

# MERIT *matters*

SPRING 2011

INSIGHTS FOR BUSINESS & LIFE

## *greening our future*

COLUMBUS  
DEVELOPS A  
REPUTATION FOR  
SUSTAINABILITY

LINKEDIN  
CEO JEFF  
WEINER  
TALKS  
ABOUT THE  
FUTURE OF  
SOCIAL  
MEDIA

RETIREMENT:  
FUNDING  
YOUR NEST  
EGG

*plus:*

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SUE  
ZAZON



# Business sustainability

**B**usiness sustainability has a different meaning now than it did a few years ago. The definition has evolved from the concept of stable business practices thanks to the advent of “green” corporate initiatives. These days, it’s about incorporating both economic and environmental sustainability, starting with a commitment to a greener world that often turns into a boon to the bottom line.

From an economic standpoint, the prospect of sustaining business as usual has been elusive, at best. Though we’re turning the corner and seem to have a better view of the road ahead, we’re not quite ready to set the cruise control. The “new normal” may never allow us that luxury again. Now more than ever, businesses are challenged with a delicate balancing act of taking advantage of the next big thing, while staying focused on the long term.

Maybe you’re looking further into the concept of cloud computing to allow more of your employees to work remotely. Or you’re making energy-efficient improvements to your company’s headquarters. Savvy companies are investing in the future of technology, wellness and community development, leading to

growth that is strategic and, yes, even sustainable.

Here in Columbus, organizations and city government are well on their way to developing programs and supporting businesses that create a greener city. In this first addition of *MeritMatters*, you’ll read about a company that FirstMerit Bank has invested in that helps make solar panels more affordable and efficient for businesses to implement. You’ll also learn about some of the initiatives taking place in Columbus by organizations on the forefront of the sustainable business movement.

What does it take to not just sustain your business but also grow it with a more prosperous, and maybe even greener, future in mind? We hope this issue of *MeritMatters* will enlighten and inform you and get you thinking about your own business’ sustainability.

Sue Zazon  
President and CEO,  
Columbus Region  
FirstMerit Bank

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## EAT YOUR GREENS

*Columbus eateries serve up top-notch cuisine through earth-friendly practices*

**G. MICHAEL'S BISTRO & BAR**  
595 S. Third St. / 614-464-0575  
<http://gmichaelsbistro.com>

Located in historic German Village, G. Michael's is a fine-dining establishment, committed to creative cuisine and community — it partners with and donates to organizations throughout the region, including Local Matters and German Village Business Community. Ask the servers which dishes on the seasonal menu feature local ingredients. Much of the pork, beef, produce and dairy come from Central Ohio growers and producers.

**RIGSBY'S KITCHEN**  
698 N. High St. / 614-461-7888  
[www.rigsbyskitchen.com](http://www.rigsbyskitchen.com)

This Short North eatery prepares dishes inspired by Italy and the Mediterranean from its exhibition-style kitchen. Rigby's selects local, seasonal ingredients, subscribing to the principle that food should be from local, humane and sustainable sources. Members of Slow Food Columbus and Local Matters.

**BLACK CREEK BISTRO**  
51 Parsons Ave. / 614-246-9662  
[www.blackcreekbistro.com](http://www.blackcreekbistro.com)

Originating as an extension of their farm, the owners of Black Creek Bistro dish up a creative seasonal menu based on the freshest produce and meats. What they don't grow, they obtain from primarily local businesses and farmers. With an in-house pastry chef, farm trucks that run on reclaimed vegetable oil and walls covered in works from Columbus artists, the bistro is truly local and sustainable.

## COLUMBUS EVENTS, HIGHLIGHTS AND ATTRACTIONS



### CAPA

[www.capa.com](http://www.capa.com)

The Columbus Association for the Performing Arts presents national and international performing arts and entertainment in a number of downtown Columbus venues. This spring's highlights include *Broadway Across America: Mary Poppins*.

April 20-May 8, 2011

Ohio Theatre / 39 E. State St.

800-745-3000

[www.broadwayacrossamerica.com](http://www.broadwayacrossamerica.com)



### EARTH DAY 2011: LIGHTEN UP!

Green Columbus invites organizations and individuals to be a part of the largest volunteer-organized Earth Day service project in the country. Volunteers create a more sustainable Columbus by planting trees, installing rain gardens, restoring local ecosystems and creating community gardens. The week ends with a celebration that includes entertainment and cultural events. Volunteer opportunities April 16-17. Earth Day Celebration April 23.

614-846-8802 / [www.greencbus.org](http://www.greencbus.org)



### AFRICAN AMERICAN HERITAGE FESTIVAL

Join the thousands of visitors celebrating African-American history and culture throughout The Ohio State University campus.

April 23-May 1, 2011 / 614-688-8449

Visit <http://heritagefestival.osu.edu> for festival events and locations.



### COLUMBUS MUSEUM OF ART

480 E. Broad St.

[www.columbusmuseum.org](http://www.columbusmuseum.org)

After extensive renovations that included the addition of the Center for Creativity, the museum revealed the changes in January to a delighted public. Plan a visit to the revamped museum around the Columbus Arts Festival. In downtown's Discovery District, enjoy the works of artists and craftspeople from around the world. The fest also features musical performances, entertainment, art activities and food from local restaurants.

June 3-5, 2011 / 614-224-2606

[www.gcac.org/fest](http://www.gcac.org/fest)



### THE MEMORIAL TOURNAMENT

Hosted by Jack Nicklaus, the major PGA tour event features some of the best golfers in the world.

May 30-June 5, 2011

Muirfield Village Golf Club / 5750 Memorial Dr.

877-MT BADGE

[www.thememorialtournament.com](http://www.thememorialtournament.com)

# POWERING THE FUTURE

*How SolarVision plans to change the world, one solar panel at a time*

BY SUE OSTROWSKI

Although SolarVision LLC has only been in business since October 2008 — and just completed its first financing last August — it is steaming ahead, with anticipated 2011 revenue of between \$60 million and \$100 million.

SolarVision, based in Westerville, Ohio, has found its niche doing commercial, industrial and governmental solar arrays, says Don Saul, Executive Vice President and an owner of the company. Solar arrays — or solar panels — convert solar energy into direct current electricity.

“We provide the equipment, install it, insure it and maintain it, and the only thing the host does is buy the power that the solar arrays generate,” says Saul. “We can go to clients and provide them with solar power at a reduced rate from what they’re paying for electrical costs and we can help them be green. We can provide all of those services at no cost to the host and, in fact, in a lot of cases, there is a savings component.”

SolarVision spent the first 15 months of its existence in research and development, trying to figure out the best way to structure and finance transactions and how to make the concept marketable not only to potential hosts of the system but also to investors. The company’s founders wanted to produce and promote renewable energy and, at the same time, make it a financially viable option.

Saul said the company looked at various ways to raise capital through investors, private placements and debt financing with banks and insurance companies, trying to prove it was feasible for the company to act as a third-party financier of solar arrays. But it was a tough sell, until they connected with FirstMerit Bank, whose bankers stepped in to help SolarVision find creative financing solutions when no other bank was interested.

“When we put together our first package to be financed, we went to local banks in the Central Ohio region and explained to them our objectives and our processes,”

says Saul. “We discussed with them what would be a viable return for them, what would be an OK return for the company, and from there, FirstMerit financed the first package and they’re attempting to finance the next one.”

That financing helped SolarVision get off the ground, and it currently has several projects in the pipeline, including a solar power purchase agreement with the city of Celina for three megawatts of solar power. The Celina Renewable Energy Center Campus will pay a fixed rate for the power



Greg Kuss, President, Don Saul, Executive Vice President, and Marty Magill, Chief Financial Officer, at SolarVision LLC.



produced by more than 12,000 solar panels covering 15 to 20 acres. The project is expected to take about five months to complete, and the agreement for power extends 20 years.

SolarVision will finance the project through private investors, the use of a clause in the Tax Relief Act of 2010 that allows for 100 percent depreciation for equipment in the first year in which it is placed into service, and the use of New Market Tax Credits, which create a 39 percent tax credit to be taken over seven years.

“The New Market Tax Credit program has been around since 2000 and has traditionally been used to encourage investment in economically distressed areas, both rural and metropolitan,” says Saul. “We were able to get permission to use the program for investing in solar arrays in distressed communities. And we’re one of the few developers in the country that has the capability of structuring deals like that.”

The company has also benefited from the passage of an Ohio House bill that requires the use of alternate power.

“The passage of House Bill 221 mandates that investor-owned utilities, such as AEP and Dayton Power, are required to get one-half of 1 percent of their total generation of electricity from solar by 2025,” says Saul. “The passage of that bill created that demand for solar and encouraged investment in it.”

## THE JOURNEY

SolarVision was founded by Greg Kuss, who then approached others who were interested in the field. After spending 15 months trying to figure out how to make the business model work, Saul said it was gratifying when the company completed its first financing in August for \$5.6 million.

“We spent well over \$1 million figuring out how to do this,” he says. “But once we did, we were able to pay most of that financing back with the first project and should be in the black by the time the Celina project financing is in place,” in the near future.

And as the number of projects continues to grow, Saul expects SolarVision’s relationship with FirstMerit Bank to do the same.

“We’re counting on it. And I think they’re counting on it,” Saul says. “We have a pretty significant depository relationship and a significant borrowing relationship with them, and we are looking toward future opportunities where they can participate and help.”

Saul said SolarVision’s relationship with FirstMerit Bank has gone beyond that of just a bank, as its bankers work hard to understand the business.

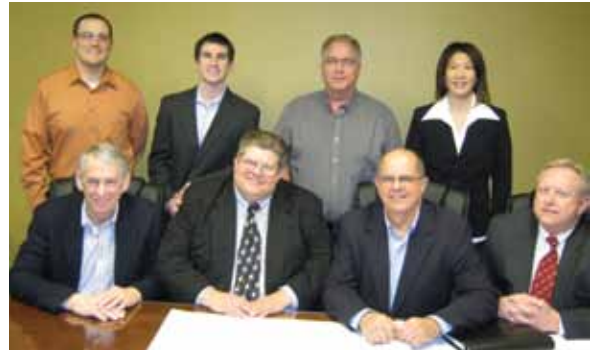
“We have found them to be more creative, good listeners, very attentive, very detail-oriented and looking for ways to put deals together rather than looking for ways to not have to do a deal,” he says. “Because of the size of the credits involved, they have to understand who we are, what we do and how we do it. They’ve come to know the business process and are very involved in it from start to finish. It’s not just our bank; it’s a partnership, with them providing the debt to assist in financing projects.”

