



CYBERSPACE BECKONS WEB FIRM TO EXPANSION IN THE BAY AREA

Michael Hinman - Tampa Bay Business Journal
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TAMPA -- A Web development company started just a decade ago in a University of Florida dorm room is taking its first strides into the Tampa Bay market.

352 Media Group opened the office March 1 and is being managed by Leonard A. Doland, a 20-year veteran of technology and sales management who worked at Tampa firms Magnetic and Bayshore Solutions.

"Companies are going to do business with the people they know," Doland said. "They can't get to know you if you're not already here."

Two tiers of Web development

The Harbour Place Drive location is the second office opened in Florida by 352 Media, which already is in Jacksonville, Atlanta, Los Angeles, New York, Seattle, and Ann Arbor, Mich. Among the clients for the company that develops Web sites and interactive media products are American Express, Ben & Jerry's, Earthlink and OSI Restaurant Partners, parent company of Outback Steakhouse.

The Tampa office will have just two employees, joining more than 50 employees 352 Media already has throughout its various locations. However, the office has room to expand.

"As the business grows, we'll have a caravan of people coming from Gainesville to expand the office," Doland said. "The opportunity we have in Tampa is really huge when you look at it. Out of the three largest business districts in the state of Florida, two of them are here in Tampa. You have some large companies here, but you also have some rising mid-tier companies that are just as much of a sweet spot for us as the larger companies."

Web development companies are quickly being separated into two camps: those that do nothing more than straight technology applications and those, like 352 Media, that are adding services such as marketing and brand development.

While diversification may be the key for some companies, others are doing quite well staying focused on core services.

"It's not that we don't want to do other types of Web sites," said Kimberly During, CEO of [K.Tek Systems Inc.](#) in Clearwater. "We do the things where our core competency is and where 90 percent of our clients are."

Over the last 15 years, K.Tek has zeroed in on advanced programming and developing better functionality of Web sites and corporate intranets. Even for those companies that have embraced the marketing side, there are plenty of potential clients to go around either in the Tampa Bay market or virtually anywhere.

"We are finding that a lot more of our clients are looking for ways to transition from straight traditional advertising to try and get on the Web more and are learning how important search engine optimization is," said Bart Ross, president of Blue Marlin Group in Lakeland.

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"There's always room for more companies like us, because as businesses become more savvy about the Web and what they really want to do, they're going to need companies like us to help them realize it. And we can't be there for everyone."

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