

Lincoln technology firm named 2010 Nebraska Small Business of the Year

OMAHA – James Bowen and Nick Bock, and their company, Five Nines Technology Group, LLC, located in Lincoln, Neb., have been named the Nebraska Small Business of the Year for 2010 by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), and the top small business for Nebraska’s 1st Congressional District.

The information technology firm was nominated for the honor by Marisol Rodriguez, Director, Nebraska Business Development Center, Lincoln, Neb.

“Five Nines mission is bringing business intelligence and a passion for technology to every client interaction,” say Bowen and Bock.

Five Nines is an information technology company providing managed services, IT support, and consulting services to small- and medium-sized businesses in the Midwest. Their company name is a nod to a measure of computer operating system reliability of 99.999 percent, which translates to a total downtime of only five minutes and fifteen seconds per year.

An SBA-backed guaranteed line of credit from Cornhusker Bank in December 2008 was crucial to ensure the viability of a small business that has to date retained more than 95 percent of its clients.



Nick Bock
*(Image provided by
Five Nines)*



James Bowen
*(Image provided by
Five Nines)*

According to a March 2010 study by the SBA Office of Advocacy, over a recent 15-year period, small businesses created a conservative estimate of 65 percent of net new private sector jobs nationwide.

From their two locations in Lincoln and Omaha, and with their 25-person team, Five Nines has successfully leveraged information technology resources to help more than 250 area companies reach their business objectives.

Five Nines enjoyed a 71 percent increase in revenues its first year before hitting 100 percent growth in 2008. Weathering the recession with growth of 33 percent for 2009, Five Nines continues to strengthen trust and strong relationships with its clients, “going against the grain,” as they put it, customizing a unique solution for its customers in a market that often provides generic IT services.

Bowen and Bock especially are proud of finding IT solutions for area health care and financial services providers. The firm has earned laudatory testimonials for work saving 60 percent on power costs for a local bank by using “virtual” servers; another customer praised the company for its cost-effective and customer-friendly solutions.

But ask Bowen and Bock how they describe success, and you won't get anything about growth or net profits – they'll answer that success is getting their customers from a vision to reaching their business goals.

Small Business of the Year for Nebraska's 2nd Congressional District

From its establishment in April 1999 to fulfill a need for aviation services in nearby Plattsmouth, to its present location at the TACAir complex at Epply Airfield in Omaha, Flight! Nebraska Group, LLC, has served as the area's premier flight training and aircraft rental operation.

Flight! Nebraska has developed a unique training program for a disadvantaged and diverse student population drawn from the Omaha Public Schools. According to company president Roy C. Kessell, the flight and ground training the company offers provides not only the basis for entry into the job market as a member of a flight crew, but other career opportunities in aviation.

A conversation over coffee a few years ago led Kessell, a longtime Omaha business owner, U.S. Air Force staff officer and strategic planner, to join with the Eastern Nebraska Community Action Partnership to develop a flight training program curriculum. From ground and flight training, to solo flights in a single-engine aircraft, the goal is to offer private pilot certification while receiving high school and college credit.

Flight! Nebraska founded a 501(c)(3) non-profit educational fund to raise money for the program, which even garnered a donation of a Piper Cherokee 140 single-engine training aircraft for the program.

Kessell also sought out the assistance of the Omaha office of the Nebraska Business Development Center, which helped provide him a business plan for expansion and software assistance for a flight training concept for at-risk youth. Flight! Nebraska was nominated by Omaha NBDC director Cliff Mosteller.

Small Business of the Year for Nebraska's 3rd Congressional District

A family-owned restaurant that serves up smoked meats and barbeque with counter-style service at its five locations across central Nebraska, Come and Get It, Inc., of Kearney has grown from 14 full- and part-time employees three years ago to an operation employing 70 people. The company offers homemade potato salad, cheesecake and barbeque sauces perfect for each palate.



Flight! Nebraska's location at Epply Airfield.
(Image provided by Flight! Nebraska)

Owned by Michael and Diane Mawby, and their daughters, Mallory and Madeline, the company's focus is on repeat business, with spectacular growth as a result—the company's revenues have grown 800 percent since its start in 2006.



The Kearney location for Come and Get It! across the street from the university. (Image provided by Come and Get It, Inc.)

Born in Palm Springs, Calif., Mawby learned the restaurant business at the feet of his grandfather. A graduate of North Arkansas Community College, he served in a number of sales and management positions and ran a food service operation with a relative from 1989 to 1996 before leaving for a job opportunity in Tennessee. He

continued to work in sales, communications and marketing positions before launching Come and Get It in Kearney.

Marketing primarily by word of mouth, Come and Get It! began with a small building across from the University of Nebraska at Kearney. A second location in North Platte, some 100 miles to the west, a third eatery in Hastings, a fourth at the Great Platte River Road Archway and a fifth in Grand Island all feed off the Kearney's single key store with smoking facilities to provide quality offerings to the outlying locations, significantly reducing start-up costs and capitalizing on sales potential. A strategic plan to franchise the venture will target higher population areas to repeat its success in offering a central location with smoking facilities to service satellite stores.

Come and Get It! got key advice from the Nebraska Business Development Center in Kearney to use existing cash flow, short-term debt and marketing research to support its plans for expansion.

The company also has provided \$10,000 in donations in cash and food products to the Royal Family Kids Camp, United Way, American Red Cross, local schools, My Bridge Radio and other community outreach programs.

Come and Get It! was nominated by Odee Ingersoll, director of the NBDC office in Kearney.