Saul said that leadership at SolarVision is in nearly daily contact with FirstMerit Bank, which has been helpful in creating projects in an arena — solar financing — that is relatively new to Ohio. And although the business’s relationship with FirstMerit Bank is based in Columbus, the company is looking to extend its reach. Currently, it has projects across Ohio and is also working in Pennsylvania, and it is considering projects in New Jersey, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Maryland and other states along the East Coast. Eventually, Saul says, SolarVision’s leaders would like to take the company national.

“We’re going to expand regionally this year and are potentially looking at launching a national program in 2012 or 2013, depending on what the economic climate is,” Saul says. “I feel like we’ve been blessed with quite an opportunity in a market that’s not extremely competitive. Good, bad or indif-



“WE CAN GO TO A CLIENT AND PROVIDE IT WITH SOLAR POWER AT A REDUCED RATE FROM WHAT IT’S PAYING FOR ELECTRICAL COSTS AND WE CAN HELP IT BE GREEN.”



Front row, left to right: Jim Farmer, Attorney; Don Saul, Executive Vice President; Greg Kuss, President; Marty Magill, Chief Financial Officer. Top row, left to right: Jamie Albert, Account Manager; Dan Harrington, Office Administrator; Mike Dickman, Vice President; Jeannie Mok, Vice President of Operations

ferent, we have the lowest cost of electricity here in Ohio, and so it is very difficult to be able to structure transactions profitably, but thanks in part to our relationship with FirstMerit, we’ve been successful at that and anticipate that we’re going to continue to be successful.”

## A GREEN GENERATION

In addition to its commitment to the environment, SolarVision also places a heavy emphasis on educating the community on the benefits of solar.

“One of our charges is an educational component to all of our systems, where the client has online access at any time to see how a system is performing, how much energy it’s created year to date and how that relates to how much carbon it’s taking out of the atmosphere from fossil fuels. For example, the set-off of a smaller system was like planting 50 acres of trees or not driving a car for 3 million miles,” Saul says. “People are generally surprised at the numbers, but the benefits of developing solar energy alongside traditional energy forms is related to the fact that we know we’ve already damaged the environment through some of the choices we’ve made in the past, and we have the responsibility to seek out and look for ways to promote clean technology and environmentally friendly ways of producing energy.”

The company is also working to educate not just potential clients but the next generation as well. One of its first projects was at an elementary school in Worthington, where large-screen TV monitors in public areas allow students to monitor the productivity of the system — what it’s producing today, how it did yesterday and how that compares to output on previous days. By making students aware of solar power, how

it is produced and how the system operates, they are learning at an early age about the benefits of solar energy.

Saul says that by educating current and future generations, SolarVision can slowly change the world.

“People are generally cautious and conservative by nature, and with our business model, they wonder why someone is going to bring them a benefit that’s just for them,” he says. “But really, it’s not just for them. We look at it more globally and feel that by promoting the fact that we believe in renewable energy, as long as we can make it cost-effective for customers, that they will come to agree.”

A little more than two years after its founding, the company now employs nine people and is completing its fifth project. Eleven more projects are scheduled to be completed this year, and Saul anticipates adding three to five employees a year over the next few years in order to keep up with the demands and maintain the company’s margins, ensuring that it continues to put together the best deals it possibly can.

“We’re more than on target; we know we’re creating jobs from the construction work perspective,” he says. “If we have an \$18 million, five-month project like the one in Celina, we’re not going to build it ourselves. We’re going to hire someone to do it.”

And SolarVision will continue to contract those jobs out as it continues to grow.

“I think we have unlimited potential,” Saul says. “And with the help of FirstMerit, I see us continuing to grow.” ♦

Don Saul is Executive Vice President of SolarVision LLC. Reach him at [donsaul@solarvisionllc.net](mailto:donsaul@solarvisionllc.net).



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# INTERNATIONAL BANKING

**CRAIG  
SCHURR**

Senior Vice President,  
International Banking  
Manager



Successful business leaders know diversification is key to growth. But stopping at the regional, statewide or even national level is no longer the safest bet for companies with the potential to take their products or services beyond our borders.

“If all your eggs are in one basket, specifically all your sales are domestic, and the U. S. economy goes into a recession, unless your business is ‘recession-proof’ you are going to be negatively affected,” says Craig Schurr, Senior Vice President and International Banking Manager at FirstMerit Bank. “But if you have a global view and a diversification of your revenue stream, you’re not dependent on just one economy. If one economy slows, you can shift your focus and keep your people employed by selling to economies that continue to expand. The other side of this equation is true also; shop-

ping for raw materials in the global market may result in less-expensive sources of supply, enabling you to lower the cost of your product and making it easier to compete for new business.”

Schurr offers further insight into current international opportunities and what to expect when taking business overseas.

## **Is it a good time right now for companies to explore international business options?**

Without question! First, the U.S. dollar is currently weak. That makes it a good time for U.S. companies who export to sell goods overseas. Companies that purchase goods from U.S. exporters are getting a bargain when they convert their higher-priced currency to lower-priced U.S. dollars to pay for what they buy. Secondly, President Obama indicated last spring that he is looking to help the U.S. economy double its exports by 2016, so there’s a lot of focus by the government right now on helping companies looking to sell overseas. Also, the forecast for growth in the U.S. economy for the next two years is very low. So companies that sell predominantly in the United States, which has a GDP of 2 to 3 percent, will not see a lot of growth. But emerging country economies, specifically those in Asia, are growing rapidly and have a GDP of 8 percent or greater. And U.S. products are in demand.

## **Are there any currency exchange concerns businesses should be aware of when doing business globally?**

Very much so. Getting paid in a currency with which you can do something is one of the key concepts of successful global business. Companies need to do their homework about the exchangeability of currencies in countries to which they sell. For instance, if they’re selling to a country where the currency is not readily exchangeable they

should only quote pricing in U.S. dollars. If they’re selling to a country where the currency is convertible, they really should consider selling in the currency of their buyer, thus making the cost of their product more understandable and showing interest in partnering with, instead of just selling to, their customers. A currency that has not been exchangeable is the Chinese renminbi. The Chinese have historically prohibited the exchange or ownership of renminbi outside of China; however, in an effort to internationalize their currency, all of that is changing and rapidly. What does this mean for a company in the United States? It means that U.S. exporters (and importers) can sell and buy with mainland Chinese businesses in their currency. And the reason that is very important even beyond the ‘partnering’ idea is that the Chinese currency has recently appreciated against the U.S. dollar. This internationalization will also give companies outside the country a better ability to participate in this dynamic economy.

## **What are the main security issues for businesses participating in international banking?**

Getting paid is the one thing they have to be sure to consider. Pricing their product is another important consideration. It costs more to get their product from here to wherever they’re selling. A company needs to do its homework and factor costs of transportation, packaging for extended shipment periods and transportation insurance into their purchasing and/or selling price. And they really need to understand the culture and political and economic realities of the places they’re selling to. Global buyers and sellers also need to understand banking products, like letters of credit, that protect the payment stream. Finally, businesses need to understand not everybody who claims to want to do business with you is honest. Being a skeptic can be a very good thing. Verify everything and never, ever assume anything. ♦

Reach Craig Schurr at [craig.schurr@firstmerit.com](mailto:craig.schurr@firstmerit.com).



# MERCHANT PROCESSING *Risk awareness*

## SUSIE BRINDZA

Vice President, Merchant Bankcard Manager



## MICHELLE THOMPSON

Assistant Vice President, Merchant Fraud/Risk Officer



## MIKE MEOLA

Vice President, Merchant Sales Manager



multiple credit cards, all with almost identical card numbers. One issuer is not going to provide someone several cards in their name. The customer will also oftentimes create a sense of urgency to rush the order. This is a very common fraud pattern, and it's still working.

**Meola:** A lot of merchants, especially when they first get started taking credit cards, think once they receive an authorization number, they are guaranteed payment. All that authorization code does is say, 'At this time, that credit card or debit card has room to put that transaction on it.' But that doesn't mean the authorized person is using the card. So the merchant is at risk, and, many times, until they have a bad experience, they don't realize it.



While new advances in technology, including instantaneous global communication, have opened new avenues for many businesses, they have also opened new avenues for fraud. And while many merchants think, "That could never happen to me," it all too often does.

"Businesses are anxious to sell their product," says Susie Brindza, Vice President and Merchant Bankcard Manager at FirstMerit Bank. "As a result, many who accept credit cards as a payment channel often bypass some of the red flags, anxious to make a sale and income during this difficult economic time."

Brindza, Michelle Thompson and Mike Meola shed more light on merchant fraud and how businesses can protect themselves.

### What should merchants be concerned about in terms of fraud?

**Thompson:** Our goal is to educate our clients on the red flags to notice up front. Many times, merchants will take a transaction, and the customer on the other end of the phone is someone they've never worked with before that finds them out of the blue. Oftentimes, the customer will ask them to ship someplace obscure or give them

### What preventive measures can merchants put in place to avoid becoming a victim of fraud?

**Thompson:** Knowing your customer is key. Many businesses are motivated by the prospect of a large sale, however, it's important to utilize common sense and good judgement. A business also needs to be aware of whose hands are in the mix. Is there a person selling on the front line who faxes or e-mails orders to an accounts payable department? Do they know this customer? Has the accounts payable department completed proper due diligence on the cards being utilized as payment? It takes everyone working together.

**Brindza:** The best way to help prevent a client from taking fraudulent transactions is education. We have a team that speaks with prospects and clients to provide them the warning signs of potentially fraudulent transactions. We educate everyone in the company who has any part of the sales process. It's the best defense for protecting them, and them protecting themselves.

### What should merchants know about Payment Card Industry (PCI) compliance?

**Thompson:** PCI is the unified standard

on behalf of American Express, Discover, MasterCard and Visa, although each of the card brands still has its own individual security standards and programs. We have a program that we kicked off just short of four years ago where we partnered with a third-party company, SecurityMetrics. We work with our clients, assisting them to achieve PCI compliance. We're very proactive, working through client questions and confusion every day.

