

Web, videos instrumental in rapid growth of Unilink

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Unilink repair technician Silvan Capita of Greece inspects a check scanner. The company's new Web site provides one-stop shopping for customers.

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SEAN DOBBIN
STAFF WRITER

The Rochester Top 100, which annually recognizes the fastest-growing privately held companies in the nine-county region, is sponsored by the Rochester Business Alliance and KPMG.

Here is an interview with Lou Fuchs, president and CEO, and Vince Pallini, sales manager, of Unilink Inc., and Joe Crestuk, owner of webSURGE LLC.

UNILINK INC.
No. 6

Unilink Inc.: Supply equipment and maintenance services for financial institutions.
Year founded: 1988.
Location: 3800 Monroe Ave., Pittsford.
Executives: Lou Fuchs, president and CEO, 52, of Webster; Vince Pallini, sales manager, 50, of Webster; Linda Riley, chief financial officer, 53, of Greece.
Employees: 17.
Web: www.unilinkinc.com.

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Fuchs: We hired five people in January. The whole world is in a down economy, but we stepped up to the plate, and we're now at 17 people, and in January we were 11.

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Pallini: This past year gave Lou the opportunity to expand and invest in the Web site and the videos, as

well as invest in a sales manager and hire three new salespeople. So we've got a larger geographical footprint, and we're prospecting for a lot of new customers and trying to grow the business while maintaining the existing business.

Fuchs: We hired five people in January. The whole world is in a down economy, but we stepped up to the plate, and we're now at 17 people, and in January we were 11.

But a lot of that down economy has been tied to banks, your primary customers. That hasn't affected you?

Fuchs: Most of the community banks, which are our customers, stayed out of the subprime mortgage stuff, and a lot are doing better than they were before because a lot of customers using the national banks have moved their business over to the community banks. So we're dealing with an account base that's doing well.

Tell me about your new Web site.

Fuchs: One of the reasons why we did this is we've got about 1,000 community bank customers around the country, and we provide a lot of different products.

The challenge that we had was that some customers would think of us as a vendor that supplied them with printers and they didn't know we did anything else.

The Web site basically gives them a full presentation of all the products that we market and support.

We also had grown so much that manually processing an order was getting quite expensive and tedious.

Crestuk: I host over 350 business Web sites in the upstate New York area, and I'm noticing that clients similar to Unilink that distribute or manufacture products are looking for more ways to streamline how they're fulfilling their orders.

So we're tying in the ability to track an order so that the customer automatically receives a communication, so Unilink's people can spend less time on the phone and more time selling products.

Fuchs: The other thing we're doing is setting up customized e-commerce platforms so when the bank's customers log on, it looks like it's the bank's Web site, even though it comes onto our Web site. So it says "Welcome to XYZ Bank's Web site," and the orders are placed, but we're actually processing the orders for them.

Do you worry that banks using their own logos instead of yours will limit Unilink's exposure?

Fuchs: We have situations where the banks don't want to get involved at all and don't even want their name on the site. They just want Unilink to process the order for them. So it's not that we care.

You also mentioned videos?

Crestuk: Another thing Unilink has been doing along with developing a Web site is creating a sales video that demonstrates the product. The bank's salespeople can show this video to one of their merchant customers, and it's a tool for them to create the sale for one of Unilink's products.

The bank's people don't really need to understand check scanners, because the video explains them, but the video is branded to the bank so it looks like the bank's video.

Fuchs: Providing them with a video that they can customize that they can run in each branch office will give a consistent marketing message about why these products are important to their customer.

With more than a 50 percent increase in staff over a few months ago, do you worry it's going to be harder to be flexible?

Fuchs: Seventeen people is not a tiny company, but we still have a lot of nimbleness and flexibility to make decisions right away.

Vince came from a large company environment, and he'd be the first one to tell you that in corporate America, it takes six months or a year to do what we can do in a couple weeks.

Pallini: Absolutely. We implemented several changes within the first two weeks of me coming on board, and really made decisions and started implementing changes right away. We've launched the Web site, we've launched a new database platform, and all the sales folks are on the phones looking for new business and closing new business.

It's really exciting to make these changes long before a major corporation would even get through the approval process to start thinking about how to implement them.

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