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## Fastest-Growing Private Companies

**WELLS  
FARGO**

THE NORTHERN COLORADO

### BUSINESS REPORT





# Speed kills, business experts caution

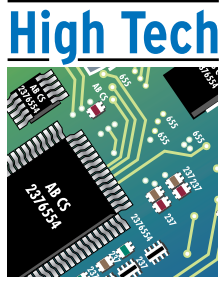
By Dan Feiveson  
The Business Report

A pack of all-new runners swapped spots with last year's top guns on *The Business Report's* Fastest-Growing Private Companies list, proving once again the swiftest feet wear high-tech wings, but also that speed can be an Achilles heel for even the mightiest start-up.

For the second year in a row, seven of the list's top 10 finishers — including the company that took top honors — belonged to the high-tech industry. But of the top seven high-tech firms on last year's list, only three remained in the top 100.

Last year's fastest-growing private company, Infokinetics Inc. of Fort Collins, came in 15th, just ahead of Cytomation Inc., which placed eighth in 1999. Engineering Computer Consultants Inc., sixth last year, ranked 46th in 2000.

"Within the high-tech area, you can come up with a good idea and do very well for six months to two years, and then all of a sudden it's not a hot idea anymore," said Engineering Computer Consultants president and CEO Tim Reeser, whose business grew 79 percent



SONJA BISBEE WULFF • BUSINESS REPORT

**Infokinetics president, John Bugarin, front center, surrounded by his employees, says rapid growth can be dangerous for small companies. Though Bugarin's software-development company has slipped from its 1999 position as the region's fastest-growing company, it's holding steady in 15th place this year.**

from 1997 to 1998 and 25 percent from 1998 to 1999. "The companies that survive and stay strong are the ones that can continually reevaluate their market."

Sharp ideas can give new businesses a big boost out of the blocks, and with many of the up-front expenses for high-tech start-ups coming down, more companies are getting in the race.

"People are investing more in technology," said John Bugarin, Infokinetics president. "High technology is getting cheaper in some ways because the hardware is getting cheaper. Businesses are trying to integrate information technology into their industry, but they don't all have the brains and brawn to do it."

Seven of the 1999 top 10 fastest-growing companies fell completely off the list in 2000. Mountain States Manufacturing Co.'s striking 67 percent growth in 1999 leveled off to a modest 4 percent revenue increase in 2000. Alliance Construction Solutions, which ranked fifth last year with nearly 88 percent growth, posted an 11 percent decrease in total revenues from 1998 to 1999.

Stepping down from their rapid growth of recent years probably is not a catastrophe for either Mountain States or Alliance Construction, but fluctuations in productivity are not always benign.

"Growth can kill you," Bugarin said.

## Region's 100 fastest-growing companies at a glance

67 businesses were founded prior to 1990, and of those, 24 — or 36 percent — were family-owned.

41 businesses were founded prior to 1980, and of those, 14 — or 34 percent — were family-owned.

22 high-tech firms made the list.

Periods of growth are often the most dangerous times for small companies, said Anne McCarthy, director of the Center for Entrepreneurial and Family Enterprises at Colorado State University.

"If entrepreneurs don't plan ahead, when growth happens it can be disastrous," she said. "There can be cash crunches that quickly bring businesses to the point of bankruptcy."

Businesses can fail at any time, but the average doomed business has a typical life expectancy — four to five years.

"The hurdle rate is around four to five years," McCarthy said. "If a business is likely to fail, a lot fail in year one, but many raise enough capital to limp through years two and three, so years four and five become this critical threshold."

