

In The
Spotlight

STAYING COMPETITIVE: WEB-HOSTING FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

By Steve Balbierz— *External Affairs Director of SBC Michigan*



There is no doubt that in today's competitive environment and difficult economy, small businesses face some very real challenges. However, with the right technology, today's small businesses also have significant opportunities to grow beyond local communities and compete even with large national businesses.

Telecommunications technology has evolved so that the small business can look and feel like a larger company to potential customers and suppliers – even home-based companies can quickly and economically build and maintain a professional Web site. A savvy business uses its telecommunications systems to constantly communicate with clients, make products and services available to customers around the clock and manage data needs that would otherwise require a telecommunications staff.

A company's Web site is often its first introduction to the customer. It is vitally important that this virtual introduction is not marred by incomplete data, slow servers or technology glitches that make some or all of the company's information unavailable to visitors. In fact, one of the most important telecommunications decisions a company can make today is its choice

of a Web Hosting provider.

Web Hosting is more than simply populating an Internet page with content. For most businesses today, the Internet plays a central role in interactions with customers, suppliers, partners, employees and investors. Provider instability is simply not an option. Of equal importance is reliability and expertise



Steve Balbierz, External Affairs Director of SBC Michigan and Michigan Works! The Job Force Board Member.

of the staff that maintains the servers and other equipment that is home to the Web site. Finally, the scope of services a Web Hosting provider offers also is important to a small business that is continually faced with changing needs, demands from customers and levels of engagement. A Web Hosting provider should have the ability to focus on the needs of a small business but still be able to grow with it and provide increasingly sophisti-

cated monitoring, reporting, networking, design, security and equipment.

Web Hosting can include as much or as little as the company needs, based on its own staff and expertise. There is no one perfect solution that will fit every small business. That can make choosing a Web Hosting provider difficult. Here are some key items to consider when making this choice:

- What kind of hosting can the company offer you?
- What amount of storage for your files can the company offer?
- What kind of security offerings does the company have?
- What kind of service-level agreements are included in the company's product?
- What are the one-time costs involved? What are the recurring costs?
- Who maintains my data? Are they available 24-hours a day? Are they dedicated to Web Hosting or do they work on other products and services?

In short, today's technology allows small businesses to use big business technology to compete for customers. Choosing a Web Hosting provider is a strategic decision that can significantly impact the company's ability to grow.

Balbierz is External Affairs Director of SBC Michigan and a mem-

COMMUNITY EVENTS

**May 5
Business After Hours**
Sydney's, Munising
For More Information Call:
(906) 387-2138

**May 10
Business After Hours**
Sawyer International Airport
Call the Lake Superior Community Partnership for more information
(906) 226-6591

**May 26
Business After Hours**
Bonifas Art Center
Call the Delta County Chamber of Commerce for more information
(906) 786-2192

**May 26
Business After Hours**
TV-6 (held at WBFAC)
Call the Delta County Chamber of Commerce for more information
(906) 786-2192

**June 14
Business After Hours**
Northern Star Broadcasting & Upfront & Company
Call the Lake Superior Community Partnership for more information
(906) 226-6591

**June 30
Business After Hours**
Northern Michigan Bank (held at Irish Oaks)
Call the Delta County Chamber of Commerce for more information
(906) 786-2192

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ber of the Job Force Board. For information about SBC Yahoo! small business web hosting products and services, visit <http://smallbusiness.sbc.yahoo.com>.

INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL DISTRICTS SUCCESSFUL IN PREPARING YOUTH FOR THE WORLD OF WORK

The Intermediate School Districts of the Central Upper Peninsula have a wonderful success story to tell. The ISDs must meet performance criteria that is established by the state for the following indicators: Academic Attainment, Technical Achievement, High School Completion, Placement, Participation by Nontraditional students and Nontraditional Completion.