**Meola:** If a merchant does not become PCI compliant, and they should experience a breach, the fines and the costs associated with it could put our clients out of business. We want them to stay in business, so they can continue to be our clients and we can continue to be their bank. It's a global perspective, and that's how we approach it. ♦

Reach Suzie Brindza at [susie.brindza@firstmerit.com](mailto:susie.brindza@firstmerit.com); Reach Michelle Thompson at [michelle.thompson@firstmerit.com](mailto:michelle.thompson@firstmerit.com); Reach Mike Meola at [michael.meola@firstmerit.com](mailto:michael.meola@firstmerit.com).

For more information on PCI compliance, visit the PCI Security Standards Council official site at [www.pcisecuritystandards.org](http://www.pcisecuritystandards.org).

# CLOSER TO YOU

*LinkedIn CEO Jeff Weiner talks about the future of social media*

BY DUSTIN S. KLEIN



Every day, it seems the social media world is growing, making the physical world around us appear that much smaller. With those changes, the line that previously separated our personal and professional lives has blurred on Web sites and applications like Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and YouTube.

So where exactly is this new frontier headed, and how can we best take advantage of it?

Who better to answer those questions than Jeff Weiner, CEO of LinkedIn, the Web's largest and most powerful network of professionals.

## How do you define social media?

Broadly defined, it is the creation of content, information and knowledge, distribution of it, consumption of it, and leveraging social interactions. Whether that's a status update, sharing an image, a video or a blog post, even retweeting or sharing a headline — those are all examples of social media.

The social interaction component really takes what historically has been behavior we all have done off-line and moves it at a speed with which we haven't seen previously. It really has the opportunity to change everything it touches.

## So what do you see as the true cultural sea change here?

This goes way beyond brand building and customer outreach, which is how many organizations are using social media

at a basic level. Leveraging social platforms is going to fundamentally change the way we work and how business gets done. So whether it's the way you hire people, find your dream job, transition from cold calling to warm prospecting by leveraging the power of first-, second- and third-degree relationships, or whether it's exchanging information that you need to make more informed decisions, I don't think people can really afford not to participate within these platforms.

## Where should we start?

There are three behavioral changes we focus on the most at LinkedIn. First is the way in which we represent our professional identity. The way in which individuals now build their professional brand starts with their profiles. And those profiles, when they're kept fresh and relevant, are search engine optimized so that when people search on Google for your name or the names of people like you with your experience, your skills, your aspirations, you're the first thing they see. This ability to carve out a piece of digital real estate that you, yourself, can control is an incredibly powerful and valuable dynamic. It's not just the individual; it's also your company. There are more than a million active company profiles on LinkedIn. These company profiles not only represent who you are and your company's identity, but they enable you to build your talent brands, establish the way in which you're going to recruit, and build word of mouth around your products and services.

The second is building your network. If we believe the world is getting flatter, more global, more digital, more networked, this is the way business gets done — it's the way people are tapping knowledge, exchanging information — and if you're not taking advantage of that and building out your network, your competition is.

Lastly is the whole notion of sharing information and knowledge — collaborating, sharing business intelligence and competitive intelligence. To be able to really derive this kind of insight from whatever networks or social environments you're operating in becomes an enormous advantage versus those folks who aren't able to do the same.

## You mentioned identity. How accurate do you think people or companies' identities are on the Internet? Whom and what should we trust?

When you're talking about a professional context, I think things change versus a social context. The more your professional identity is out there, the more opportunities you potentially accrue. It's a tried and true practice. So when you're putting your profile out there for everyone to see publicly and transparently, the people who work with you and know exactly what you did are going to call you out if you're not telling the truth.

It's very much self-policing in a professional context. The quality of interaction from people's professional identities are very different than what's shared outside of the professional context. ♦

# GOT APPS?

When Apple launched its 1.5-pound, .5-inch deep iPad in April 2010, it prompted myriad questions. The most common: Is the iPad practical for everyday business use, or is it destined for personal use?

The iPad is clearly entertaining and useful as a personal device but also offers an array of convenient capabilities for any business professional. It syncs e-mail, calendars and contacts, aligning mobile devices with corporate networks for on-the-go access.

In addition to the iPad's own built-in security measures, a company's IT department can create additional security measures like complex passwords. If a company's iPad is lost or stolen, the department can remotely clear all data.

Already there are plenty of apps designed for business use. Some of these include:

## **iWork suite (Pages, Numbers and Keynote)**

Pages provides templates for everything from newsletters to reports that can include photos, graphics and charts.

Numbers also offers an abundance of templates in which to perform calculations, data summarization, formula creation and more. Keynote features tools such as themes, animations and effects to enhance a presentation. It also allows importation of photos and videos, views of slides and notes, a clock and a timer. It is compatible with Keynote '09, Microsoft PowerPoint and PDF files.

## **Bloomberg**

The must-have app for up-to-date financial information. It offers news, stock quotes, trends and analysis, company profiles and more. Users can also create a customized list of stocks.

## **PrintCentral**

Print Central allows users to print any document type from any printer through WiFi, 3G and corporate networks. It also allows users to view and store e-mails, documents, files, photos, websites and more.

## **Evernote**

While the iPad comes with a built-in note-taking app, it is very limited. Evernote includes photo and video syncing, audio recording, a tagging option for quick retrieval and a handy organization system. It also syncs with other devices such as a Mac or iPhone.

## **GoToMeeting**

This app allows online conferencing by clicking an e-mail invitation link or entering a meeting code. Attendees can share documents and presentations or communicate through audio.

# ON THE CLOUD



You've probably heard the cloud touted as the ultimate solution to every technology problem you've ever encountered. And depending on your IT requirements, it just may be. For those looking for more insight into how to best capitalize on this tech trend, more information is emerging on its long-term business applications.

Cloud computing in its simplest sense is technology infrastructure — servers and software — that exists on the Web. Any Internet program that can be accessed from a Web browser is basically a cloud, such as Gmail or a photo-sharing site. The term "cloud" has only gained popularity recently due to the rise of available broadband, which allows users to be constantly connected and, in turn, more able to retrieve data and use applications from just about anywhere.

Many businesses are discovering the cloud's capabilities in Internet-based computing, where they can add or increase IT capabilities without investing in new infrastructure, software or staff. It gives businesses the flexibility to execute new ideas and implement cost-saving and time-saving technology without the risk.

Aside from Software as a Service (SaaS) providers like Salesforce, other major cloud service providers include Amazon, Rackspace Cloud, Skytap, Microsoft and Google, offering everything from applications to storage services to spam filtering. For example, the popular Google Business Apps offer communications tools like video, e-mail and calendars, along with security and a high level of storage. And it's all hosted by Google.

Another cutting-edge solution made possible by cloud computing is the virtual desktop, which allows you to access your desktop from anywhere. This also eliminates the need for constant backup; should the computer crash, everything that was on the desktop can be accessed from the cloud.

With the potential to create greater business agility, streamline management and reduce costs, businesses would be wise to look to the cloud for the future of their IT infrastructure.



# LOOKING FOR THE HOUSING SOLUTION

BY DANIELLE TOTH

*Low rates make for an excellent time to refinance*

Reports on the uncertainty of the housing market and mortgage crisis have given many potential and current homeowners continued apprehension.

However, Tom Finnegan, President and CEO of FirstMerit Mortgage, says because mortgage rates are at historically low levels, it is an excellent time to refinance a loan.

“If someone was originally in a 30-year-type mortgage, they can go into a 15-year mortgage and get a bigger rate advantage,” he says. “Using the 15-year-type loan will build equity in their property quicker. That’s a great strategy in the environment right now with rates being so low.”

The advantageous combination of affordable rates and low home prices also makes now the perfect time to buy a home, Finnegan says.

“People can be overwhelmed by what they hear in the media relative to the mortgage market and the housing market, but it comes down to a decision individual families have to make based on their own circumstances,” he says. “It’s a good time just to sit down with your lender and have a profile done of your own particular situation to come up with the mortgage product that best suits your individual needs.”

Governmental programs, such as the Making Home Affordable Program, also provide opportunities for homeowners to modify or refinance their mortgage.

“If someone’s monthly budget has changed, say they have an ongoing monthly income, but perhaps not at the level they had previously, modification programs are available,” Finnegan says. “At FirstMerit, we work on a case-by-case basis. We work to get the payment to a more affordable level.”

Lenders don’t make money by foreclos-



Tom Finnegan,  
President and  
CEO, FirstMerit  
Mortgage

ing, Finnegan says, and will usually work with borrowers to keep them in their homes.

And although the federal first-time homebuyer tax credit expired, there are still many opportunities for first-time homebuyers, Finnegan says. The Federal Housing

Administration offers low money-down programs, and many lenders are offering conventional mortgages with as little as 5 percent down, he

says. In addition, the Ohio Housing Finance Agency offers down payment assistance grants for qualifying first-time homebuyers through the First-Time Homebuyer and Grants for Grads programs.

“Borrowers should always keep their eyes open,” Finnegan says. “Banks are still lending money, and although credit standards have tightened some throughout the crisis, there is still a full array of fixed- and adjustable-rate mortgages borrowers can take advantage of.”

Mortgage rates were at 50-year lows in 2010 and began slowly rising by the end of the year, Finnegan says. In 2011, he anticipates rates will rise slightly. The amount depends on the robustness of economic activity, he says, but rates will most likely not jump dramatically in a short period of time.

Although higher mortgage rates generally have a depressing effect on the housing market, Finnegan says the overriding issue with housing is poor economic activity rather than rates.

“If we get an economic recovery and people feel confident they’re going to have a job, mortgage rates in the 5 percent range are still very affordable,” he says. “That shouldn’t stop anybody from looking to buy a home.”

In Chicago, there was both an impact from the economy as well as overbuilding in certain segments, particularly condominiums, resulting in a substantial decline in prices that may not rise for some time, Finnegan says. But in Ohio, the housing market has mirrored the economy, and as the economy improves, so will the market, he says.