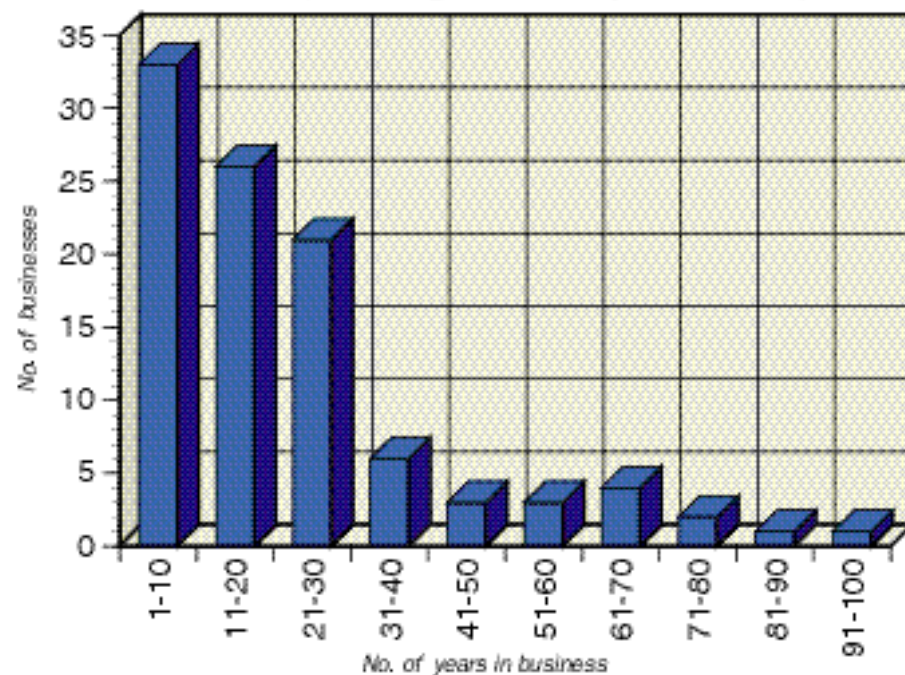
For the second year in a row, companies ranked in the top 10 on *The Business Report's* fastest-growing list averaged between seven and eight years in business. McCarthy acknowledged that a seventh-year threshold could be emerging as a second checkpoint in a company's development, a launching point for either explosive growth or lev-

See **SPEED**, 7C

Poudre Property Services

## Fastest-growing companies by years in operation

Although recent start-ups represented a large slice of the regional growth pie, many mainstay Northern Colorado businesses proved a surge can come at any time in a company's career.







SONJA BISBEE WULFF • BUSINESS REPORT

Tim Den with Exodus Moving and Storage packs up an office in a northeast Fort Collins commercial park. Moving companies across the region saw significant growth in 1999.

# Help wanted across region

## Fort Collins tops growth list — for now

By Sonja Bisbee Wulff  
The Business Report

Fort Collins businesses led the region in employment growth last year, with high-tech and moving companies reporting the largest-percentage increases.

Of the region's 100 fastest-growing companies, 45.3 percent of those experiencing employment growth called Fort Collins home, according to recent research by *The Business Report*.

Longmont businesses came in second with 15.6 percent, ahead of Greeley at 14.1 percent and Loveland at 12.5 percent. The rest of the 64 companies reporting employment growth were spread throughout Larimer and Weld counties, which boasted 60.9 percent and 34.4 percent of the growing businesses, respectively.

Also, of the companies with 20 or more employees at the end of 1999, six of the top 20 — ranked according to largest-percentage increase — fell in the high-tech category, while four were moving and storage companies.

The findings came as no surprise to Lew Wymisner, assistant director of Larimer County Workforce Center.

"The growth is consistent with what we've been seeing across industries," Wymisner said.

And John Green, an economist with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Colorado State University, agreed.

"Both Larimer and Weld Counties are recruiting high-tech companies and, given the fact that we have some good high-tech companies like (Hewlett Packard) here already, that's what we would expect to attract," Green said, "more high tech to support high tech, and high-tech employees spinning off from their employers to start their own little high-tech start-ups."

One of these start-ups is Cytomation, a biomedical-instrumentation company that grew 51 percent in revenues in 1999 and 49 percent in number of

employees. It ranks 12th among the fastest-growing companies for employee increases.

"Our biggest challenge is finding good people," said president and CEO Nigel Ferrey, describing the "very technical" nature of the business. "(Fort Collins) is a good labor market. People want to be here."

The company, which makes cell-sorting machines ranging in price from \$200,000 to \$450,000, now employs 73 people in Fort Collins and 90 worldwide.

Also high on *The Business Report's* list of growing employers are several software-development companies, a robotics company and a company specializing in geographic-information systems.

