

Small Biz, High Tech

In our second annual awards, we discover ten innovators using tech in smart ways to run their businesses. *by John R. Quinn*

For this year's small-business awards, we considered more than 150 nominees—many named by our readers—that are saving money, improving customer support, developing better products, or beefing up the bottom line through the smart use of technology. Our outstanding winners come from a wide variety of businesses, from an organic-food delivery service to a maker of interactive DVDs for movies. And many of them are virtual companies, with employees or contractors working from home in different states or countries. The technologies that are making the biggest impact aren't necessarily expensive or complex. In fact, they're technologies—wikis, VoIP, open-source software—that

seem tailor-made for small operations on a budget. Each winner is an inspiration to anyone running a small business or dreaming of launching one someday.

To nominate your company for next year's award, fill out our online nomination form at go.pcmag.com/smb2008. To qualify, your business must have fewer than 300 employees and have been in operation for at least one year. Good luck.



Support à la Carte

YOUR TECH ONLINE

Size: <100 employees

Headquarters: Kelowna, British Columbia, Canada

Key Tech: VoIP

Business: Tech support

www.yourtechonline.com

YourTechOnline started with one simple question: It's 9 o'clock at night and you have computer trouble, so who are you going to call? Formed in 2000, YourTechOnline offers customers around-the-clock online and phone tech support. Prices range from 99 cents to \$1.63 per minute, depending on the pack-

age people sign up for. Whenever there's trouble, YourTechOnline's experts spring into action online, fixing system settings, zapping rootkits, and slaying viruses. The company, which received a *PC Magazine* Editors' Choice in 2005, has gone from about 20,000 customers two years ago to more than 40,000 today, says CEO and founder Chris Wandler.

The two technologies intrinsic to the company's business are Mitel's VoIP system and Citrix's GoToAssist desktop-sharing software. "We need the best agents and have to be able to hire them where they are at, not put them in a brick-and-mortar environment," says Wandler. For him that meant a VoIP solution that would work the minute the phone was plugged into a router in order to connect agents from Saskatchewan to Mexico. Indeed, 95 percent of the company's agents work from home and are monitored using Mitel's CCM6110 call-center software, which lets people at headquarters see which agents are logged in and even monitor live calls.

To do the work on customers' computers, YourTechOnline

TAKE CONTROL YourTechOnline relies on Citrix's GoToAssist desktop-sharing software to solve PC problems for its 40,000 customers.

uses GoToAssist. Still, the software is just a tool; the important part of the business is the expertise of the human agents. "But we would never be able to do this without VoIP," Wandler says. "It just wouldn't work without it."

Of course, even with the most advanced communications systems, there are limits to what YourTechOnline can do. "We can't fix the hardware," admits Wandler.

Excerpted from *PC Magazine*, October 16, 2007 with permission from Ziff Davis Media Inc.
©2007 Ziff Davis Publishing Holdings Inc. All rights reserved.