“We didn’t have the massive increases in home prices in Ohio that some of the hotter markets had, so we don’t have the situation some of those markets have relative to people being underwater,” he explains. “As long as they want to live in their home and have income, there’s no particular reason why the fact that on paper their home value is a little lower than their mortgage really should matter that much. They should continue to make their mortgage payment, and, at some point, values will start to recover.” ♦

Reach Tom Finnegan at  
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# PLANNING FOR RETIREMENT

## *Making sense of an uncertain environment*

BY GREG MCDERMOTT, PRESIDENT, FIRSTMERIT INSURANCE GROUP

### **How has the economy affected future retirees?**

The prospect of enjoying the Golden Years may seem more like fools gold to many Americans who have seen their retirement savings dwindle during the recent economic downturn. One of the immediate impacts of the downturn was the reduction or elimination of employer contributions to qualified retirement plans. In addition, a significant number of individuals lost their jobs and have had to tap into retirement savings in order to sustain them during this difficult economic period.

Perhaps the most significant barrier to the goal of retirement has been the loss in account values suffered by most retirement plan participants over the past few years due to market volatility and dramatic declines in stock values. The psychological fallout from the market meltdown has made many employees nearing retirement more risk averse and conservative in their investment selections, which may limit the future performance of their accounts.

All of these factors have combined to create a material reduction in retirement savings.

### **Many future retirees are worried about the future of Social Security. Where do you see Social Security heading?**

The future viability of Social Security is certainly a looming issue and one that has challenged our government for decades, but with little action. I think we are nearing a time in which changes are going to need to be made in order to sustain the system for future generations. Since the Social Security system was put in place in 1935, the average life expectancies of retiring workers have increased dramatically, which means benefits are being paid for many more years than originally anticipated.



Another startling statistic is that in 1950, for every Social Security beneficiary, there were 16 active workers helping to fund the system. Today, there are three workers for every beneficiary, and that ratio will be two workers for every beneficiary by 2050.

The logical conclusion from this is that the age to qualify for Social Security will need to be increased materially in the future. It is also likely that there will be a form of “means testing” so that higher income earners may receive fewer Social Security benefits. Lastly, there is considerable discussion today surrounding converting our current “defined benefit” approach to Social Security to a defined contribution approach for younger employees in the work force in order to limit the continued growth in the benefit liability.

There is a general awareness by our government of the added burden on future retirees to create additional personal retirement savings. The advent of the Roth IRA is a good example of the government’s desire to create incentives for individuals to build their retirement savings on a tax-favored basis and create greater financial independence from government programs.

### **Anything else interesting or timely regarding retirement planning?**

In late 2010, as part of the financial service reform legislation, Congress focused on creating greater transparency in fees and expenses charged within qualified retirement plans. Beginning in 2012, plan sponsors and participants will be told — in dollars and cents — exactly how much they pay each quarter for the management of their 401(k) plan. Most participants believe they pay nothing.

Investment fees, recordkeeping and administrative fees will be published in the one document most participants actually open and read — their participant statements. As participants begin to compare



these fees and expenses, there will likely be questions raised concerning the value of services provided. This will be especially true when selecting investment fund alternatives. While many 401(k) providers have been very disciplined and transparent in their pricing for services, those providers that have been more aggressive in their fees and expense charges and have not been transparent in disclosure will be at a distinct competitive disadvantage. Many industry analysts are predicting that this new disclosure will likely produce a tipping point, resulting in reduced fees and expenses by many service providers, accompanied by greater accountability by plan providers.

As an example of the impact of fees and expenses, a 1 percent annual reduction in expenses at the participant account level over a working career could result in an increase in the account value at retirement of as much as 25 percent. While plan participants will now have a greater awareness of the expenses being charged to their account, plan providers will have an enhanced responsibility to assure the reasonableness of the fees and expenses being charged to the retirement plans they sponsor. ♦

Reach Greg McDermott at [gregory.mcdermott@firstmerit.com](mailto:gregory.mcdermott@firstmerit.com).

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**Henderson Partners, LLC**  
(Metropolitan Partners)  
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redevelopment of  
office/retail building



**Lincoln Construction, Inc.**  
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**The Wallick Companies**  
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management of affordable multi-family housing  
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**Knapp Veterinary Hospital, Inc.**  
Veterinary Office  
**\$605,000 Real Estate Financing**  
**\$75,000 Line of Credit**  
Real estate financing, operating line of credit,  
depository services



**Gowdy Partners III LLC**  
(The Daimler Group)  
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Land acquisition and medical office  
building development



**Gilson Company, Inc.**  
Materials testing equipment  
**\$2,000,000**  
Line of credit for general corporate purposes



**Andrews Architects**  
Architecture and Design  
for Healthcare  
and Senior Living  
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line of credit,  
depository services  
including remote deposit



**DAK Enterprises**  
Manufacturer of injection molded plastic parts  
**\$7,100,000**  
Line of credit and term debt financing



**Suburban Steel Supply, LLC**  
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and miscellaneous fabricator  
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and term loan for acquisition



**Gudenauf Corporation, Inc.**  
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**\$3,500,000**  
Line of credit for general  
corporate purposes  
and equipment term loan



**Portfolio Creative**  
Staffing and Recruiting for the Creative Industry  
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including remote deposit



**Banner Stamping Company**  
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# MARKET RECOVERY

BY DANIELLE TOTH

*What investors can expect as the economy gains speed*

**J**ob growth, increases in manufacturing and boosts in consumer spending and confidence have economists and average Americans alike predicting a better 2011 as the United States moves out of the recession. The economy is transitioning into an expansion phase, which begins when the economy gets past the old high-water mark for GDP, says Bob Leggett, Chief Investment Officer for FirstMerit Wealth Management Services. He believes the phase began early in the first quarter of 2011.

“Capital spending is strong, exports are growing and inventories have not yet been fully replenished,” says Leggett, who has more than 25 years of investment management experience. “All of this means production must continue to grow. While the unemployment rate remains unacceptably high, net job growth is still well established. The depression in housing and overall consumer deleveraging does not mean consumers won’t spend anything at all.”

Leggett provides further insight into market recovery and what investors can expect in 2011.

## **Do you think the possibility of a ‘double-dip’ recession is valid?**

Double-dips are extremely unlikely to happen. The only double-dip recession we’ve seen in modern times was in the early ’80s, and that was done intentionally by Paul Volcker, the chairman of the Fed at the time, because he was working to break the back of inflation. Also, there are always soft patches or mid-cycle slowdowns like we experienced in 2010. When an economy comes out of a recession, it usually runs at a pretty hot pace for a few quarters, maybe even a few years,



**Bob Leggett,**  
Chief Investment  
Officer, FirstMerit  
Wealth Manage-  
ment Services

and then it invariably slows down. We feel there is plenty of pent-up demand out there to allow the economy to re-accelerate as we’ve seen over the past few quarters and we expect the expansion to continue through 2011.

## **What are the best opportunities for investment right now?**

We are big believers in being diversified. That means you want to own a mix of assets — some stocks, some bonds. You want to have different types of stocks, like large U.S. stocks or big cap and small cap. You want to have international stocks. You want to be diversified across

the market capitalization ranges and the economic sectors that companies represent. People should always start by thinking through their investment objectives. We work with our clients to create an investment plan and agree on how we’re going to allocate that client’s dollars. And right now, we tell clients they should be fully invested and not have much in the way of cash reserves.

## **What advice would you give to investors who are still worried about the market?**

There’s never a perfect time to make a large change in your investment strategy. If someone has a very small investment in the stock market and could really afford to have a much larger one, we would say they should have a plan for gradually reinvesting. People on the sidelines should be dipping their toes into the water. If an investor tries to perfectly time entering the market, quite often he or she will never enter or will get frustrated and make a big move. And that’s how you end up buying high and selling low instead of the opposite.

## **Do you see interest rates rising in 2011?**

We don’t see interest rates rising significantly in the foreseeable future. Interest rates are still quite low, particularly at the very short end of the yield curve, the shortest maturities, because that’s where the Federal Reserve can force them to stay low. The rest of the yield curve isn’t quite so much in the Federal Reserve’s control, so it’s going to be driven by inflation expectations and expectations as to whether the Fed is going to make any changes at the short end. The yield curve currently is quite steep by historic measures, and the Fed has clearly stated they are not going to increase the short end of rates any time soon. As for the longer ma-



turities, I'd say investors have been back and forth on how concerned they are looking out a year or so in inflation. But overall, the inflation numbers remain very low. As long as unemployment is high, wage growth is going to be hard to come by, and that means that inflation should stay pretty low.

#### **What is the state of the bond market?**

Bond interest rates have risen recently. People have been really concerned about tax-exempt bonds. They're worried the budget problems many states and municipalities have will lead to major difficulties in paying off the bonds when they come due. We think that's a significantly overstated fear. We tell investors who are worried about tax-exempt bonds to stick to high quality. On the taxable side, we still think investment-grade corporate bonds are pretty good values relative to U.S. Treasury bonds. The Federal Reserve's Quantitative Easing 2 plan is supposed to be pulling those rates down but hasn't been successful thus far. We are concerned the Fed may be overly successful at their goal of bumping inflation rates up a little.

#### **What are your thoughts on the housing market?**

Housing is certainly extremely weak. It would be difficult for housing starts and permits to get much worse than they are. The problem is there's no real reason to expect housing construction to pick up a lot either because there's a huge inventory of homes either for sale or in foreclosure. The housing construction industry is a very small part of GDP now because housing is in a depression.

The question that needs to be answered on housing is: What happens to house prices overall? Prices are down very significantly from where they were. It's really hard to see, with the improvement in the economy and very little new supply coming, how housing could get worse. Housing construction and increased housing prices would help consumer net worth and consumer confidence. The problem is it's hard to see either of those areas improving much looking into 2011.

#### **What markets can consumers expect to recover more quickly?**

Business equipment spending has been good, and we think it will continue. On an overall basis, consumer goods and services are growing and consumer confidence will be helped by better job growth. The economy has entered a positive feedback loop in which business spending feeds consumer spending, which, in turn, supports stronger business spending. ♦

Reach Bob Leggett at [robert.leggett@firstmerit.com](mailto:robert.leggett@firstmerit.com).

## 2011 ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

*with Jack Kleinhenz of Kleinhenz & Associates*

**B**y the end of 2010, the U.S. economy was gaining momentum, a trend that is expected to continue throughout 2011. The United States is at the end of its recovery phase and is heading into a period of economic expansion, says Jack Kleinhenz, Principal and Chief Economist of Kleinhenz & Associates, an economic, financial consulting and wealth management firm in Cleveland.