The other industry that makes repeated appearances in the top 20 is the moving and storage business. The Right Move and Exodus Moving and Storage, both of Fort Collins, ranked second and fourth, with Longmont's St. Vrain Moving and Arrow Moving and Storage in Cheyenne ranking numbers seven and 14 — a sign, according to Green, of the region's booming economy.

All anyone has to do is look around at the "big prairie mansions...springing up everywhere," he said.

"Everyone is upgrading their homes, which means moving," Green said.

Ilan Levy, owner of Fort Collins-based Exodus Moving and Storage, is capitalizing on that — and more. Not only are people moving into larger homes, Levy said, but new people are moving into the region for new jobs or retirement.

"The town is growing," he said.

Exodus, which more than doubled its staff to 26 people, lists Thompson School District, Front Range Community College and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation among its regular commercial accounts, with plans to move several physician offices into the soon-to-be-completed medical complex in south Fort Collins. But the bulk of the company's business is residential, including local, cross-country and overseas moves.

What will be interesting to watch, **See HELP, 15C**



### Fastest-Growing Private Companies by regional employment

3T Systems takes top honors with a staff increase of 270 percent from 1998 to 1999.

	Company	City	Employees 1999	Employees 1998	Percent Change
1	3T SYSTEMS	Windsor	22	6	270
2	THE RIGHT MOVE INC.	Fort Collins	35	10	250
3	I-CUBED INFO. INTEGRATION & IMAGING	Fort Collins	35	13	170
4	EXODUS MOVING & STORAGE	Fort Collins	26	11	140
5	LEED FABRICATION SERVICES INC.	Brighton	50	25	100
6	ST. VRAIN MOVING & STORAGE	Longmont	120	60	100
7	SPECIAL APPLICATION ROBOTICS	Loveland	20	10	100
8	GENESIS FIXTURES INC. & GENESIS INNOVATIONS INC.	Fort Collins	190	100	90
9	1ST CHOICE BANK	Greeley	135	80	69
10	CHEETAH ADVANCED TECHNOLOGIES INC.	Fort Collins	25	16	56

Source: Business Report survey

# Ed Gruff/Estes



# Ensign flies high

*Power-supply  
maker tops list of  
fastest growing*

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ITX

By Jack Lovelace  
*Business Report Correspondent*

LOVELAND — Bill Harris and Larry Choate live the adage, "All work and no play make Jack a dull boy," and it's paying off.

Though Harris, Choate and all their employees with Ensign Power Systems Inc. take every other Friday off, sales jumped from under \$300,000 in 1998 to nearly \$1.1 million in 1999, putting the company at the top of *The Business Report's* list of 100 fastest-growing companies in Northern Colorado.

