

Growing computer business owner earns SBA's Entrepreneur of the Year

BY BILL WILSON

It's been quite a year for Jason Klein.

His Datility Networks computer consulting business has grown from its Newton roots at 104 W. 17th into a Wichita office in The Stables, 322 S. Mosley.

He's been named the 2005 Small Business Administration Entrepreneur of the Year for the Wichita district.



Klein

And his 4-year-old Internet hosting business is growing its client base by 25 percent to 35 percent annually, to almost 1,000 clients, primarily by acquiring and distributing retail sales and operations data over the Web from remote store locations to corporations.

Heady stuff for a guy whose first venture into computers a decade ago got him into trouble.

"I tore the first computer my parents got me apart," says Klein, 25. "Parts everywhere, you know, just to see how it worked. Computers weren't cheap then, and my parents weren't too happy."

Bill Ramsey, who runs The Bill Guy Technology Solutions in Wichita, provides specialized networking services to small businesses. He uses Datility for Klein's accessibility.

"You can go online and use any of a number of cheap Web hosting services," he says. "The thing is, though, if you have a problem or a question, you're kind of on your own. Can't get in touch with anyone. Jason, on the other hand, is more than happy to go in and find an answer to whatever you're trying to do."

Klein became known during his Newton High School days as the kid with the computer answers, "just learning everything I could about computers, becoming kind of a sponge, I guess, about computers and networking."

That curiosity has turned into clients in 13 states and services ranging from tracking sales to chasing a spy out of a network.

"He's my little Bill Gates," says Mark Buckley, assistant director of Wichita State University's Small Business Development

Datility Networks

Corporate office: 104 W. 17th, Newton, Kan. 67114.

Satellite office: 322 S. Mosley, Wichita, Kan. 67202.

Founder and CEO: Jason Klein.

Employees: 4.

Center. "Jason understands computers as well as anyone, but he also understands how to run a business. You don't find that often in people."

The only hurdle to Datility's growth has been marketing, Klein says, "something I don't know a lot about."

Datility's niche

Rick Benard, whose BBR Investments in Newton runs 14 Sonic drive-ins across Kansas and Nebraska, says he couldn't manage his stores without Klein.

"He takes care of store polling for us," Benard says. "He grabs data, sorts it and gives it to me every day on sales, labor, things like that. It's extremely important to our operation because if there's a problem, I can react to it ASAP."

Collecting business data, such as daily sales figures, from stores and distributing that via the Web to headquarters is Datility's niche, Klein says.

"There's a market in restaurants and retailing for people who need to know how their stores are doing on a daily basis," he says.

That data used to be accumulated at the corporate office over the phone, Klein says.

"Not very accurate," he says. "This way, with the Internet and an automated process, we can get the information out quicker and correctly."

Klein's next goals are personal — finish the computer engineering degree at WSU that Datility's founding interrupted and complete the company's move to Wichita, where Internet access is cheaper than Newton.

"It's a long way from the first keyboarding class my parents had me take in Newton," he says, chuckling. "Wasn't interested at all. But when I took the class again in 8th grade, I aced it, and here we are."

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