



**Company:** Optimax Systems Inc.  
**Headquarters/Location:** 6367 Dean Parkway  
Ontario, New York  
**Year Founded:** 1991  
**Total Number of Employees:** 110  
**Revenues, 2004:** \$9.4 million  
**CEO:** Rick Plympton  
**Website:** [www.optimaxsi.com](http://www.optimaxsi.com)

### Activities and developments:

Optimax Systems was founded in 1991 and is located on Dean Parkway in the town of Ontario, Wayne County, just east of Rochester, N.Y. The company has 80 optics technicians on staff, making it one of the largest manufacturers of precision optics in the United States.

The first four years of business were focused on getting the business going and refining the rapid manufacturing process. By 1995, Optimax could make a custom lens in 1 to 2 days. The company started advertising one-week delivery of prototype optics in 1996 and started offering a money back guarantee for expedited deliveries soon afterward.

The company utilizes Opticam CNC (computer-numerically-controlled) technology to enable faster manufacturing. People have been CNC-machining metals for 40 years, but Opticam goes beyond conventional technology by processing brittle optical materials to tolerances 100 times tighter than conventional machines. Opticam also reduces the number of manufacturing steps from 14 to 5, enabling a quicker, more robust process.

Optimax's major strength is its rapid-prototyping capability. Optimax is a company that specializes in small quantity jobs — from "1 to 100." It works with more than 200 different optical materials and can create precision optics in the shape of spheres, aspheres and cylinders. The company prides itself on being able to deliver prototype lenses in one week.

Optimax hired some 30 opticians in 2004 and is currently in need of an additional 30 to 50 opticians. The company's opticians have machining skills necessary for making optical components 3 to 300mm diameter.



Optimax created the lenses used in the Mars Rovers to beam back images to Earth.

Housed in a 40,000-square-foot facility, Optimax has been operating at or near capacity for the last two years. The company's workforce has grown from 12 employees in 1995 to a total of 110 today. Meanwhile, revenues have climbed from just under \$1 million in 1995 to an anticipated \$10 million in 2005.

Today, more than 50 percent of the company's business is prototype or R&D optics, with about 30 percent being expedited for quicker delivery each month.

The vast majority of this work is related to the semiconductor and defense industries. Approximately one third of Optimax's work is in the semiconductor area, with another third in the defense area. The defense area — more specifically, contracts with the U.S. Department of Defense — has seen the biggest leap by far, growing 700 percent during the past five years in support of several homeland security programs.

The balance of the work comes from several market sectors including machine vision, medical systems, the U.S. Department of Energy, graphic arts, and aerospace. Optimax proudly manufactured the lenses made for NASA's Mars Rovers, *Spirit* and *Opportunity*.

### **Why Rochester:**

Higher education is extremely important in the 21<sup>st</sup> century automated manufacturing environment, and to Optimax.

With some of the top optics programs in the nation, Rochester-area colleges and universities are an ideal recruiting ground for the opticians that Optimax needs.

In addition, the company is currently working with Monroe Community College and Finger Lakes Community College to refine academic programs that address development of the knowledge and skills required for the today's CNC Opticians, making them appropriate candidates to meet Optimax's needs.



**Approximately 110 employees work at Optimax.**

Mike Mandina, Founder and President, and Rick Plympton, CEO, both started their careers on the production floor and later received advanced degrees from Rochester-area universities in engineering and business management. For more information on educational resources in Rochester, go to <http://www.rochesterbiz.com/Living/Education/>.

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