"We believe in living. The company is

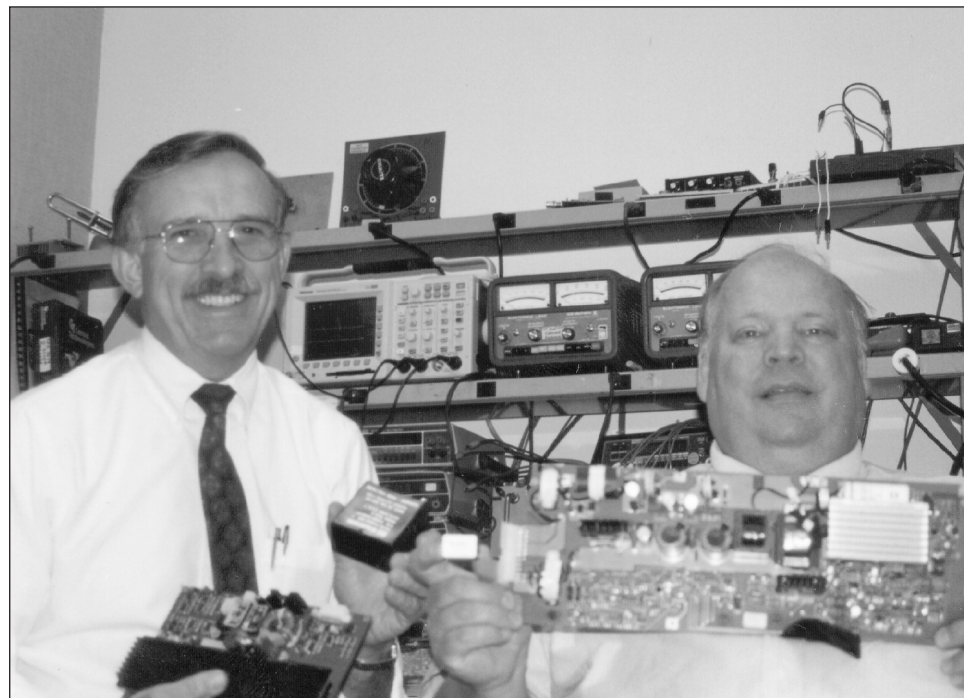


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SONJA BISBEE WULFF • BUSINESS REPORT

**Bill Harris, left, and Larry Choate, co-founders of Ensign Power Systems Inc., display a few of their recent and ongoing projects — power supplies for a U.S. Marine Corps telephone system, medical equipment, a night-vision rifle and a telephone-switching office.**

not our life," said Harris, president and CEO, who created Ensign in 1995 along with partner and vice president Choate.

Harris's balanced philosophy doesn't mean anything less than serious commitment to Ensign, which provides custom power supplies for military equipment, such as portable computers, missile-control systems and rifles, and for civilian applications such as flow meters, power-line monitors and medical devices.

What began in a small office has taken over an entire floor, and the company is now considering a new facility — all an indication of Ensign's rapid success.

Harris and Choate embarked on this venture when Tecnetics, a military power-supply company in Boulder, merged with another company and moved to Florida. Tecnetics employees Harris, an electrical engineer, and Choate, a mechanical engineer, decided to take their skills and strike out on their own.

"We worked well together. We wanted to see what we could do, so we started a company," Harris said.

Kicking in \$14,000 apiece, they opened a small office, bought some equipment auctioned when Tecnetics left, and began offering their services as consultants.

After doing consulting the first year — including work with the company that bought Tecnetics — they began making custom power systems in the second year.

"We had a lot of contacts," Harris said.

In the third year, Ensign exploded with 220 percent total growth, before reaching the 300 percent-plus level of growth recorded in 1999.

"We've had the right programs at the right time," Harris said. "We haven't had dry spells, and at the same time, we haven't been overwhelmed. We progressed in the proper sequence."

Ensign does its own design work and testing.

"That's our expertise," said Harris, who has a master's degree in electrical engineering with 25 years of military and aerospace electronics-design experience. Choate also has a master's degree in mechanical engineering and more than 20 years experience as a mechanical design engineer, including

nine years packaging power supplies.

The two subcontract assembly work.

Part of Ensign's business is with the military. The military work has been helped by a new military policy aimed at ending those legendary \$24 paper clips. It is called COTS, which stands for "commercial off the shelf," a military effort to use commercial parts. Ensign can either meet the needs for existing supplies or do full-blown military design.

"If we can't find it, we'll make it," Harris said.

Many partnerships falter over disagreements, but not Harris and Choate.

"It's been amazing," Harris said. "Larry has some financial background, and he likes computers. I don't like computers, so he has taken finance and computers, and I like marketing, meeting people, being with people."

It wasn't planned but evolved that way, to the point where Harris says "I wouldn't do it with anybody else as I look back."

Harris, 56, lives in Berthoud, while Choate, 48, lives in Loveland.

Ensign opened in the smallest office in a complex on Lincoln Avenue in Loveland and now has the whole upstairs.

"We are about maxed out. We are looking at a new building in the next year," Harris said.

Ensign has never been in debt, beyond short-term production material.

"We feel no debt has been a benefit," Harris said. "It has been our rule of thumb, if we can see clear for six months to hire a person, we do it." Ensign began with Harris and Choate and now numbers seven employees.

Those employees don't mind the Harris-Choate philosophy of closing the office very other Friday.

"They love it," Harris said, not surprisingly.

Ensign also is open to finding employees with special needs. One key employee can only work a half-day, sometimes morning, sometimes afternoon, and the company works with that arrangement. Ensign offers two weeks vacation to start, health insurance and a retirement plan.

"We want this to be an enjoyable place," Harris said.