"I look at the economy as a puzzle," Kleinhenz says. "Two years ago, the pieces were upside down. We weren't sure what the top of the box looked like and if the pieces would even fit. Today, the pieces are right side up. Recently, we began to see the edges of the top of the box, and some of the core pieces are coming together."

One of those pieces is consumer spending, which increased in the latter half of 2010 and should spur job growth, Kleinhenz says. He predicts employers to hire 2.25 million workers in 2011, although the unemployment rate will most likely remain around 9 percent. It will take approximately five to seven years before unemployment is back to an acceptable level, he says.

Another driver to job growth is large and small business optimism, which has risen. The manufacturing sector, particularly, is strongly moving forward. The construction sector is also showing positive gains, he says.

The housing sector continues to struggle, as home sales, housing starts and home prices were at record lows at the end of 2010. Housing prices will

most likely decrease further because of a continued increase in delinquencies and foreclosures. However, in 2011, Kleinhenz expects some recovery as job and income growth persists.

The Fed is optimistic about its quantitative easing plan meant to further stimulate the economy. One of its advantages is that the Fed's asset purchases are a clear signal it will keep interest rates low, Kleinhenz says. The plan hopes to encourage consumers to buy now rather than face higher prices in the future. However, there is still some ambivalence regarding this approach, he says.

"The impact of easing on interest rates is still uncertain," Kleinhenz says. "Purchases may lower rates but not encourage investment and jobs in the U.S. The money could go abroad."

Overall, Kleinhenz believes that 2011 will see some economic improvement. The pace will continue to be slow as compared to previous recessions; however, the prospects for gradual economic growth appear positive.

Jack Kleinhenz is also a Regional Economist, Adjunct Professor of Economics at Case Western Reserve University's Weatherhead School of Management and serves as chief economist for the National Retail Federation headquartered in Washington, D.C. Formerly with the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland, Jack also served as chief economist and consultant to the Greater Cleveland Growth Association, the nation's largest chamber of commerce.

# BUSINESS SUCCESSION PLANNING

*Creating value well before your inevitable exit from the business*

**A**s a business owner, you spend the early years of your business focused largely on financial survival. Then as the business begins to prosper, the focus turns to growth, often with little thought given to long-range planning. The common excuses for not addressing business succession planning then become: “I just don’t have time now,” and “We are going through a lot of change and I don’t know what I want the future plan to be.”

The reality is that there will never seem to be enough time, the business will likely always be going through change and most owners do not have the answers when they begin the planning process. But most owners, once they go through the planning process, have found that the advantages of having a succession plan in place far outweigh the reasons for procrastination.

Certainly, the earlier a business owner can begin to focus on long-range succession planning, the more strategic and successful those plans tend to be, particularly with regard to minimizing the tax consequences of transferring business ownership.

Greg McDermott, President of FirstMerit Insurance Group, provides more advice on smart business succession planning.

## **What steps can an owner take to ensure a successful succession plan?**

One of the most important steps for any business owner is to select a qualified team of professional advisers to assist in the succession planning process. That team should consist of the business owner’s accountant, attorney, estate planner and selected other financial professionals. By taking a team approach to succession planning, a business owner will benefit from unbiased opinions. The greatest success occurs when the advisory team works together throughout the initial planning phases as well as the plan development and implementation phases. Then, on an ongoing basis, the team should plan to meet periodically to assure that the plan is still viable given a potential myriad of changes in family, company, tax and legislative circumstances.

## **What are the consequences of not having a succession plan?**

Far too often, business owners have not established a succession plan to provide for the sale, disposition or transfer

of the company in the event of an unforeseen circumstance such as the death, illness or disability of the owner.

A typical family business owner works diligently throughout his/her career to grow the value of his/her business and it is not uncommon for that business to represent 60 to 70 percent or more of the owner’s total net worth. If the size of that business owner’s estate is subject to estate taxes, there may not be enough liquidity and/or insurance available in the owner’s estate to pay the tax. As a result, the family may be forced to sell the company at a significantly discounted price and could lose their main source of financial support.

A second circumstance also frequently occurs when a business owner does not plan for succession until he or she is at retirement age. The options available at that point are significantly restricted. The owner may be forced to sell the business at a discounted price, or a lack of long-term planning may result in higher transfer taxes. In some cases, the owner may need to continue working in the business well beyond his or her anticipated retirement age.

## **What succession planning options are available?**

Most business owners will ultimately sell or transfer their businesses to one of the following parties:

- Family members
- An outside investor
- Successor management
- Employees





If the company is being sold to outside investors, successor management or employees, the owner will likely want to maximize the value of the company prior to sale. If the goal of the owner is to transfer a portion or all of the business to family members, the goal may be to minimize transfer taxes (i.e., gift taxes) during the transfer process. Regardless of the selected strategy, business owners should have a thorough understanding of the financial impact of the transaction as well as its income, estate and gift tax implications.

### **Should succession planning differ in a family-run business?**

It is common for a business owner who has children in the business to want to transfer the business to the next generation. There are both benefits and challenges to this type of planning that set it apart from planning considerations involved in non-family business transfers.

In a family succession plan, for example, stock can be gifted to the next generation over the founding business owner's lifetime. However, this often raises questions and concerns regarding control and decision-making, income continuation to the founding owner and equitable treatment of children working in the business versus those who are not involved in the family business.

Because the succession needs of a family-owned business are unique, a business owner should work closely with a team of experienced advisers who can help guide the

family using strategies and techniques to address each of these issues.

### **What charitable strategies can business owners take in succession planning?**

If a business owner has a genuine charitable intent, there are charitable strategies that can be utilized in conjunction with a business succession plan to provide certain tax advantages. A charitable remainder trust can offer both income tax and estate tax savings to a business owner, but it generally involves the sale of the company stock by the trust. While there can be definite benefits to charitable planning of this type, it is critical that the advisory team make sure that it is in alignment with the business owner's goals and objectives and in keeping with a charitable intent.

### **How does today's market impact business succession planning?**

With the recent extension of the "Bush Tax Cuts," there was also new legislation addressing estate and gift taxes. For 2011 and 2012, the estate tax exemption was raised to \$5 million for individuals and \$10 million for married couples, which allows estates under this threshold to be transferred without paying federal estate taxes. For estates greater than \$10 million, the federal estate tax rate will be 35 percent.

As a part of that same legislation, there was a reunification of the gift tax exemption with the estate tax exemption. Therefore, a husband and wife can each gift up to \$5 million of assets during their lifetime without paying a federal gift tax.

This presents a unique planning window for family businesses. Business owners can now gift company stock of significant value to their children during 2011 and 2012 to remove the business value from their estate as well as the future appreciation of that business value. We do not know what the estate and gift tax rates will be after 2012, as the current legislation expires at that time. In the interim, however, business owners would be wise to consult with their estate planners and advisory team to consider this strategy as a part of an overall business succession plan. ♦

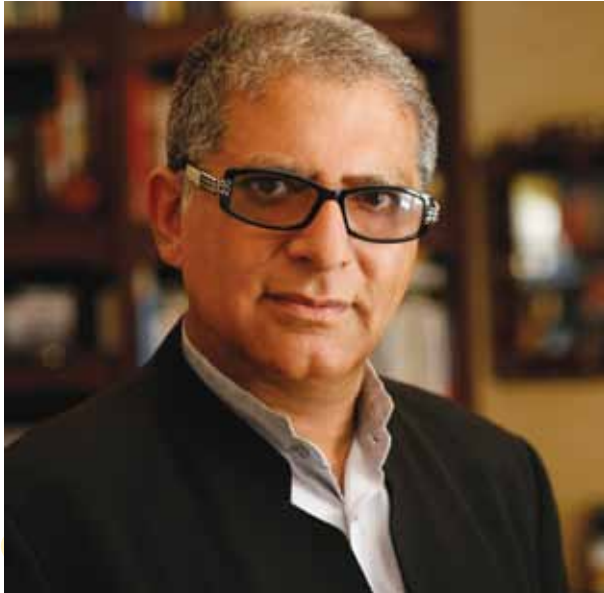
Reach Greg McDermott at [gregory.mcdermott@firstmerit.com](mailto:gregory.mcdermott@firstmerit.com).



# HEALTHY WAYS

*A frank conversation with best-selling author and wellness guru*

*Deepak Chopra on the correlation between health and wealth* BY DUSTIN S. KLEIN



**W**ellness is everywhere these days. It's in the home. It's in the workplace. And it's a topic of national conversation. But wellness can mean more to our success and relationships than we ever imagined.

We learned more about the wellness connection from Deepak Chopra, a medical doctor, wellness guru and founder of the Chopra Center for Wellbeing, where he works with individuals, executives and companies to foster wellness in numerous forms.

## **How important is wellness and can you put an actual economic number on that importance?**

When you look at wellness, you have to examine everything – your career wellbeing, your financial wellbeing, physical wellbeing, social wellbeing, community wellbeing and ultimately, your spiritual wellbeing. There is a lot of good data that shows how wellbeing correlates with economics, and there are huge implications of how one's wellbeing affects the bottom line of a company.

It is currently estimated that 15 percent of the work force in the United States is 'actively disengaged.' These are unhappy people who go to work each day and make it their business to make other people unhappy. The cost of 'actively disengaged' workers in the American work force is about \$350 billion a year. There are another 57 percent of people who are not 'actively disengaged,' but they're 'disengaged,'

which means they're just punching the clock. That leaves only about 28 percent of workers who are actively engaged.

I'm on the advisory board of the Gallup Organization, and we've studied this issue. What we've begun to find is that the economic implications of this are not only in the billions but probably in the trillions. What's more, we don't understand the relationship between physical and mental wellbeing and economics very well because medicine has not focused on this. But the fact is that new information shows that your physical wellbeing is linked to all these other things and there's an enormous economic impact tied to wellness.

## **Can you give me an example of how this works?**

If you are having an unhappy time at work, for example, you're not only disengaged but your supervisor ignores you, your likelihood of getting disengaged and ultimately becoming sick goes up by 44 percent. If, on the other hand, your supervisor doesn't ignore you but criticizes you, your disengagement falls to 20 percent because you'd rather be criticized than ignored. That is because when you're ignored you don't exist. Finally, if your strengths are noticed by your supervisor or by your colleagues, your disengagement falls to less than 1 percent. That has huge economic implications, not just for a person's wellbeing, but also for their family.

