

Developments

Helping Employers Retain & Create Quality Jobs Rockford, Illinois USA

Aerospace Networking Companies Help Each Other Grow Faster; Diversify Local Economy

With the community-wide effort to attract Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University's third campus to Rockford, many now know that the region boasts a **strong cluster of aerospace companies. We are home to five tier-one aerospace firms and to more than 150 tier-two and tier-three aerospace suppliers.**

With aerospace wages approximately double the average Rockford pay scale, the **Rockford Area Economic Development Council ranks aerospace very high in its strategy. That's why it recently formed the Rockford Area Aerospace Network (RAAN)**, so local aerospace companies can collaborate and grow at a faster rate.

The group meets regularly and focuses on four areas.

- Business development
- Exports
- Innovation
- Training

Exports Global companies are more profitable and sustainable. The new International Trade Center office in Rockford will help businesses export products and services overseas, as well as help foreign companies buy from Rockford-area companies.

Innovation Growing our region's innovation capabilities is key to a healthier, diversified economy. RAAN will partner with centers of innovation

(higher education) to bring more tools and talent to grow innovation quicker.

Training A trained and productive workforce, and funding for such training, is the third focus. Also, promoting lean manufacturing for productivity gains.

Business Development RAAN members can partner with the RAEDC to attend and exhibit at international, national and regional aerospace trade shows. They can also take advantage of supplier symposiums such as the Boeing, GE Aerospace and Navistar events arranged in partnership with Congressman Don Manzullo.

For more information on RAAN membership, contact Mary Cacciopio, RAEDC's director of investor relations, about joining the RAEDC. RAAN is chaired by Jeff Kaney, Kaney Group chief executive officer.



L-R Jeff Kaney, Rockford Area Aerospace Network chair; Dan Bowman, Woodward vice president sales and marketing, aerospace and defense; Scott Christiansen, Winnebago County board chair at the RAAN news conference.

Customer Service is a Common Characteristic

The two companies featured in this issue of DEVELOPMENTS say that **their focus on customer service separates them from their competitors. Lyons Consulting Group** (see story on page two), an eCommerce design, development and support company that creates eCommerce websites, guarantees their clients' complete satisfaction. They also offer 24/7/365 customer support. Comply365 provides all-inclusive packages with free customer service for administrators and free upgrades. "Customer service is a keystone. We want customers to feel free to connect with us. We are here for them," stated Frank.

Roscoe Company Helps Improve Aerospace Safety

Comply365, a Roscoe-based company that provides a full line of compliance software programs for the aviation industry, is a charter member of RAAN. Kerry Frank, company president, has willingly shared business leads and industry tips with fellow RAAN members. "I know this group can help each other grow our businesses. When you rally together, you realize that teamwork is what it takes, in good times or bad," she said.

Frank's niche is a proprietary software program that allows airlines to easily document and report compliance, training and other human resource procedures electronically and automatically for significant cost savings. This means improved safety outcomes for airlines and ultimately, passengers. Previously the procedures were done manually. "Nobody else provides the complete package like we do," asserts Frank.

The company recently signed a major multi-year contract with Republic Airways Holding to supply their compliance software programs. Republic owns five airlines and has 11,000 employees. Comply365 has targeted additional airlines domestically as well as in Iceland and South America for 2011.

When Frank and her husband, Dude, began the company in 2007, Dude worked as the night auditor at a local hotel to help pay for groceries and other expenses. They have three young children. "Going through the tough times, I wanted our kids to realize it would not be like this forever. We involved them in the business by having them be our 'home board of directors.' We always said it was their business as much as ours. We meet every other month and they ask great questions and have good suggestions. They tell me we need more contracts!" related Frank.



Dude Frank, chief operating officer, and Kerry Frank, president, of **COMPLY365**, with their children Natalie, Aaron and Kimberly. The kids are on the "home board of directors" for the aviation compliance software company.

Red Carpet for EIGERlab's New Client

Growing Cluster Brings IT Talent to Rockford Region

EIGERlab's newest high-tech client joins a growing cluster of software, development and information technology companies at the entrepreneurship center, 605 Fulton Avenue, Rockford.

Lyons Consulting Group (lyonscg), a premier eCommerce design, development and support firm based in downtown Chicago, recently opened a new satellite development and support center in Rockford.

Right People; Red Carpet

"EIGERlab introduced us to the right people and our business is growing rapidly," said Dave Barr, executive vice president of Lyons Consulting Group. Barr, who grew up in Rockford and still has family in the area, brought his son to the Riverview Ice House last year for a hockey camp. It was then, as he recalled his own summer job at the Rockford Park District, that Barr thought about expanding lyonscg into the Rockford area.

Rockford became a logical choice for the new office location. It's close to several colleges and universities which provide a steady stream of strong technical talent, within driving distance to their Chicago office and is centrally located to provide support across U.S. time zones.

"Rockford rolled out the red carpet for us," said Stephen Chinn, director of eCommerce. Since the opening, Lyons Consulting Group has already hired eight people for the Rockford office, one from Rock Valley College, and continues to seek more technical recruits from the Rockford area. "Finding qualified talent is important to us and we've been very pleased with the people we have hired for our Rockford office," noted Chinn. Chuck Konkol, a programming instructor

from the college who met with lyonscg, expressed his satisfaction also. "Lyons has been really beneficial to our students. They show them the ropes and if they need further training, they provide it. **It's one thing to teach a class, and another to see our students get jobs and make a good living without having to leave Rockford,**" he said.

High-Tech Cluster Envisioned

Dan Cataldi, director of EIGERlab, a mixed-use incubator serving the Rockford region with leading-edge business and engineering support services, said, "**Lyons Consulting Group is a great addition to the mix of software, development and IT companies that have opened an office in the Rockford area.** We envision a peer group of non-competing technical companies that could help each other with common challenges and lyonscg will

be a cornerstone for that collaboration," said Cataldi. For more information on EIGERlab, contact dcataldi@eigerlab.org or visit eigerlab.org. Rock Valley College provides operations management and programming support to EIGERlab and the Rockford Area Economic Development Council assists with strategic direction and marketing.

About Lyons Consulting Group

Lyons Consulting Group creates enterprise-level eCommerce websites for businesses that want to improve online operations, user experience and increase online profits. Some of their major clients include Oneida, Maui Jim, and Blu Dot. **For more information on Lyons Consulting Group visit www.lyonscg.com or call 312.564.3142.**



Lyons Consulting Group Executive Vice President Dave Barr had good memories of growing up in Rockford and felt it provided a great environment for his company's expansion.



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The primary role of the Rockford Area Economic Development Council is to enhance wealth creation in the Rockford Region by marketing the area and helping employers retain and create quality jobs. The RAEDC works closely with many partners to serve as a one-stop resource for clients, to improve the competitiveness of the region and to engage the community in the work of economic development.

For more information on RAEDC programs or services, please call 815.987.8118, e-mail information@rockfordill.com, or visit www.rockfordill.com.

Please forward to others who share your interest in our region's economic development. Be "green."

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