It should come as no surprise after

See ENSIGN, 7C



# LARGEST PRIVATELY HELD COMPANIES

(Locally based, ranked by 1999 revenues)

RANK	COMPANY Address Phone/Fax	1999 REVENUE (\$ MIL.)	1999 EMPLOYEES LOCAL/STATEWIDE TOTAL	INDUSTRY	WEBSITE	OWNER OR OWNER PARTIAL YEAR END YEAR FOUNDED
1	BEVEL BUILDING EQUIPMENT CO. P.O. Box 8 Greeley, CO 80639 (970) 499-9900/(970) 499-9901	\$1,200,000 (\$1,200,000) \$0.00%	400/0/0 400/0/0 0	General construction/contractor.	N/A www.bevel.com	Jerry Bergman May 01 1987
2	BEVEL CONSTRUCTION 261 7th Ave. Boulder, CO 80501 (970) 449-3911/(970) 449-3919	\$1,000,000 (\$70,000,000) -7.00%	40/70/0 40/70/0 1	General contractor, design-build projects.	http://bevelconstruction.com www.bevelconstruction.com	Thomas Reilly May 01 1971
3	BEVELLY EQUIPMENT CO. 3401 S. College Ave. Fort Collins, CO 80525 (970) 228-2000/(970) 228-4929	\$911,000 (\$1,000,000) -11.00%	200/70/0 170/70/0 1	Automotive sales.	www.bevelly.com www.bevelly.com	Douglas E. Markey Dec 01 1988
4	BEVELLY INC. 200 Parkway Blvd Eaton, CO 80615 (970) 484-0261/(970) 484-0144	\$812,000 (\$70,000,000) -12.70%	200/70/0 200/70/0 0	Trucks, trailers, haul, box, trailers, trucks, flat bed pipe hangers.	N/A	Robert M. Markey June 30 1990
5	BEVELLY SERVICES INC. 200 N. Parkville Parkway Fort Collins, CO 80525 (970) 228-2000/(970) 228-4929	\$812,000 (\$4,700,000) -8.00%	200/70/0 200/70/0 0	Equipment and parts.	www.bevelly.com www.bevelly.com	Russ Kellie Dec 01 1988
6	BEVELLY TRUCKS & EQUIPMENT 4420 S. College Ave., P.O. Box 8 Fort Collins, CO 80525 (970) 228-2000/(970) 228-4929	\$812,000 (\$8,100,000) -8.00%	97/70/0 97/70/0 1	Trucks, vans, sales, leasing, retail and service, parts and vehicle repair.	N/A www.bevellytrucks.com	Berry Peterson Dec 01 1978
7	BEVEL TRUCKS & EQUIPMENT 3001 New Park Blvd., Suite 300 Lamar, CO 80026 (303) 778-4761/(303) 778-4748	\$812,000 (\$8,100,000) -8.00%	200/70/0 200/70/0 1	Contractor, landscape, hospital, school.	www.bevelly.com www.bevelly.com	Dean M. Pratt Dec 01 1983
8	BEVEL & SERVICES INC. 4001 25th St. Greeley, CO 80639 (970) 499-9900/(970) 499-9901	\$812,000 (\$8,100,000) -8.00%	200/70/0 200/70/0 1	Automotive sales.	www.bevel.com www.bevel.com	Tra Brynman Dec 01 1988
9	BEVEL CONSTRUCTION CO. 3401 S. Harmony Road Fort Collins, CO 80525 (970) 228-2000/(970) 228-4929	\$812,000 (\$8,100,000) -8.00%	100/70/0 100/70/0 1	Mobile machinery and electronics for commercial customers.	www.bevel.com www.bevel.com	Bob Miller Sept 01 1988
10	BEVEL TRUCKS & EQUIPMENT 700 Weaver Park Road Lamar, CO 80026 (303) 778-4761/(303) 778-4748	\$812,000 (\$1,000,000) -21.00%	100/70/0 100/70/0 N/A	General contractor, utility and other construction.	www.bevel.com	John Smith Dec 01 1977
11	BEVEL TRUCKS & EQUIPMENT 2304 25th Ave. Boulder, CO 80501 (970) 449-3900/(970) 449-3919	\$812,000 (\$8,100,000) -8.00%	100/70/0 100/70/0 1	Lease and service.	N/A www.beveltrucks.com	David McWhorter Dec 01 1982