Likewise, there is data on social wellbeing, community wellbeing and financial wellbeing. If you work for a firm that makes sure there is some safeguard for you not to get into debt, if you have a certain amount of savings taken care of through automated plans and if you can afford to pay your taxes comfortably, those have direct implications on your health, and therefore on your productivity.

When you actually sit down and analyze it, you can come to the conclusion that for companies, wellness and wellbeing may just be your biggest investment because it has huge returns for you economically. Think about it from this perspective: If you have happy employees and you're happy yourself, you're going to have happy customers. And if you have happy customers, you're going to have a healthy company and happy investors.

## **So you're saying that there's a correlation between happiness, health and wellness, and prosperity?**

Absolutely. We now know so much about happiness and workplace happiness, and how that has direct effects on your neurophysiology, on your biology, on things like immunomodulators (the things that modulate the activity of your



## HEALTH BY THE NUMBERS

immune system), so no longer is the connection between emotions and wellness and wellbeing disputed.

If you're a business leader, you need to consider whether you engage emotionally with your employees, and even your customers, in order to improve and increase your business. This emotional engagement requires immense amounts of knowledge about what makes people emotionally intelligent.

For forty years, we focused, as a medical profession, on the deleterious effects of stress. We now know that with people who are stressed, there is a direct correlation with addictive behavior, cardiovascular disease, infections, and some types of cancer. But we hadn't looked at the opposite: If stress could make you sick, could happiness make you better? And the evidence shows it can.

### **What can someone do to spark that happiness and, in turn, become healthier?**

There is a lot of good data on happiness. Happy people see opportunities where others see problems. Happy people have ways of getting over the limiting beliefs that hold them back. Happy people have meaning and purpose in what they do. Happy people make other people happy. And they know the fastest way to be happy is to make someone else happy.

Here's something worth thinking about: If you have a happy friend, your happiness level goes up 15 times. If your happy friend has a happy friend, it goes up another 10 percent. And if your happy friend has a happy friend who has a happy friend that you don't even know, it goes up another 10 percent. Here's why: Because when two people meet, it's not just those two people meeting, it's all the relationships and factors in that person's life that influence their behavior.

These days, we are doing a lot of research on social networks, and how they not only improve the quality of life but also the quality of wellbeing, economics, productivity in the workplace, engagement and even biochemical responses, such as your blood pressure level. It is all tied to wellness and wellbeing.

### **Wellness seems to be something everybody should be interested in pursuing, but it goes well beyond just eating healthy, exercising and trying to be happy. You're talking about a complete behavioral change, correct?**

That's true. I work directly with companies and executives to provide training on leadership skills in this area. True leadership requires several strategies. It requires the ability

- In 2007, national health care expenditures totaled \$2.2 trillion, or 16 percent of the U.S. GDP, a 14 percent increase from 2000.
- Chronic diseases account for 75 percent of all U.S. health care costs; they include many preventable conditions such as cardiovascular disease, lung disease, diabetes, stroke and obesity.
- From 2001 to 2007, health insurance premiums for a typical family of four increased by 78 percent.
- Employers can realize a savings between \$3 and \$6 for every dollar invested in wellness programs.

*Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*

to listen, but the ability to listen not only as a good observer, but as an analytical listener, emotional listener and spiritual listener. Leadership also requires the ability to create a vision, the ability to engage emotionally with people and the ability to enhance your awareness to understand what people need – whether it is your customers, employees or investors.

Finally, leadership requires the ability to strategize and take action.

There is a whole section I call responsibility. When you talk about corporate or leadership responsibility, you talk about initiative, investing the right resources, risk management, values and establishing corporate missions. But what is missing for corporate leaders and leadership training is that as leaders we need to be healthy ourselves, physically and emotionally, and we need to make sure the people we work with we have at least some tools to ensure their health, wellness and happiness. That does require a different way of thinking and, yes, it is a behavioral change.

### **How do you get to that point? It's a lot harder than simply working out before going to work, or eating that salad for lunch instead of a double cheeseburger.**

If you motivate people through fear it usually doesn't work. There's a high drop-off rate and, furthermore, fear has its own consequences, such as stress. So many times, when people are motivated by fear they end up worse than they were before. Instead, people have to be inspired and feel some type of joy in this transformative process. They also have to understand that if they take on this transformative process and take responsibility for their wellbeing they'll be

much more productive. They'll be able to accomplish more by doing less.

Take stress for example. When people are stressed out they do things they shouldn't, like drink to excess. If somebody has a hangover because they were stressed out and sought refuge by drinking too much, half the day is wasted just recovering from the hangover. And by the time you've recovered then you're ready to create another hangover.

So it's very important for people to recognize that their energy level, their creativity, their ability to motivate others and their ability to produce more is directly related to how they're feeling inside and their health.

### **What are some ways people can increase their wellness?**

There are a few simple things that will help create wellbeing:

- Get good sleep. The importance of sleep has been underestimated. There is an overwhelming percentage of the population of the United States that take sleeping pills to sleep. That doesn't produce normal, rejuvenative sleep, which is necessary.
- Engage in a minimum amount of exercise each day.
- Be a little careful about your diet. Don't be compulsive, but try not to eat anything that comes in a can or has a label.
- Have healthy relationships.
- Use some technique for stress management, even if it is 10 minutes for meditation, reflection or thinking about how you want your day to go, sitting quietly or strategizing around your priorities.
- Build up on your relationships – both at home and in business.

### **You mentioned relationships. What's the importance of personal relationships in wellness and wellbeing?**

Emotions are contagious. If you're feeling stressed, even if you don't say or do anything that's inappropriate, there's a phenomenon called limbic resonance. People around you will start to feel stress, their blood pressure will go up and their heart rate will speed up even though they are not aware of it. All of this means that as a social species we are constantly monitoring, regulating and being regulated by the emotional state of others around us.

This emotional state not only affects our emotions but our physical state – blood pressure, heart rate, adrenaline levels. If you are emotionally fulfilled, happy, you affect other people not only by what you say or do, but by your very presence.

And the opposite is true. If you're stressed out, you affect people in a negative way, not only emotionally, but physically, just by your presence.

### **What can you do to keep this from negatively impacting your wellness along with the wellbeing of others?**

There are techniques to change this. You can acknowledge other peoples' strengths, help build teams and foster teamwork, and actually make sure that people work only in those areas where they can utilize their strengths.

We have identified 35 strengths people fall into and found that even if people are really good and productive, if you put them in the wrong seat on the bus with regard to their strengths they're not going to be happy, and that's going to affect their productivity. Therefore, teambuilding and putting together the right set of talents based on people's strengths is imperative in the workplace. And, you must acknowledge people's strengths. We don't always do this.

We asked people in more than 150 countries the same question: 'Do you like what you do every day?'

Only 20 percent of people said 'Yes.' We also found out that more people die in the United States on Monday morning at 9 a.m. of a heart attack than any other time because they hate their jobs. These are facts that are immediate and alterable, and they all correspond to wellness.

### **What should be the first thing people do to take responsibility in their own wellness and wellbeing?**

Sit for five minutes with your eyes closed. Put your attention in your heart every morning and ask yourself, 'Who am I? What do I want? And how do I want my day to go?' If you start living that question, you will spontaneously know what your priorities are. And that will ultimately lead to a healthier, more productive and happier life. ♦



# A MODEL CITIZEN



## *Curt F. Ramkissoon's journey from the Caribbean to Columbus*

From the schoolhouse to the bank, from Trinidad and Tobago to the United States, Curt F. Ramkissoon has literally been there and done that. Now enjoying great success as a Vice President of Wealth Management Services for FirstMerit Bank, Ramkissoon is a proud U.S. citizen and a pillar of the community. And all of that success can be attributed to a rich and fulfilling path that began in the Caribbean.

Ramkissoon was born in the twin island republic of Trinidad and Tobago. Growing up, he attended a Presbyterian primary and elementary school and an Anglican high school, which led him to enroll at Valsayn Teacher's College, where he graduated with a major in economics. Following that, he was a schoolteacher for more than 10 years, educating students in grades one through five (mostly fifth grade, he says) in Trinidad's Presbyterian school system.

After teaching at more than seven different Presbyterian primary schools in Trinidad, Ramkissoon was introduced to the First Presbyterian Church in London, Ohio. In 1998, he received an opportunity to come to the United States through a sponsorship from the Presbyterian Church of the United States.

Ramkissoon came to this country with just \$300 to his name. After a brief stint working with children at The Presbyterian Child Center, Ramkissoon was offered a position as a personal banker at the Worthington office of FirstMerit Bank on January 4, 2001. He then transferred to the West Jefferson branch in 2003, and shortly after that, he took his current position in downtown Columbus.

Transitioning from the education field into the banking world may seem daunting. But, Ramkissoon took what he learned as a teacher and applied it to the banking industry.

"I think, as an educator, effective communication is important and that lends itself to the banking industry as well," says Ramkissoon. "Both teaching and banking are people-oriented jobs; they just have different audiences. The transition wasn't difficult at all as long as you understood the bank regulations and what is required of you. I think I needed a change from teaching; it's a stressful job and I do admire and respect the work teachers do. It's a different kind of stress in the banking industry, and I guess I was ready for a change. Change and adapting to change is good for overall personal growth."

As the Vice President of Wealth Management Services,



Ramkissoon focuses on affluent clients in Franklin, Madison and Delaware counties, taking care of their personal financial needs. In that capacity, he works closely with business owners and professionals who desire a high level of personalized service and a comprehensive approach to their finances. This includes, but is not limited to, loans and lines of credit, savings, CDs, IRAs, general portfolio management, and the retention of existing clients.

Ramkissoon frequently works with professional and business organizations, including a large number of Asian and Indian groups in Columbus. He also works closely with FirstMerit Bank's Investment Management team.

"Customer service is extremely important," says Ramkissoon. "At FirstMerit, we're not about mass-market retail banking; we're about banking on a personal level."

In 2006, Ramkissoon became a U.S. citizen, the first in his family to do so. As a first-generation U.S. citizen, he has sponsored his sister and her two children as U.S. citizens, something he hopes to do in the future with his brother and two other sisters.

In his free time, Ramkissoon loves to travel and is an avid photographer and technophile. He is a member of the First Presbyterian Church in London, Ohio, and is in the church choir. He maintains strong ties to the community as a member of the Rotary Club of London, and sustains a connection to his roots through a love of Caribbean and Indian-influenced cuisine.

