



JOB FORCE BOARD WELCOMES B3 COMPUTERS INC. TO SAWYER BUSINESS COMMUNITY



Michigan Works! The Job Force Board welcomes B3 to our community and is pleased to be a partner in the attraction and expansion of their workforce.

B3 Computers, Inc. is a leading computer manufacturer and application service provider. B3 is located in what was once known as the SAGE building at Sawyer. B3's customers are primarily computer resellers, system integrators and consultants that want the ability to offer computer products and services to the small to medium business market. Their objective is to leverage the collective buying power of

these VARs (Value Added Resellers) so that they can compete on line with the direct sellers. They accomplish this by providing resellers with a customizable website through which they sell high quality build-to-order computer systems.

In order to assist B3 expand its current staff, members of the Marquette Michigan Works Service Center have helped to find qualified job candidates by posting job orders, collect resumes, and schedule interviews. "Michigan Works has done a great job of helping us build a pool of qualified job candidates for our current job openings," said Fred Schlaffer, President, B3 Computers. The Michigan Works

staff has been very helpful. They help to streamline our hiring process, leaving more time for us to focus our energy on serving our customers."

"B3 Computers has been making great use of the services provided by our service center", says Mike Beacco, the Michigan Works Business Retention Specialist, who along with Business Service Consultant Jackie Earle, has been working closely with B3 Computers. "It's very satisfying to help a business find the right person for the right job," says Earle.

For more information regarding the services available at Michigan Works, contact your local service center.

/fast growth performers/



Fred Schlaffer, President of B3 Computers of Gwinn, MI

Fred Schlaffer has a simple strategy that he hopes will triple his business over the next 18 months: Recruit more VARs (Value Added Reseller.)

B3 COMPUTER CALLING ALL VARS

Schlaffer, president of B3 Computers, a system builder in Gwinn last year saw his company's revenue jumped 50 percent to \$9 million from \$6 million. And the number of systems B3 Computers built grew to 3,200 per month in 2003 from 1,750 per month in 2002.

While B3 Computers has seen healthy growth across its entire product line, its server growth has outpaced both desktops and notebooks. In 2002, it was building about 50 servers per month. In 2003, that number increased four-fold to 200.

"We made a big effort to recruit more resellers," Schlaffer said. "We've gone after the ASCII Group members and other small resellers that the big guys [large PC

vendors] don't pay much attention to."

And the effort's paid off. Two years ago, B3 Computers counted 600 resellers as customers. Through a concerted recruitment effort, that number has now grown to more than 1,100, he said. To accommodate planned growth, B3 Computers has secured grants from the state of Michigan and local governments and has moved into a 30,000-square-foot facility at the former Air Force base.

"Small businesses typically don't go to HP Direct; they go to a local reseller," Schlaffer said. He noted that the typical reseller targeted by B3 Computers has fewer than 10 employees. "Incrementally, they

(See B3 COMPUTERS Page 2)

COMMUNITY EVENTS

- September 13**
Business After Hours (5:00-7:00)
Marquette County Convention & Visitors Bureau
Location: Holiday Inn
Call the Lake Superior Community Partnership for more information
(906) 226-6591
- September 28**
Business After Hours (5:00-6:30) C.T.
Michigan Works! The Job Force Board
Locations: Riverside Country Club
Call River Cities Chamber of Commerce for more information
(906) 863-2679
- September 29**
Business After Hours (5:30-7:30)
Michigan Works! The Job Force Board
Location: Log Cabin
Call the Delta County Chamber of Commerce for more information
(906) 786-2192
- October 7**
Delta County Chamber Annual Dinner
Call the Delta County Chamber of Commerce for more information
(906) 786-2192
- October 8**
2nd Annual UP Human Resource Forum
Contact Jim Kent for more information
(906) 483-1675 / jakent@portagehealth.org
- October 11**
Business After Hours (5:00-7:00)
Charter Communications
Call the Lake Superior Community Partnership for more information
(906) 226-6591
- October 19**
Business After Hours (5:00-7:00)
Location: Blind Duck
Call River Cities Chamber of Commerce for more information
(906) 863-2679
- October 21**
LSCP Comedy Zone III
Contact Carol Shuty for more information
(906) 486-4841
- October 27**
Business After Hours (5:30-7:30)
Location: Hilltop RV Superstore
Call the Delta County Chamber of Commerce for more information
(906) 786-2192

BUILDING THE ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT IN THE UPPER PENINSULA!