Academic attainment includes the number of 10-12th grade Career and Technical Education (CTE) students who completed 60% or more of their course, completed 4 or more MEAP tests and attained an endorsement level of three. Technical achievement takes the number of 11th and 12th grade CTE students who completed

60% or more of their CTE course, left school and obtained a GPA of 2.0 or better. High School completion includes all CTE students who receive a secondary diploma or equivalent. Placement performance is the number of CTE students who have completed the program for the previous year and enrolled in post-secondary training, became employed or entered the military. Nontraditional participation and nontraditional completion is the number of female/male CTE students who are enrolled or have completed an occupational program that is nontraditional to their gender.

The Job Force Board's Career Connections Group, had the opportunity to congratulate Marquette Alger

RESA, Delta Schoolcraft Intermediate School District and the Dickinson Iron Intermediate School District on their most recent performance data. The Intermediate School Districts surpassed all state required performance levels.

The placement rate of vocational education students is impressive. In April 2003, the unemployment rate in the Upper Peninsula was 8%. This means that Voc Ed graduates were placed at a higher rate than the unemployment rate. Regionally of 1005 students who completed training, 995 were placed. Vocational training provides students early exposure to the career and technical skills they will need to be successful in their chosen pathway and pro-

vides to business a well prepared youth for The workplace.



Will Carne, President Michigan Works!
The Job Force Board

6,021 students are enrolled in vocational education classes across the central Upper Peninsula. Vocational educational curriculums include drafting/design technology, construction trades, automotive technician, precision production trades, electrical/electronics repair, web/A+ certification, welding, health sciences, business management and operations, automotive technician and child and custodial care services.

DELTA AND SCHOOLCRAFT COUNTY SIXTH GRADERS LEARN ABOUT CAREERS



Students discuss nursing as part the health sciences career pathway.

The Delta Schoolcraft Intermediate School District recently hosted a career day at Bay College for the sixth graders of Delta and Schoolcraft counties. Sixth graders researched careers prior to participating in the career day and were given the opportunity to visit the career vendors that were of interest to them.

High school students acted as vendors and created hands on materials such as visual aids and poster boards with career information and occupational outlook information with job descriptions, duties and wages. High school students also used power points as visual aides when discussing and answering questions about careers. All six career pathways: health sciences; human services; business management, marketing and technology; natural resources and agriculture; arts and communications; and engineering/manufacturing and industrial technology were represented.

Nicole Wakkuri, Escanaba High School Senior who is currently a

nurse aide and planning to continue her nursing education at the post secondary level, hosted one of the nursing assistant vendor tables. Nicole, who has participated in the career day for the last two years said, "This is a great experience. I enjoy the opportunity to use the knowledge and skills that I have learned through health occupations. Presenting career information to a group of students who have an interest in the nursing field is fun and rewarding."



Students are given a lesson on "how to become a teacher."



Students "get the scoop" on journalism.

Michigan Works! assisted with the coordination of the day's activities, supporting career preparation efforts that focus on preparing and education youth about career choices and employment opportunities.

For more information on how your business can help youth in career preparation activities call Gayle De-Shambo, Delta Schoolcraft ISD at (906)786-9300, or Electa Shepeck, Michigan Works! (906)789-9732.

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WAL★MART® SUPER CENTER

JOB FORCE BOARD HONORS MICHIGAN WORKS! IN DELTA COUNTY

EXEMPLARY SERVICES TO WAL-MART SUPER CENTER:

The Job Force Board at its March 2004 meeting gave special recognition to the Delta County Michigan Works! Service Center for its exemplary business service to the new Wal-Mart Super Center in Escanaba. Michigan Works! recently partnered with the new Wal-Mart Super Center in Escanaba to assist in their extensive recruitment process. Wal-Mart will be bringing on approximately 90 new associates for the expansion and with new people working on the floor on April 1st 2004.

Michigan Works! Business Services team members Dannette Viau and Holly Peoples met with the Wal-Mart management team and Human Resources Directors over a period of several months to understand the needs of the company. They matched those needs to the services Michigan Works! provides to businesses.



