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Proto Labs' Cool Idea! Award Helps AgPulse 'Water Down' the Competition
Production grant empowered company to quickly go to market with innovative irrigation solution

MAPLE PLAIN, MINN. — June 28, 2016 — With water efficiency top of mind in agriculture, new businesses are cropping up quickly. Winning a [Cool Idea! Award](#) and getting access to critical grant funding was able to propel one innovative company forward, enabling them to get their product to market quickly and efficiently.

California-based Mist Labs hopes to take a leading role in the water-management segment with its new offering, [AgPulse](#), an internet-of-things-enabled, micro-irrigation control platform for farms, vineyards, orchards – even backyards and gardens. AgPulse employs wireless soil sensors and data analytics to monitor ground moisture and to water the ideal amount when the soil indicates it is necessary.

“Manual irrigation and record-keeping can cause large discrepancies in watering,” said Mist Labs CEO Matt Kresse. “AgPulse creates an immediate opportunity for farmers to understand and conserve water usage, leading to optimized costs and yield.”

With the price of water on an upward trajectory – especially in drought-ridden regions like Central Valley California – Mist Labs offers a unique solution, but needed to get to market quickly to gain a competitive foothold.

According to Kresse, the company had all the elements required to bring AgPulse to market but needed a partner to produce the final, end-use parts for its innovative equipment. The parts had to be custom-designed and injection-molded, using a high-strength polycarbonate material.

The Cool Idea! Award, a service grant given to innovative companies by quick-turn part and prototype manufacturer [Proto Labs](#) (NYSE: PRLB), was the perfect solution. By winning the Cool Idea! Award, Kresse and his team were able to apply the grant funding to an initial production run of end-use parts. These included fully functional, wireless flow meters designed to withstand the demanding conditions of an agricultural environment. Very quickly, Mist Labs was able to test and finalize the equipment, and launch AgPulse to the market.

“We’re scheduled to deploy a large number of units on farms in 2016, establishing a solid customer base that will set us up for success in the future,” said Kresse. “Without winning the Cool Idea! Award, we would not be where we are today.”

With orders already rolling in, Kresse and his team are excited about the sales pipeline and their ability to deliver products as ordered. Units begin shipping midsummer 2016.

“Our goal with the Cool Idea! Award is to help innovative companies move through the design-to-development process quickly – whether they need functional prototypes, testing or low-volume production quantities,” said Proto Labs founder Larry Lukis. “Through our software-powered 3D printing, injection molding and CNC machining manufacturing processes, we can help award winners create exactly what they need, when they need it, to move their business forward.”

About the Proto Labs Cool Idea! Award

Offered by Proto Labs, the world’s fastest digital manufacturing source for custom prototypes and low-volume production parts, the Cool Idea! Award helps entrepreneurs bring innovative products to market through grants that support product prototyping, testing and production. For more details and to apply for a Cool Idea! Award, go to www.protolabs.com/cool-idea.