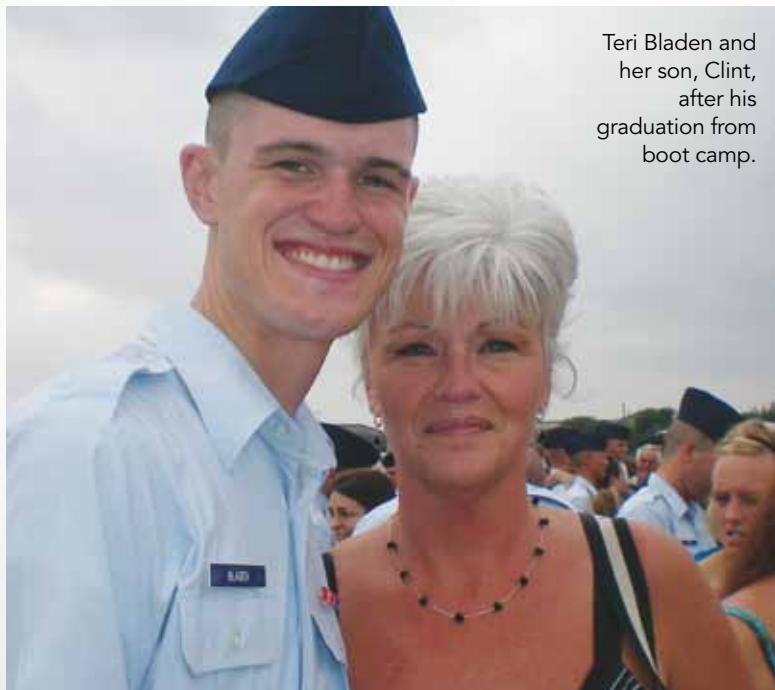
When asked about his greatest successes or accomplishments — either personally or professionally — Ramkissoon cites one simple, yet profound, achievement that he's particularly proud of: becoming a U.S. citizen.

"This is the land of opportunities, and I am proud to be an American." ♦

— Troy Simpson

# SUPPORTING THE TROOPS

*Making a difference with Any Soldier Inc.*



Teri Bladen and her son, Clint, after his graduation from boot camp.

It's easy to say you support the troops, but how many of us go that extra step and actually do something to benefit the men and women serving overseas?

Several employees in FirstMerit Bank's Columbus region weren't satisfied with moral support — they wanted to go the extra mile and make a difference for the troops. That's why a group of employees — led by W. Jeff Fornshell, the Pickerington Banking Center Manager/AVP, and Teri Bladen, an Executive Assistant — got involved with Any Soldier Inc.

Any Soldier Inc. is an organization that helps nearly 100,000 American soldiers in all branches of the military — both active duty and reservists — by making sure those men and women who have been deployed for war are remembered and cared for. The website, [www.AnySoldier.com](http://www.AnySoldier.com), features a list of e-mails from various members of the military, detailing exactly what type of support they need in the field. This could include anything from a simple letter to packages filled with toiletries, food, newspapers, magazines, etc.

To get involved, donors select who they want to assist and send the packages to the proper addresses. Visitors to [AnySoldier.com](http://AnySoldier.com) can search for contacts by service location, where the unit comes from, the number of males or females in the group, and the number of times their address has been requested, among other options.

The packages then go to the soldier who wrote the

initial e-mail, and that soldier shares the items with his or her fellow servicemen and women. Also, the donor gets to connect with the soldiers he or she is supporting, through return letters and pictures.

According to Marty Horn, a 20-year Army veteran and the president of Any Soldier Inc., [AnySoldier.com](http://AnySoldier.com) started as a family effort. Horn and his wife, Sue, wanted to help their son, Brian, who was one of the 1,000 soldiers that parachuted into Northern Iraq in March 2003. Marty and Sue began sending Brian an average of six care packages per week. When Brian asked his parents to send more, his parents thought he was joking, only to find out that the extra packages wouldn't be for Brian but for other soldiers who weren't receiving anything.

Since Marty and Sue had spent their careers in the military, they completely understood. Millions of men and women serving overseas never receive any mail. Besides often lacking basic necessities, these men and women have to cope with the harsh conditions of serving overseas without signs of support from friends and family back home.

"We knew his unit was living under very rough conditions, so whenever we sent care packages to Brian, we always sent enough to share with fellow soldiers."

## FIRSTMERIT BANK GETS INVOLVED

About five years ago, Fornshell was asked to come up with a community service project for FirstMerit Bank's Columbus region. Since his son is in the Army and was deployed at the time, Fornshell knew he wanted to do something to support the troops.

"I knew my son and everyone else in Iraq did not have everything they needed," says Fornshell. "I was already sending him care packages on a regular basis, so [AnySoldier.com](http://AnySoldier.com) was a perfect match.

Bladen, who has a son in the Air Force, agreed, and after researching [AnySoldier.com](http://AnySoldier.com) and talking with other co-workers, they decided this was the program they wanted to support.

"Having a son in the Air Force and many friends who serve in the military and have served in various deployments, I have always had a heart for those who serve," says Bladen. "When I read about this program and how it supported deployed soldiers, I immediately wanted to jump on board and get everyone as excited as I was."

With Fornshell and Bladen spearheading the project, several Columbus-area FirstMerit Bank employees joined the cause and the charity initiative took off. In addition to the support provided by FirstMerit Bank employees, several

customers and businesses partners also donated items.

“This project was embraced by all divisions of the bank, including banking offices, mortgage, business banking, commercial banking and, of course, corporate administration, who were instrumental in supporting the project, communicating the progress, and coordinating the collecting and shipping efforts,” says Fornshell.

## HOW THEY MADE A DIFFERENCE

After Bladen sent an e-mail to the entire Columbus region, informing them of the AnySoldier.com initiative, each office determined how many boxes they wanted to provide. The items were collected by each branch and then packaged and shipped.

“By each branch collecting and packing the items, it did two things: It made the process easier to manage, and it made the process more personal, since each branch selected the soldier to support, packaged the items in the shipping box and then addressed and mailed the box,” says Fornshell. “It is easy to give something and forget about it when someone else packs and ships it, but when you take the extra steps, it makes the process so much more meaningful.”

For instance, Bladen and her group selected a Marine unit stationed in Afghanistan that contained six soldiers (four men and two females). The only thing they asked for were fresh, clean socks, but the FirstMerit Bank employees didn't stop there. In addition to socks, they sent dental hygiene items provided by Bladen's personal dentist, Dr. James Aust, personal hygiene products for the women, toiletries, books, beef jerky, candy, gum, peanut butter, crackers, granola bars and more.

“We collected so many supplies that we ended up shipping seven boxes,” says Bladen.

## ONLY THE BEGINNING

Everyone involved with the first AnySoldier.com initiative loved connecting with and supporting the troops, so much so that the efforts continue to this day, with no signs of stopping.

“I feel very strongly about supporting our troops as I know from personal experience how much they and their families sacrifice when the soldier is deployed,” says Fornshell. “If I can help make their time away from home a little better, then that is what I try and do.”

“I personally found that even in this time where many people are struggling to provide for their own families, they still wanted to donate in whatever capacity they could,” adds Bladen. “I have already started thinking about next year and how we can increase our participation as a region.” ♦



Having a son serving in Iraq inspired Jeff Fornshell to get his coworkers involved with Any Soldier Inc.

## WORKING TOGETHER

According to Marty Horn, the President of Any Soldier Inc., AnySoldier.com caters to those people who want to do something to help the troops but who don't want to just blindly send money to an organization.

“We help people that want to do something — anything — for the troops,” says Horn. “Being able to directly contact our servicemen and servicewomen and send them exactly what they want and need is a rewarding experience.”

To date, AnySoldier.com and its related websites, AnyMarine.com, AnyAirman.com, AnySailor.com and AnyCoastGuardsmen.com, have served more than 1.4 million troops stationed in 22 locations. The servicemen and servicewomen come from 51 states and countries, and while the vast majority of those soldiers are from the U.S., the organization also benefits soldiers from such places as England, Italy, Germany and Japan.

In addition to many other projects, AnySoldier.com has also offered support to wounded Marines recuperating from injuries, assisted in procuring and importing wheelchairs for crippled Afghan children, and helped highlight the need for and arrange shipments of much-needed medical supplies and textbooks for distribution throughout the Iraqi medical system.

AnySoldier.com packages have also contributed to the distribution of toys, books and necessary supplies to civilians living in war zones.

Unfortunately, AnySoldier.com can't do all of this on its own, which is why support from people and companies such as FirstMerit Bank is so vital to the cause.

“The support of individuals and corporations means everything,” says Horn. “It's what allows our staff of one-and-a-half people to service 2,000 people on a daily basis.”

If anyone is interested in being a part of the cause, Horn recommends that he or she first visit AnySoldier.com to learn about the organization and what it does. He advises anyone — whether it be an individual or a large corporation — to start small.