Holly Peoples (L) and Dannette Viau (R) of Michigan Works! in Delta County, speak to Michigan Works! The Job Force Board members about the services Michigan Works! provided to Wal-Mart Super Center. They later represented Michigan Works! in receiving an award of Exemplary Business Services in Delta County. Picture taken by Sean Depuydt/BUP.

Meeting the Wal-Mart recruitment services from Michigan Works! 1) a needs included some of the following detailed, job-related description to

post on the Michigan's Talent Bank; 2) screening and recruiting space at the Michigan Works! Service Center in Delta County for the mass hiring process; 3) planning and implementation of a step-by-step process; 4) facilitating this process; 5) providing telephone access at the Service Center for Wal-Mart staff to do reference checks; 6) providing computers for data entry of the pre-assessment required by Wal-Mart and 7) joint advertising in the Daily press.

Staff at both facilities were trained by Viau and Peoples. The benefits to both organizations were significant. Wal-Mart was delighted with the results and services. It was a partnership effort between Michigan Works! and Wal-Mart to meet their recruitment needs. Says Wal-Mart Store Manager, Steve Hardin, "It was a pleasure working with your organization. I would definitely recommend this same process to any other employer."

FORMER LAKESIDE WORKER FINDS SUCCESS THROUGH MICHIGAN WORKS!



Pictured above is Anthony "Tony" Mayville of Technical Automotive Group or TAG Corporation. Picture taken by Sean Depuydt/BUP.

Technical Automotive Group or TAG Corporation was in need of a good salesman. Anthony "Tony" Mayville was in need of a good job. TAG, a newly formed subsidiary of SnapOn Tools, whose corporate headquarters

are based in Conway, Arkansas, was searching for someone to fill their position as Equipment Sales Specialist.

TAG Sales consist of automotive machinery such as brake alignment and tire changing machines to independent garages and auto dealerships with full service automotive repair facilities.

Circumstances surrounding Anthony's need for a good job were due to the well-documented closure of a local manufacturer in 2002 - Lakeside Machine. As a result of the plant closure Tony and approx. 169 other workers in the central Upper Peninsula found themselves without a job

and few prospects on the horizon. The Michigan Works! Service Center in Delta County provided Tony with a variety of value added re-employment services and helped Tony to upgrade skills through Bay College's Contracting with Business and Industry program.

Tony, has always dabbled in other ventures such as automotive and home repair. Leveraging his extensive automotive background and help from Michigan Works!, Tony used his advantage to gain an interview and successfully land the ESS position with TAG.

Six months after landing the sales position with TAG, Tony couldn't feel better about his new employer and

the opportunity he has had to expand his knowledge of the automotive industry and sales skills. Being the TAG Equipment Sales Specialist for Northeast Wisconsin and West and Central Upper Peninsula requires Tony to travel 4 or more days a week. Although this presents a demanding schedule, Tony has found the flexibility in his schedule to ensure his family remains a priority in his life. "Looking back, I wouldn't really change anything that has happened."

"Our goal is to transition dislocated workers back into employment as quickly as possible," says Will Carne, President of the Job Force Board. "We congratulate Tony and the Delta County Michigan Works! Service Center on their success."

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MARQUETTE COUNTY TO EXPLORE BUSINESS INCUBATOR CONCEPT

Is a business incubator likely to become a part of the future economic growth of Marquette County? The answer to this question will come as a result of a study that is currently being conducted through the joint efforts of the County of Marquette and the Lake Superior Community Partnership, with grant funding provided by the U.S.D.A. Marquette County has chosen to become a member of the National Business Incu-

bator Association (NBIA) in order to tap into valuable resources while exploring the viability of establishing an incubator program in the county. The NBIA provides information, research and networking resources to help members develop and manage successful incubator programs. The business incubator concept, while relatively new, has documented great success levels. NBIA research shows that 87% of all

firms that graduate from NBIA incubators remain in business and 84% continue to operate in their local communities.

Larry Albertson, president of LPA Associates has been retained, with U.S.D.A. grant funding, to conduct a business incubator feasibility study over the next four months. The study will assess community reaction, community need, funding sources, facility availability and the prospect for self-sufficiency of the incubator.



