

# Computer and Office PRODUCTS & SERVICES

## Computer Works focuses on local clients

by Mary M. Cox

Computer Works of Toledo is a subsidiary of BizTech, which has clients in five countries and in every state in the U.S. Computer Works, however, focuses on Toledo and the surrounding area; 95% of its client base is in a 25-mile radius. The company provides information technology (IT) services to small to medium-sized businesses.

Joe Zaleski, COO, and Mike Brown, CEO, founded the company ten years ago. They both have IT backgrounds from manufacturing industries and decided to form a company to serve clients that were not getting proper support from their vendors.

"We supplement client IT teams with our expertise; but for smaller businesses, we serve wholly as their IT staff," stated Bill Wass, technical services manager, Computer Works. "We encourage clients to consider a managed services approach first, but if that does not fit their needs, we can instead help them on a 'break-fix' or per diem basis."

He added that a managed services program involves a flat monthly fee paid by the

client. In exchange, Computer Works performs proactive and interactive maintenance on the client's IT system. "This scenario is preferred by many businesses, because it allows them to budget for IT services and they also benefit from proactive maintenance as opposed to high, unexpected costs at the end of the year, incurred as the result of the 'break-fix' syndrome," Wass explained. "When we begin our relationship with a new client, we strive to identify their very specific needs so we are well-prepared to serve those needs in the long-term, unlike vendors who may only sell clients hardware or software and then move on from there. From the outset, we learn our client's objectives, speak with key staff members, familiarize ourselves with their infrastructure, and then devise a plan that describes the IT enhancements we can offer. If this option does not accommodate a company's budget, we can provide services on an hourly fee or work off of a retainer – a block of time that they have purchased. We were early adopters of the managed services model. Two or three



(L to R) Michael Bentz, senior account manager, Computer Works, and Bill Wass, technical services manager, Computer Works

years down the road, I believe the trend in providing IT support will have switched more widely toward the managed services approach we already use."



A Computer Works client, Kolbus, Inc., has corporate offices located in Germany and its North American sales and services (continued on page 30)

## Computer Works

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division in Cleveland. It has a staff of 25 people at that location and a roaming workforce of 25 people that use laptops from various points across the nation. It markets within the publishing industry, offering book binding services and related products. According to Kolbus, it is key that it provides its clients – large publishing companies – with zero downtime and the ability to meet strict deadlines.

Wass described his company's relationship with Kolbus. "They are very progressive in the way they approach their business, and we are pleased that they chose to place their entire IT function with us three years ago," he stated. "We installed and now host and maintain their servers, and we provide all software, hardware, and end-user needs on a 24/7 basis. Their operations service center is set up in an environment-appropriate site that includes 15 servers, all the back-up capacity they require, and a diesel-powered generator back-up that provides them with 100% uptime capability and security. Their servers are located in a purpose-built data center as part of a Toledo-based network operations center (NOC) with high availability services that include power protection, back-up generators, fault-tolerant Internet connectivity, and a controlled, ambient-air environment. The per hour cost of down-time is very high for Kolbus, so in exchange for a flat monthly fee, we provide them with the IT capabilities they need to perform to their client's needs. They have just announced that they will

retain our services for the next five years as well."

Additionally, Computer Works has worked with First Solar, Inc. for more than seven years, performing monthly proactive maintenance on its Citrix infrastructure – a remote-control access point for all of its branch offices. Wass explained, "We have been working with them for quite some time – their headquarters are in Arizona. They're also located in Germany and Malaysia, but Perrysburg is their primary North American manufacturing facility. Their Citrix system is a set of servers that allows access from their entire roaming workforce and branch offices. Once a month, we use our expertise with Citrix to perform maintenance required for those servers. This gives First Solar peace of mind that they're maintaining best practices relative to all members of the network and their ability to access whatever company information or capabilities they may need."

According to Computer Works, it is the only gold-certified provider in this area for Citrix, so First Solar found the company when it needed support in this area of the country for its system. "Because of our partnership with one of the leading software vendors in the world, we've managed to form relationships with other companies like

First Solar as well," Wass added.

Other Computer Works accounts include Dunbar Mechanical, Inc., an industrial construction company. "We perform Citrix-related monthly maintenance and we help them screen their candidates for their internal IT staff. They have a managed service contract with us but we also work for them on a per diem basis as well," Wass stated. The company also serves the Toledo Police Federal Credit Union on a monthly basis, performing corrective maintenance of its IT systems at both locations.

Michael Bentz, senior account manager, Computer Works, stated, "There are unlimited types of clients who use our services on a per diem basis: schools, offices for physicians, lawyers, and accountants."

Wass added, "Our client list is very diverse, so our expertise is also very broad. We feel we offer a one-stop IT shop, and our engineers are trained and certified as database administrators, application programmers, and webmasters."

YMCA of Toledo is an account Bentz brought with him to the firm. He has been in the business for 25 years and has worked with the YMCA for 20 years. For the last two years, Computer Works has worked with Poggemeyer Design Group. The firm's headquarters are located in Bowling Green,

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- Bill Wass, technical services manager, Computer Works

but it also has locations in Las Vegas, Reno, Pennsylvania, San Diego, Seattle, Defiance, Toledo, and Monroe, Michigan as well.

"We just completed a large project for [Poggemeyer]. We took them from a Novell operating base to a Microsoft system and also integrated all of their offices relative to email. In about six weeks, we converted about 150 network users to a completely different system," Wass stated.

"With regard to their email system, we incorporated redundancy that ensures the security of the entire network even if a portion of the network should fail, due to power shortages on the west coast, for instance," Bentz added.

The project was a network domain transition project, but Computer Works also provides services in website construction, corporate identity work, IT function that supports corporate technological advances, logo design, and security work.

Bentz explained, "Often times, clients may fear outside intrusion or vulnerability, which we are able to address; but the most common vulnerability is the result of internal network users. Also, if catastrophic occurrence from fire or weather ruins your business on one day, would that end your business? For many businesses it would. Or could you open for business the next day or shortly thereafter from your home or another location? Properly addressing these issues for our clients is easy because of the relationship we have with them. Computer Works categorizes this type of effort as a business continuity strategy for disaster recovery. Through the execution of a managed service, which can include business continuity, we can earn their trust."