

**A Matter of Trust**

Non-compete contracts stop client theft

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# GWINNETT BUSINESS JOURNAL



Check out Gwinnett around the clock in freeze frame.

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New biz moves to Norcross.

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Bonnie Herron, vice president and chief financial officer, and Leland Strange, CEO, talk with Michael Wilkes, CEO of Dynamic Answers Inc., at Gwinnett Innovation Park.

## Hatching success

### Gwinnett Innovation Park incubates new businesses

by Christopher Lancette

After years of building his client base, Dynamic Answers CEO Michael Wilkes knew it was time to make the entrepreneurial leap from a home-based office to regular digs. But he also feared that all the chores of finding, moving into and operating an office would take his team off course.

That's when a friend of a friend told him about a business incubator run by the Norcross-based Intelligent Systems Corporation, which renamed the facility to Gwinnett Innovation Park this summer.

Presto.

"Intelligent Systems provided us with an office lease, phone lines, Internet service and everything else we needed," says Wilkes, whose firm offers customized software and web applications – along with database development services – that enable clients to get the most productivity out of

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### Corporate retreat doesn't mean surrender

Regularly scheduled gatherings may be the only time a company settles key issues

by Jeff Corbin

Annual retreats bear the brunt of many jokes. Most employees hate them. Corporate leadership dreads their return. Some have even managed to turn "off-site" into something akin to a curse.

But why is it so difficult to make everyone set aside the daily grind and get out of the workplace for a structured planning meeting or corporate retreat?

With little exception, the first hang-up is the personal imposition of leaving home, loved ones, pets and other personal matters unattended. Add in the moving up or delaying of work deadlines, and it's easy to see why some would rather skip the whole thing.

Still, retreats are a vital part of the operation, and they can be accomplished well. Take a look at how company president Bryan Cohen and those running the show at Touchstone Homes in Suwanee make good use of their huddle times.

Touchstone has consistently employed quarterly retreats for the last four years. The overall mission: get a group of about 10 key players out of the office

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#### Builder steps up for abused children

Bowen Family Homes building new lives for abused children.

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#### Play Ball!

Sign up for corporate softball league.

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## Hatching success

>>> Continued from cover



Intelligent Systems Corporation CEO J. Leland Strange.

their web sites. The solutions help businesses achieve everything from increasing revenue to improving customer service. “We couldn’t have asked for a better situation. This allowed us to come in, focus on our work, and not have to deal with all the headaches of setting up an office.”

That’s music to the ears of Intelligent Systems Corporation CEO J. Leland Strange. The incubator provides a wide range of services that include good deals on office space, all kinds of infrastructure and technical support, consulting, and even venture capital.

“We strive to be able to help our client companies in whatever way they need,” he says.

That assistance has given life to approximately 60 companies over the past few decades, creating an estimated 800 to 1,000 jobs. It currently houses 18 to 20 companies. Most are in technology industries, but others include a mortgage company and an industrial electronics firm. Though much of the incubator’s early focus was on generating revenues by investing in its clients, Intelligent Systems Corporation has decreased that emphasis over time.

“Our reason for doing this isn’t so much about deal-flow now,” Strange says. “Having been in Gwinnett for thirty years now, we’re old enough to be able to give back a little bit. Everything we do doesn’t have to be about the bottom line.”

For companies like Dynamic Answers, on the other hand, Gwinnett Innovation Park is an enormous aid to boosting their profits. Thanks to the incubator’s offerings, companies can expand their office space without all the expenses relating to moving. They can use conference rooms when they need them, obtain advice, and find key resources.

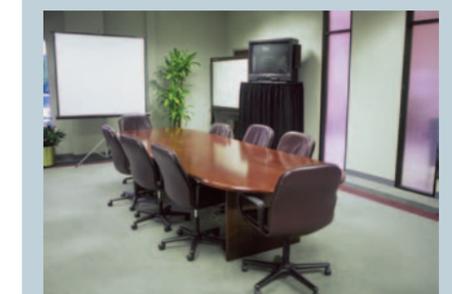
With these items out of the way, Dynamic Answers is able to maintain focus on its next

milestone: hitting the \$500,000 in annual sales mark. In turn, the company can make life easier for increasing numbers of clients.

“We really enjoy seeing people spend their time on what they love to do because we’ve gotten the technology part out of the way for them,” Wilkes says. 



A mainframe of one of the largest software companies located in the facility.



Fully-equipped conference and training rooms are among the many amenities offered at the facility.

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