Larry Albertson, president of LPA Associates

Albertson recently made the first of four scheduled visits to Marquette County to begin gathering information for the study, so look for him to become a familiar face in the area. Community input is an important part of the feasibility study process and Albertson will be meeting with many area business people and service clubs during his visits in order to gain a better understanding of the current business climate.

Anyone interested in this project is encouraged to either schedule a meeting with Albertson during one of his visits or participate by completing one of two

surveys he is distributing throughout the community. The Community Reaction Survey is tailored to the general community at large and small business owners and entrepreneurs are encouraged to fill out the Incubator Use Survey. Surveys are available by calling the Partnership office at 226-9658 or visiting www.marquette.org. You may schedule an appointment with Albertson during one of his visits by calling either Anne Giroux at 346-3137, ext #20 or Lois Ellis at 226-9658.

CELEBRATING 30 YEARS

of improving the economy and quality of life in the central Upper Peninsula by bringing employers and job seekers together!

Upper Peninsula Business Works because...



MICHIGAN WORKS!

Visit our user-friendly Michigan Works! Service Centers in Munising, Escanaba, Iron Mountain, Marquette, Menominee and Manistique.

Join us for these upcoming Business After Hours Celebrations!

- April 12, 5-7 pm
Upright & Company, Marquette
- May 5, 5-7 pm
Sydney's Restaurant, Munising
- September 29, 5-7 pm
Delta County location
- September 14, 5-7 pm
Menominee County location
- October
Dickinson County location

Thanks to all who attended our Schoolcraft County celebration in Manistique on April 7!



"My business works because Michigan Works!"

Services offered for employers:

- Pulling jobs to determine necessary skills and abilities
- Writing job descriptions and advertisements
- Posting job openings on the Talent Bank and company website
- Screening resumes and applicants
- Providing interview rooms and meeting facilities
- Training employees
- Helping with Human Resources administration issues
- Planning for business retention and expansion
- Offering Business Building Incentives on key items

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"I work because Michigan Works!"

Services offered for job seekers:

- Linking job seekers with local and regional employment opportunities and job search web sites
- Testing ability and knowledge
- Assessing interests
- Offering employment and career skills workshops
- Helping with education financial aid forms
- Providing a resource library of books, videos and software for job seekers
- Offering internet access, word processing equipment, phone and fax services
- Supplying information on employment policies and legal issues



MICHIGAN WORKS! 30 Years of Business!
The Job Force Board is UP

and the Six County Employment Alliance
Serving Alger, Delta, Dickinson, Marquette, Menominee and Schoolcraft counties.



ATTORNEY GENERAL MIKE COX GUEST SPEAKER AT THE EMBEZZLEMENT CONFERENCE AT M-TEC

On March 20, 2004, representatives from the Marquette Michigan Works! service center reported to the Ishpeming bowling alley to have some fun! Kelly Beard, Julie Hautala, Jackie Earle, Business Service Consultants and Steve (Veterans Employment Counselor) and Terri Gillotte formed a team to raise funds for Big Brothers Big Sisters and participated in Bowl for Kids' Sake.

Bowl for Kids' Sake has been the largest annual fundraiser for Big Brothers Big Sisters' for over twenty years. Each bowler raises money by collecting pledges, the money gathered goes directly towards matching the children who are ready to be matched with a Big Brother, Big Sister, or Big Couple.

Every March representatives from small and large businesses, civic clubs, professional organizations, law enforcement agencies, community organizations and schools form teams to raise money to help Big Brothers Big Sisters match more kids.

With scores ranging from 180 to 69, the team had a great time and raised money for the children! "Even though I didn't bowl well, I had a blast!" said Jackie Earle. "It was a great experience and rewarding to know that the money raised was going to such a charitable organization" stated Kelly Beard.

The Michigan Works! Team raised approximately \$550! Congratulations to the Marquette Michigan Works! Service Center Team!

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