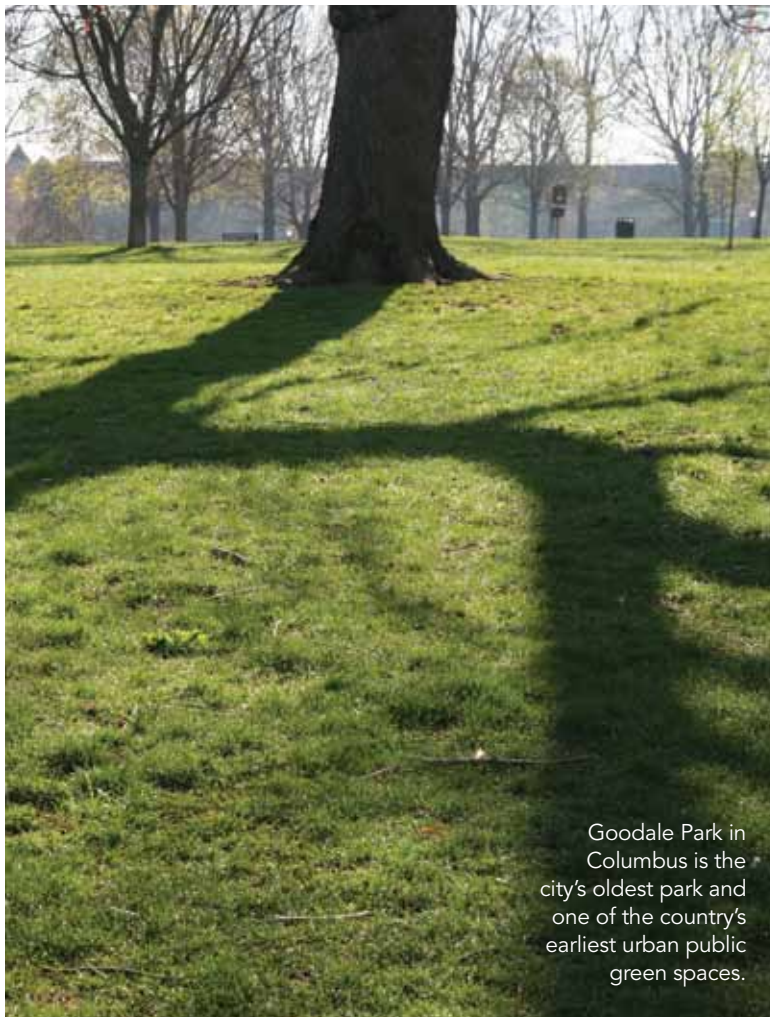
“We don't want anyone to get overwhelmed or frustrated, and we don't want them going broke,” says Horn. “If you're interested in AnySoldier.com, read up on the organization and get involved. Start by sending one package and go from there.”

For more information on Any Soldier Inc., contact Marty Horn at [Marty@anysoldier.com](mailto:Marty@anysoldier.com) or visit its website at [www.anysoldier.com](http://www.anysoldier.com).

# GREENING OUR FUTURE

## COLUMBUS DEVELOPS A REPUTATION FOR BEING GREEN

BY DANIELLE TOTH



Goodale Park in Columbus is the city's oldest park and one of the country's earliest urban public green spaces.

In the United States, buildings account for 72 percent of our electricity consumption, 39 percent of energy use and 38 percent of carbon dioxide emissions, according to the U.S. Green Building Council. These statistics may be surprising, but when you consider the heating, cooling, water and lighting a typical office building requires, the staggering numbers make sense.

Designing a new landscape with sustainability in mind is the first step to reducing that impact.

By now, most business leaders have heard of LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) and how it's used to better control energy use and create a win-win for businesses and the world around them. It's just one way innovative companies are lightening their footprint for generations to come.

### DRIVING GROWTH

In Columbus, Mayor Michael Coleman has been at the forefront of sustainability since he took office in 2000, encouraging the city's residents and businesses to adopt sustainable initiatives while implementing some of his own.

His passion for the environment led to the creation of Get Green Columbus in 2005. The initiative aims to meet the city's economic development goals while also facilitating a healthier environment.

One component of the initiative includes creating green vehicle operation and maintenance in the city's Fleet Management Division. The city implemented an anti-idling policy, received grant funding to retrofit vehicles with oxidation converters and engine hydraulic and coolant heaters and increased its use of environmentally friendly biofuels, such as biodiesel, for its refuse collection vehicles. Another component of the project



For four years, Mayor Michael B. Coleman's Get Green Columbus initiative has encouraged green business development and healthy neighborhoods.

includes building a compressed natural gas (CNG) fueling center, which will be available to the public by October 2011. Natural gas is one of the cleanest burning and least expensive alternative fuels.

Columbus' Fleet Management Division was named one of the greenest fleets in the nation at the Green Fleet Conference 2009 Environmental Leadership Awards. It has also been recognized multiple times by 100 Best Fleets, placing in the top 20.

"We are so proud that our Fleet Management Division continues to be recognized as one of the greenest and most efficient in the nation," Coleman says. "We are committed to reducing our carbon footprint and pioneering alternative fuels to protect the environment while saving public resources."

Another component of Get Green Columbus is the Green Columbus Fund, a reimbursement grant program created in October 2010 to encourage sustainable development and redevelopment by providing financial incentives to private businesses and nonprofits. Funding for the grants comes from the city's capital budget. It has two distinct components: green building and brownfield redevelopment.

Under brownfield redevelopment, Columbus provides grant funding for environmental assessments and land acquisition for brownfield sites. Land acquisition must account for less than half of the grant, and

there is a cap on any one project of \$20,000.

"The brownfield redevelopment part really comes out of Clean Ohio, a state program administered by the Ohio Department of Development with help from Ohio EPA federal protection," says David Hull, Assistant Director in Columbus' Office of Sustainability and Regional Development. "For Columbus, it supports economic development and environmental goals at the same time. That's one of the things we like about it."

When buildings go green, Columbus will reimburse a business's LEED certification fee, and sometimes more, depending on how many LEED criteria it meets. The city selected 12 LEED criteria it found most important. If a business meets eight of those 12 criteria, its certification fee is reimbursed. For every criterion a business meets after eight, it will receive an additional 25 percent of the certification fee. Also, for every LEED level — Silver, Gold and Platinum — a business achieves, it receives 50 percent of the certification fee. Businesses can mix and match the incentives to receive up to triple the certification fee, or 300 percent.

"Because of budgetary concerns, we didn't want to increase the city bureaucracy," Hull says. "To determine whether a building really is green, there's a fair amount of specialized expertise needed. So we came up with the idea of piggybacking on the LEED rating system that the U.S.

Green Building Council developed over a long period of time. So it doesn't require any separate review by us, and it doesn't require any separate work by the builder."

## SUSTAINABLE BY DESIGN

While Columbus' mayor and administration have focused a great deal of time and energy into greening the city, several businesses and organizations in Columbus have also made sustainability not just a priority, but part of their mission.

One of those businesses is Wallick Companies, a Reynoldsburg business that provides development and construction expertise for residential and commercial projects, specializing in affordable multifamily housing.

"We've been in this business for well over 40 years, and we have projects or communities within our portfolio that go back that far," says Phil Brown, Senior Vice President of Wallick-Hendy Properties, one of Wallick's divisions. "One of the things that concerns us with these older communities is the ever-growing operating costs associated with them. The ability to do a green initiative, while it may have more capital costs, helps us stabilize the ongoing operating costs. It allows us to keep rents lower on these communities for a longer period of time, and it just allows for a more stable operation. Saving money is essential to us in preserving these communities going forward."



Tom Feusse, Chief Executive Officer, and Phil Brown, Senior Vice President, further The Wallick Companies' mission of using recycled and sustainable materials in every building project.

As another way to save money and provide sustainable benefits, Wallick created its Evergreen Materials program, which creates a formal process for determining product standards and green buying requirements. The program, created in 2010, is built into Wallick's purchasing program, so there are central specs for the different materials Wallick uses — everything from carpeting and cabinets to countertops and appliances.

"We wanted to bring green into our materials across our portfolio," says Tom Feusse, Chief Executive Officer and Co-Owner of Wallick. "The only way we could do that was by having people abide by standard specs. Also, by forming common specs, we could go out and do common buys. We've got 180 properties that are each going to need maybe 10 widgets over the course of a year. So if we buy a thousand widgets at a time, we can drive some pretty significant cost savings. And it also helps in simplicity in terms of inventory parts and things like that."

## GREEN PIONEERS

Based in Dublin, Ohio, Inside Outfitters is another business that has embraced sustainability as part of its model for growth. The company provides window coverings such as manual and motorized blinds, shades and draperies. Inside Outfitters has manufactured its Sun Or Shade solutions that reduce heat gain and glare for 32 years.

"We focus on total light management," says Marti Hoffer, Vice President at Inside Outfitters. "We make sure our client considers solutions that reduce the use of electric

light. Managing overall energy consumption through maximizing natural light is most important."

Inside Outfitters also offers products that use recycled components that are polyvinyl chloride (PVC)-free or have quantifiable data regarding recycled content, closed-loop manufacturing or reducing carbon footprints.

It also asks its suppliers to consider adopting sustainable initiatives as a condition of working together.

"Inside Outfitters has six fundamental principles," Hoffer explains. "But we focus on one key principle as we define our green initiatives: Ask. We start with asking our employees, vendors and customers to consider greener solutions. We also ask the construction and design community to buy local, meaning buy the Sun Or Shade solutions that are designed and developed in Dublin, Ohio. Our philosophy is simple: Use common sense, starting with supporting the local economy."

Thirty years ago, at a time when many companies still weren't sure what the concepts of "green" or "sustainable" meant, Inside Outfitters was already putting them into practice.

"Sustainability can definitely be viewed as a trend in the marketplace," Hoffer says. "But even so, we were selling heat gain and glare reduction 30 years ago. People just didn't have a framework to work from. They heard about it and thought about it because we presented it to them. But education is greater now. And now, people make a connection to reducing consumption and protecting the environment." ♦

# GREEN IS THE NEW BLACK

*Notes from Robert Watson, founding father of LEED, Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, the internationally recognized green building certification system. Businesses and homeowners rely on LEED standards to build and redesign for energy savings, reduced carbon dioxide emissions and more.*

## What is the significance of LEED?

What we wanted to do was create a leadership standard. While most people think cars and trucks or industry are the leading producers of carbon dioxide on the planet, it's actually buildings. Buildings account for at least half of all the energy consumed worldwide. So we cannot solve the global climate problem without green buildings.

## What is the economic benefit?

The bottom line of green is black. There's no doubt about it. Companies will experience productivity, brand value and brand equity from the exposure following green construction. Though market research shows green buildings cost between 5 and 10 percent more than conventional projects, they have higher occupancy rates. The vacancy rates in San Francisco for LEED certified buildings are half that of non-certified buildings. Buildings that are LEED certified in Oregon sell for 20 percent more than comparable ones that are not. Green has a very significant market impact.

## What advice would you have for someone looking to achieve LEED certification?

There are five keys: Start early, discard old thinking, have a firm green goal, have a realistic budget and then stick to the budget. Don't let the budget or the environmental goal compromise each other. If you're finding that your environmental measures are costing too much, don't throw out the environmental measures. Send your design team back and say, 'Hit the target for the budget.'

## Where do you see LEED heading in the future?

I think we will continue to see the squeezing down of resource consumption. I think we will also begin looking more into the supply chain. We're seeing much more in what's called life cycle assessment. It evaluates the process of what happens when we take things out of the Earth to when they eventually go back there.

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