The WebZone shrinks Oklahoma's wide open spaces with PortMaster 3-based Internet access

Background: From Software Development to Internet Services

The WebZone was founded in early 1996 by MBA, Inc. – an AS/400 software developer and IBM Alliance partner based in Tulsa, OK. MBA has been in business for about nine years and has achieved considerable success through its own marketing efforts as well as through its affiliation with IBM.

Carol Mersch and Tony Bacher are the owners of both MBA and The WebZone. Tony's son Mike provided the technical inspiration for The WebZone. And since its inception, General Manager Pat Milton has been involved in developing all aspects of The WebZone's business including operations, sales and marketing, products, and administration.

When founding The WebZone, MBA saw an opportunity to apply its application programming expertise to the development of Internet applications. The WebZone has developed a number of applications, one of which has been launched in the form of a new company, Enviryx Environmental Information Technologies (**www.enviryx.com**). Enviryx is an online environmental health and safety management and reporting system enabling companies to manage their Material Safety Data Sheets and chemical inventories anywhere in the world.

The Challenge: Doubling Growth through Quality of Service

Today, The WebZone provides a wide range of services for both individuals and business. These include thousands of dial-up analog and ISDN accounts; website hosting accounts; and dedicated analog, ISDN, and T1 accounts. The company's growth has continued to outpace management expectations. Hundreds of new accounts are added each month, making The WebZone's growth rate more than twice what it was a year ago.

"One of the reasons for this phenomenal growth," explains general manager Pat Milton, "is our commitment to providing the highest level of service to our customers. This includes all aspects of our business – from the equipment we use and the way we manage our network to the way we handle sales and bill and collect from our customers. As a result, customer referrals account for 46% of all our new accounts."

In late 1996, The WebZone management team determined that, to accommodate their projected growth, they would need to replace their existing analog access equipment (then Livingston PortMaster® 2s and Microcom modems) with ISDN lines and digital access servers. Accordingly, they contracted with Brooks Fiber Communications (now Brooks Worldcom) for a large number of primary rate interface (PRI) lines to replace the analog lines and deliver the capacity The WebZone needed to enable rapid growth. At the same time, company management compared the performance of several competitive digital access servers but was not completely satisfied with any of their options, except one.

The Lucent Solution: PortMaster 3 Integrated Access Server

"We had been very pleased with the performance of the PortMaster 2s, and the features of the PortMaster 3 appeared to fulfill all our needs" Milton observes. The PortMaster 3 combines True Digital™ DSP-based modem technology, Primary Rate Interface (PRI) and T1/E1 support, a communications server, a router, and WAN switching into a single compact chassis. The consolidation of these separate remote access functions delivered the simplified installation, administration and unsurpassed reliability that The WebZone needed to support its growing customer base.

The WebZone Team
(top-to-bottom, left-to-right) Bruce Reynolds, Mike Bacher, Brian Younger, Scott Seufert, Steven Smallwood, Kevin Mooney, Steve Goggans, Dilene Crockett, Doug Funk, Lance Scott, Tara Rinke, Deonna Fegley, Heather Syska, Anna Schutte, Julia Nelson; (standing) James Morrow, Rachel Autry-Swim, Mystl Pagonis; (seated) Pat Milton, Chris Jackson, Joy Cheek; (standing) Missey Scott, Tony Bacher, Carol Mersch; (not shown) Paul Fry, Stephen Burns, Jason Garcia, Gregg Bartlett

The WebZone has steadily doubled its PortMaster 3 deployment since the first units were installed in early 1997. Recent growth in their Tulsa market has been so robust the company has ordered five additional PortMaster 3s just within the last two weeks, and they anticipate ordering several more by year-end. In addition, The WebZone is currently implementing a plan to open an office and a network point of presence (POP) in Oklahoma City where they will also be installing a number of PortMaster 3s.

For more information, visit their website at **http://www.webzone.net**