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## Executive Interview with Steve Kirchner, COO, SOMS Technologies

**Steven Kirchner is the chief operating officer (COO) of SOMS Technologies LLC, developer and manufacturer of the microGreen Extended Performance Oil Filter. As COO, he is responsible for the day-to-day operations related to sales and distribution, and primary contact for marketing and public relations. The microGreen Extended Performance Oil Filter is a new patented filter technology introduced in 2008 that provides dual filtration to keep motor oil like new for up to 30,000 miles. In this exclusive interview, Kirchner talks to aftermarketNews about this new product, introduced last Fall, and its progress in the marketplace thus far.**

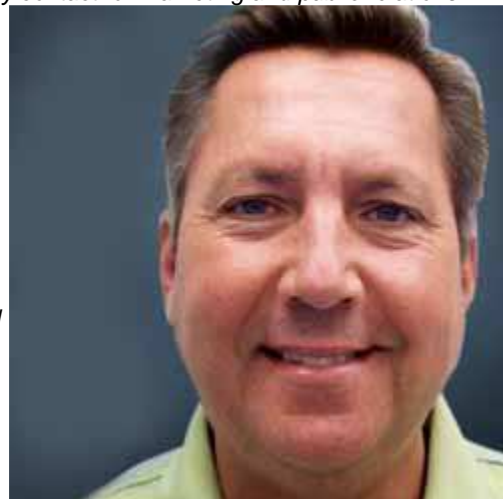
**By Amy Antenora**

Monday, September 14, 2009

*Steven Kirchner is the chief operating officer (COO) of SOMS Technologies LLC, developer and manufacturer of the microGreen Extended Performance Oil Filter. As COO, he is responsible for the day-to-day operations related to sales and distribution, and primary contact for marketing and public relations.*

*A former senior vice president of worldwide marketing for Valvoline Oil Co., Kirchner has more than 23 years of marketing, sales and operational experience in the automotive industry. He developed and led dynamic new marketing and sales changes within the industry. Kirchner was responsible for developing and managing Valvoline's distribution network, creating new strategies that changed the business model for the large independent distributors in the industry.*

*Kirchner led the national sales team at Valvoline, consisting of more than 110 sales representatives, and changed the structure of the team resulting in improved efficiencies and a significant boost to profitability. He has led teams that successfully launched new products and brands across a variety of channels and market segments. Kirchner also was awarded a Cannes Film Festival Award and a Clio Award for an Environmental Marketing Campaign in 1990.*



*Over the past six years he has leveraged his industry experience to provide consulting services and has been involved in startup companies that provided technology solutions for retail management and for the consumer products sector.*

*Kirchner is a graduate of Indiana University and was a member of their NCAA Division I soccer team when it took second place in the national championship.*

*The microGreen Extended Performance Oil Filter is a new patented filter technology introduced in 2008 that provides dual filtration to keep motor oil like new for up to 30,000 miles. This unique spin-on filter fits most light vehicles, as well as fleet classes 1-6, and can be used to greatly reduce costs associated with periodic oil changes while protecting the environment. In this exclusive interview, Kirchner talks to aftermarketNews about this new product, introduced last Fall, and its progress in the marketplace thus far.*

**The microGreen filter makes some very big promises that I'm sure have been met by some skepticism. Tell us about the technology and research that backs up this product.**

The microGreen Extended Performance Oil Filter is a new patented technology oil filter that took more than nine years to develop and test. Additionally, it has been laboratory and field tested by fleets for more than two years and some of those tests have been conducted under a shared research agreement with the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority.

It is unique because of an advanced, patented microfilter system that is located within a standard filter canister. The two-stage system provides dual filtration and captures contaminant particles down to two microns in size, whereas conventional filters only capture particles down to 25 to 40 microns in size.

**When SOMS debuted the microGreen filter last year, you were focused on distribution to fleets only and then moved on to offering the product online direct to consumers. How are you building consumer awareness and what has the reception been for the product thus far?**

Due to the significant advancement in technology and performance of the filter, the decision was made to initially introduce the filter to fleets because they have trained professional mechanics servicing their vehicles. These professionals are already familiar with dual filtration and were considered to be the best candidates to first adopt the product's technology and experience the substantial environmental and financial benefits. We are still focused on building our brand awareness to the professional fleet segment of the market and do not plan to aggressively build broad consumer awareness until we have built a substantial base of distributors in this market segment.

**Will you begin marketing the product at the distribution level as well and will SOMS/microGreen be attending or exhibiting at AAPEX this year?**

We are beginning to work with automotive aftermarket distributors and plan to build a national distribution network. We attend many conferences and trade shows during the year including the Green Fleet Conference, Government Fleet Expo and HDAW, and yes, we will absolutely attend the AAPEX show this fall.

**From the work you've been doing at the fleet level, what lessons are you learning that would support this industry in adopting green initiatives?**

Most, if not all fleets, are very conscious about how their maintenance practices affect the environment. However, making changes to maintenance practices must also make business and economic sense, particularly in today's current economic climate. One of the most appealing benefits of the microGreen oil filter is that fleets begin saving money immediately. Also, there is no major initial investment that requires a lengthy pay back period.

**SOMS is still a relatively young company, however you have had extensive experience in this market. What advantages does that bring to the table for the company? What lessons from the field have you applied to this new business?**

This has definitely been an asset in presenting this new breakthrough technology. As you mentioned before, because this technology is so advanced, and the change in behavior is significant, there is skepticism. Interestingly, as people learn how the microGreen filter works, they are very quick to accept the product and show an interest in using it. Their primary questions revolve around the oil. Obviously, they have never gone 24,000 to 30,000 miles without changing the oil, particularly in light and medium-duty vehicles. Our experience helped us anticipate these questions and devise an approach to provide prospective customers with independent data to assure performance. The first fleets that used our filter conducted independent oil analysis, at periodic intervals to monitor the condition of the oil. They all found that with the oil staying extremely clean, the condition of the oil remained suitable for extended use. We

currently work with many of the largest commercial fleets in the U.S. and they all have ongoing oil analysis programs through our fleet adoption program. We have experienced tremendous growth and are in the process of hiring a national sales team. We are specifically looking for people with automotive aftermarket sales experience.

**Any plans for new products in the near future?**

We have several technological initiatives under way for additional new filters for different types of engines and for engines that use different types of fuels.

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