



A New Type of Technology Company

Beau Smithback, Envision IT

By Michael Muckian

Summer jobs for college-bound high school graduates take many forms, but rarely do they involve starting a company. Beau Smithback proved the exception to the rule, starting his enterprise one month before graduating from Cambridge High School.

Envision, located on Madison's west side, provides software design services and office processes for small businesses. Smithback, 24, founded the company in 2001 with partner Jake Wicke, one month before he graduated from high school. The pair, who had worked together at Small Bytes Inc., a Cambridge data processing consulting firm, was looking for summer employment to supplant what they knew their former employer couldn't provide.

"We were told that there wasn't enough work available to support us both full-time the summer before I went to college," Smithback says. "Both of us loved the work we were doing, so instead of finding work with another consulting firm, we set out to create a new type of technology company."

That new type of company rises above the techno-geek approach, Smithback says, by ladling healthy doses of customer service into the mix. Customer involvement in the process ensures that the right IT development steps will be taken for the right reasons.

"For us, there was more to this business than fixing broken computers and installing new ones," Smithback says. "Each technology and solution purchase needed to accomplish a real business goal with some type of financial return or business gain. I think that makes us unique from other IT firms."

That customer centricity has helped Envision grow, says Smithback, who holds a B.S. in Computer Science from UW-Madison and, with Wicke, was instrumental in installing Internet and establishing the Web site for Cambridge High School when the two were fellow students there. In July 2007, Envision officially merged with Branflick Consulting, a Middleton-based provider of integrated marketing solutions to small business, the market Envision also cultivates. The marriage of enterprises was a good move for both firms, says Smithback, who admits to having had 14 computers in his bedroom while growing and attempting to write his first computer code at age 10.

"Our merger resulted from a series of collaborations over several months, during which it became evident that both companies shared a commitment to serving clients and a dedication to business-driven information technology," Smithback says.

"The new Envision IT combines market-

ing expertise and graphic design with current services, including Web site and application development, networking and telecommunications system design, installation and technical support," he adds. "We examine companies' business processes and goals to match with an appropriate technology to help firms automate and enhance productivity."

New capabilities, matched with a dedication level the entrepreneurs bring to their work, have helped Envision maintain a solid client base, Smithback says — one that remains loyal as the youthful firm grows.

"Character counts and so do the human interactions we have during the course of the business day," Smithback says. "Today, we are a busy and growing company, and our challenge is to keep the qualities that have helped us move into the future."

Next month: All in the Family with Prairie Athletic Club.

CAREER MOMENTUM INC.	
<small>A CAREER PARTNERS INTERNATIONAL FIRM</small>	
Assessment	www.CareerMomentum.com
Outplacement	608.274.2430
Leadership Development	