Will Carne, President Job Force Board

Many people that consider starting their own business do so because they have been recently “downsized” or are trying to find a way to do, full-time, the work they most love. While this is without a doubt the best reason, it is crucial that in addition to being prepared to do that work that the potential business owner prepare him/herself for the business of “just doing business.”

A marketing plan is a must.

Before making a big investment decision the potential owner should be certain that his/her business will be able to reach and retain the type of customer at the volume/rate that will be required to support the business.

A system for managing business finances is also critical. If the business owner doesn't have a predisposition toward and a background in account-

ing, professional help is a must at least in getting systems for tracking transactions established and in motion.

A bit of research into the legal ramifications of business ownership can also keep the new start-up out of hot water. For instance, businesses are required to have employer identification and Michigan sales tax numbers. The name of the business has to be legally registered and depending on the

business type a special license may be another issue on what could, for some businesses, be only one of many more on a list of such obligations.

To protect against all possible risks, various types of insurance are required.

While one can learn a great deal about doing business by talking with other business owners and by researching online, in the library, through trade associations, and the like, Northern Initiatives has partnered up with 1st Step, and Michigan Works! Service Centers to offer workshops that are designed to answer many “new business owner” questions in one fell swoop (or perhaps two).

1st Step consultants facilitate three-hour *Reality Check* workshops that help jobseekers and potential business owners assess their readiness. 1st Step also provides one-on-one business counseling to those interested in getting started. Call 1-800-562-9828 to register and obtain workshop site information/directions.

Four Steps and a Leap Busi-

ness Planning Sessions are currently being scheduled by Michigan Works! for this Fall. The quality sessions provide jobseekers and serious candidates twelve hours of intensive assistance with business planning. Stay tuned for dates.

You can email Joe Esbrook, Director of Business Development, Michigan Works! The Job Force Board for more information at: jesbrook@jobforce.org. You can also contact Dar Shepard. Dar Shepherd serves as the Director of Business Assistance for Northern Initiatives (NI). The company provides loans for U.P. business start-ups and for business expansion projects. Business development and consulting services are also available. NI's central office is located in Marquette, Michigan.

For more information about Northern Initiatives programs and services check the web site www.niupnorth.org or you can call Dar at 906-226-1669.

For information on how Michigan Works! can help your business, visit us on our website at www.jobforce.org.

B3 COMPUTERS (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

bring in a little business, but in total they brought in a lot of business. That's where all of our growth has come from.”

Chris Chaltron, senior technician at Creative Computer Solutions of Michigan, said that B3 Computers gave his company a cold call, set up a face-to-face meeting and convinced the VAR to start buying B3 systems. “We used to build our own systems, but we

found that we weren't making any money,” Chaltron said. “The real money is in service. We buy 10 to 12 systems per month from B3, and they've been nothing but top-notch in their quality.”

Schlafter added that B3 Computers is focusing on whitebooks as a way to bring more VARs on board. “You need special tools and special expertise to build notebooks,” he said. Plus, he said that

B3 Computers can do custom configurations on notebooks.

The ability to custom-configure systems to the VAR's specification is also a big selling point in attracting new resellers, Schlafter said. “Everyone else builds a whole bunch of systems all the same. But every one of our systems is custom-built. It can be different software, different video. We customize them to meet the needs of the reseller.”

B3 COMPUTERS
 GWINN, MICH.
 TOP EXECUTIVE:
 Fred Schlafter, president
 2003 UNITS PER MONTH:
 3,200
 UNIT GROWTH RATE: 83%
 2003 REVENUE: \$9 million
 RANK BY UNITS BUILT: 8
 RANK BY UNIT GROWTH: 4
 PRIMARY DISTRIBUTORS:
 ASI, MA Labs, Synnex



STEPS TO TAKE TO PROTECT YOUR PC

- Symantec/Norton (90-day free trial subscription)
- Tiny Software: Tiny Personal Firewall
- ZoneAlarm

Update your computer

Security updates help shield your computer from vulnerabilities, viruses, worms, and other threats as they are discovered. If you are using Microsoft Windows® 2000 Service Pack 3 (SP3) or later, you can use the Automatic Updates feature to download the latest Windows security updates automatically when your computer is on and connected to the Internet. If you are not sure if you have the latest Windows 2000 service pack installed.

