use. Forty years of development have made PSR's 5 global databases deep and broad, and easy to use.

OE Link™ is the single source of global O.E.M. equipment production and related forecast data. The comprehensive database provides global annual production and forecast volumes of O.E.M. equipment across all engine-powered market segments, including power generation. Information is presented so that subscribers can filter it in many ways to produce customized reports.

Details in OE Link™ enable subscribers to drill down from a global view of equipment production to the most granular levels that include O.E.M. model level details. OE Link™ provides an unparalleled level of detail for competitor analysis.

PSR clients use OE Link™ to increase market share, measure performance, monitor growth trends, identify emerging technologies and gain competitive intelligence.

#### Custom Research Services

Custom research services always have been offered by PSR, and George Zirnhelt, himself, completed more than 1,000 project management assignments for the company.



Realizing that personal telephone interviews could be more effective than direct mail surveys, PSR acquired a call center operation in 1992, adding an important in-house calling capability to the PSR list of services. PSR holds a unique industry position by operating within the engine-powered research space and having its own in-house call center that retains many years of researching industry specific issues.

“Having these skilled researchers in the same office is a tremendous advantage,” says Michael Aistrup, Senior Analyst, who develops and manages many of PSR’s survey-based projects.

During its 40 years, PSR has stayed true to its DNA of innovation, and has continually improved its global operations and brought out new products to enhance client value. Last year, PSR stepped up by following through on initiatives to launch new subsidiary companies based in Beijing, China and Pune, India.

### Tracking Power Generation

One of the key industries tracked by PSR is power generation. Besides coverage of power generation equipment in the OE Link™ database, PSR also maintains two ongoing syndicated surveys, PowerTracker North America™ and PowerTracker International™. These syndicated surveys regularly track the progress of the end-user markets by reaching out to dealers and end-users of generator sets to monitor trends and developments within the industry. The surveys provide a nice complement to the production database and allow for a more complete picture of the production and sales pipeline.

### Another New Product

In 2016, the company is expanding its offerings from data to technical information with the launch of PSR Labs™, a new benchmarking service. It’s aimed at companies that need assistance in physically measuring and evaluating products, theirs as well as their competitor’s.

The benchmarking services are performed at the company’s in-house lab under the direction of Tad Achterberg, a 30-year veteran. “These benchmarking services are an extension of the type of engine data that PSR has been providing for 40 years,” says Achterberg. “The only difference is that we’re collecting the data from hardware, not from spreadsheets.”

PSR clients continue to renew their subscriptions because the data and analysis meets their needs in a convenient and economical way. “I appreciate all the years PSR has given us great data, and you’ve been (excellent) to work with,” says one PSR client. That pretty well summarizes the PSR story and its 40-year record of growth.

## In Memoriam

### George Zirnhelt

1945 – 2015

Founder, President, C.E.O.  
Power Systems Research



George Zirnhelt, founder, president and C.E.O. of Power Systems Research (PSR), launched the company in 1976. He earned a bachelor’s degree in mechanical engineering and an MBA from the University of Minnesota.

While working at the battery company, Gould, Inc., Zirnhelt earned several patents. Eventually, he became majority owner, President and C.E.O. of an O.E.M. that built wheel loaders, forklifts and related equipment which was sold around the world. After selling this company, he launched Power Systems Research. (PSR)

### The EGSA Connection

Since the fall of 2005, Joe Zirnhelt (C.O.O.) has been an active participant in EGSA business. From his time as a Committee Officer for the Market Trends Committee (currently serving as Vice Chair) to his great work on the Market Pulse Survey these past two years, Joe has contributed greatly.

You can also look forward to Joe presenting some of PSR’s research during our Sacramento event this fall, as he is one of our 6 presenters at the EGSA 51st Annual Fall Conference. His presentation is entitled, *Investor Mindset – Why Invest in Power Generation Related Companies?*

Not only has PSR donated Joe’s time for the betterment of the industry, but they have also offset our conference costs and kept member pricing low by always participating in EGSA’s sponsorship program. We are grateful to them for a fabulous collection of reusable water bottles over the years!

Finally, if you ever wish to spend formalized networking time with the PSR folks, they never miss an EGSA Gearhead opportunity, so feel free to join them on the tours! ■