1. Click **Start**, and then click **Run**.
2. In the box, type **winver**, and then click **OK**.

The window that appears will show you which version of Windows your computer is using.

Important: To ensure you have all the latest updates available from Microsoft, be sure to visit Windows Update after turning on the Automatic Updates feature. Automatic Updates only downloads future updates. It does not download existing updates available for your computer. (We'll give you the full details in the second half of this Step.)

Turn on the Automatic Updates feature

1. Click **Start**, point to **Settings**, and then click **Control Panel**.
2. Double click **Automatic Updates**.
3. Click the **Automatic Updates** tab, and then select **Keep my computer up to date**.
4. Select a setting. Microsoft recommends selecting **Automatically download the updates, and install them on the schedule that I specify** and setting a daily schedule.

Note: You can set the Automatic Downloads feature for any time of day. (To avoid slow-downs, we recommend a time when you will not

be using the computer for other Web or e-mail tasks.) If you set up Automatic Updates to notify you, or if you forget to leave your computer on, you will see a notification balloon. Click the notification balloon to review and install the updates.

You will now download all future updates automatically. Next, get up to date with Windows Update. Here's how you can bring your computer up to date with security updates that are currently available. You can also use these instructions to keep up with the latest non-critical updates:

1. Go to the Windows Update website at <http://windowsupdate.microsoft.com>.
2. On the Windows Update site, click **Scan for Updates**. Windows Update will scan your computer and displays a pre-selected list of critical updates, including security updates and service packs.
3. **Note:** Slower modems might take several hours to download all recommended updates the first time you use Windows Update. Download times might vary depending on modem speed and how many updates your computer needs. To reduce download times, run Windows Update when you are not using your computer for other Internet-related tasks such as reading e-mail or surfing the Web.
4. In the **Pick updates to install** click **Critical Updates and Service Packs**. Windows Update then creates a list of updates that are appropriate for your computer.
5. Click **Review and install updates**.
6. Select updates to install and then click **Install Now**. You might have to restart your computer after installing the updates.
7. **Note:** Be sure to go back to Windows Update after installation to check for any additional up-

dates. You might have to do this several times.

Important If you use Microsoft Office, visit the Office Update site to install the latest security releases.

Antivirus

Antivirus software helps protect your computer against most viruses, worms, Trojans, and other unwanted invaders that can make your computer "sick." Many computers come with antivirus software installed. You can also purchase antivirus software and install it yourself.

Just having an antivirus software program installed is not enough, however. To help ensure your computer stays healthy, you need to keep your antivirus software up to date. You can help your computer stay healthy by using up to date antivirus software.

The following questions can help you determine your antivirus needs.

Do I have antivirus software installed on my computer?

1. Click **Start**, and then click **Programs**.
2. Look for the word "antivirus." You might also see the name of a popular antivirus manufacturer or package. These include: McAfee, Norton, Trend Micro, and Symantec.
3. If you don't have antivirus software installed, check out the following antivirus software companies for special offers on their products:
 - o Computer Associates (12-months free trial subscription)
 - o F-secure (6-months free trial subscription)
 - o McAfee Security
 - o Panda Software (90-day free trial subscription)
 - Symantec/Norton (90-day free trial subscription)
 - Trend Micro

Important: If you have antivirus software installed but want to install a new product from a different company, be sure to uninstall your current product before installing the
(See Protect PC Page 4)

Beau Boden, Director of Operations Technology Systems offers the following advice on protecting your PC:

Firewalls

A firewall is a piece of software or hardware that creates a protective barrier between your computer and potentially harmful content on the Internet. It helps guard against hackers and many computer viruses and worms. If your computer is running Windows® 2000 Professional, Microsoft recommends that you get and install either a hardware or software firewall before connecting to the Internet.

The following resources provide more information about some firewall options.

Hardware Firewalls

Hardware firewalls are a good choice for versions of the Windows operating system prior to Windows XP. Some home-networking hardware, like wireless access points and broadband routers come with built-in hardware firewalls. These help protect most home networks.

Software Firewalls

Software firewalls are available from several vendors, including:

- BlackICE PC Protection
- Computer Associates (12-months free trial subscription)
- F-secure (6-months free trial subscription)
- McAfee Security
- Panda Software (90-day free trial subscription)

SYSTEMS CONTROL, A DIVISION OF NORTHERN STAR INDUSTRIES, INC.



System Control in Iron Mountain, Michigan.

Iron Mountain, Michigan is not only proud to be the hometown of Tom Izzo and Steve Mariucci, it is also proud to be the home of The BOSS Snowplow. The BOSS Snowplow, manufactured by Systems Control, has a reputation of being the toughest, most innovative and dependable snowplow in the industry. In addition to snowplows Systems Control, a division of Northern Star Industries, Inc. designs and manufactures relay and control panels for some of the largest elec-

trical utilities in the United States. Like the snowplows, these products have the reputation of being "the best" in their industry. Both product lines are produced by skilled craftsmen in Systems Control's ISO 9001-2004 quality registered manufacturing facility.

It all started in Iron Mountain, Michigan, 1959, when W. J. Brule purchased an appliance repair shop, M. J. Electric. From there, Brule created a nationally-known electrical construction company.

Three years later, Brule formed Systems Control as a division of M. J. Electric, to manufacture control panels, and in time, relay panels and medium-voltage switchgear. Through the 70's and 80's, many of our nations' nuclear plants were supplied with Systems Control's instrumentation racks, relay panels, and main control boards.

In 1985, Systems acquired the manufacturing rights for The BOSS Snowplow. The BOSS Snowplow would be produced with the same quality and high standards as System's other products. As business continued to grow, Systems Control continued to improve its manufacturing processes. In 1999 they implemented a form of "Flow" manufacturing. Each year since, processes have been improved through rapid improvement (RI) events that take place on a monthly basis. Utilizing many of the principals of the Toyota Production Systems (TPS), Systems Control continues to look for ways to improve its overall operations through the elimination of waste.

The year of 2000 saw many changes for Systems Control. Northern Star Industries, Inc.,

owned by David Brule, Sr., becomes the parent company to Systems Control in a sale of M. J. Electric's construction divisions. Today, Systems Control remains committed to an unending pursuit of continuous improvement and quality. It is a nationally recognized company with state-of-the-art facilities and uses the most modern design and engineering applications. Systems employs over 250 highly skilled employees dedicated to reputable products and customer satisfaction.

In partnership with Michigan Works!, Systems Control, an Equal Opportunity Employer, will be posting all jobs on the Michigan Talent Bank. Interested applicants should go to their nearest Michigan Works! Service Center to check job postings, or log on to www.michworks.org. Also, Systems Control posts jobs on their websites: www.systemscontrol.com and www.bosspow.com. If you are interested in checking out more on The BOSS Snowplow, visit their website.

To learn more on how Michigan Works! can assist in your human resource needs call 1-800-285 WORKS!

PROTECT PC— (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3)

new one. Having two different anti-virus programs installed can cause conflicts (problems) on your computer.

Is my antivirus software up to date?

Installing antivirus software will only protect you against previous security issues. To help ensure your computer is safe, you need to keep your antivirus software up to date. Most antivirus companies offer subscription services to ensure you get the latest updates.

To check if you have up to date software: Open your antivirus program from the **Start** menu or the

taskbar notification area and look for update status. If you still aren't sure if your antivirus software is up to date, contact your antivirus software provider.

Temporary Help

If you do not have antivirus software but do have a connection to the Internet, there are several free online scanners that can be of assistance to you. These are not a replacement for full versions and will only help you after the fact as opposed to preventing new infections. Trend Micro House Call is a straightforward and easy to use online scanner <http://housecall.trendmicro.com/>

If you find a virus on your computer there are several tools, which may aid you in cleaning your computer, programs such as Panda QuickRemover, are tools aimed to complement antivirus solutions, and are designed specifically to help restore your computer from all the possible effects of a virus.

Adware

Any software application in which advertising banners are displayed while the program is running is called **Adware**. And any software that sends data back to a third party - WITHOUT ASKING the user - is **Spyware**.

This means that software can be Adware and Spyware at the same time! More importantly, not all Adware is Spyware and most Spyware is NOT easily detected by displaying ads.

Adware/spyware can also lead to embarrassing pop ups and decrease the efficiency of your PC.

To check for adware or spyware use a program such as Adaware 6.0 from Lavasoft. <http://www.lavasoft.de/>

This is an easy to use solution that will scan your computer and list all infected files, allowing you the opportunity to clean your PC.