12	BEVEL TRUCKS & EQUIPMENT 700 N. 1st St. Lamar, CO 80026 (303) 778-4761/(303) 778-4748	\$812,000 (\$8,100,000) -8.00%	100/70/0 100/70/0 1	Mobile manufacturing and repair.	N/A www.bevel.com	Robert Whiting Dec 01 1978
13	BEVEL COMMUNICATIONS CO. 300 1st St. Lamar, CO 80026 (303) 778-4761/(303) 778-4748	\$812,000 (\$8,100,000) -8.00%	20/0/0 20/0/0 0	Newspaper publishing and printing, including Daily Times-Gazette, Lamar Daily Reporter-Gazette, Lynden News, Lynden News, Erie Independent Press, Lamar	www.bevel.com www.bevel.com	Edward Lehman, publisher Dec 01 1997
14	BEVEL SERVICES INC. TRUCKS & EQUIPMENT 401 S. Lincoln Ave. Lamar, CO (970) 778-4761/(970) 778-4748	\$812,000 (\$8,100,000) -8.00%	N/A/ N/A/ N/A	Rent and used car sales, automotive repair and part sales.	www.bevel.com www.bevel.com	Ron Ray Dec 01
15	BEVEL SERVICES INC. 3000 S. Harmony Rd., P.O. Box 2000 Fort Collins, CO 80525 (970) 228-2000/(970) 228-4929	\$812,000 (\$8,100,000) -8.00%	20/70/0 20/70/0 1	Commercial construction, schools, shopping centers, office buildings.	N/A www.bevel.com	David Smith Dec 01 1973
16	BEVEL SERVICES CO. INC. 2001 Fourth Ave. Greeley, CO 80639 (970) 499-9900/(970) 499-9901	\$812,000 (\$1,000,000) -21.00%	20/70/0 20/70/0 1	Commercial contractor for new and renovated projects.	www.bevel.com www.bevel.com	Ron Schmitt 1974
17	BEVEL SERVICES INC. & BEVEL SERVICES 3000 Highway Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525 (970) 228-2000/(970) 228-4929	\$812,000 (\$1,000,000) -21.00%	100/70/0 100/70/0 1	Home sales and high-end residential interiors.	N/A	Quincy Pappas Dec 01 1982
18	BEVEL SERVICES INC. & BEVEL SERVICES 3000 E. Grand Ave. Lamar, CO 80026 (970) 778-4761/(970) 778-4748	\$812,000 (\$1,000,000) -21.00%	47/70/0 N/A/70/0 1	Home, retail, parties, education, etc. Construction, parts, service, installation, leasing and truck sales.	www.bevel.com www.bevel.com	Brad Marshall Dec 01 1999
19	BEVEL SERVICES INC. 344 E. Parkville Parkway, Suite 12 Fort Collins, CO 80525 (970) 228-2000/(970) 228-4929	\$812,000 (\$1,000,000) -21.00%	20/70/0 N/A/70/0 1	Home loans, development.	www.bevel.com www.bevel.com	Ray Hoyer 1982
20	BEVEL SERVICES INC. 204 Denver Ave. Fort Lupton, CO 80021 (970) 499-9900/(970) 499-9901	\$812,000 (\$1,000,000) -21.00%	20/70/0 20/70/0 1	Real estate and development.	www.bevel.com N/A	Tra Hoyer June 1987
21	BEVEL SERVICES INC. 200 Park Ave. Eaton, CO 80615 (970) 484-0261/(970) 484-0144	\$812,000 (\$1,000,000) -21.00%	100/70/0 97/70/0 1	Welding services, hydraulic jacking equipment, contract work, industrial cutting and maintenance projects and services.	www.bevel.com www.bevel.com	Michael Spurr Dec 01 1978
22	BEVEL SERVICES INC. 3000 1st St., Suite 10 Boulder, CO 80501 (970) 449-3900/(970) 449-3919	\$812,000 (\$1,000,000) -21.00%	7/0/0 N/A/0 1	Product marketing, food, alcohol & beverage distribution.	www.bevel.com www.bevel.com	Mark A. Miller Oct 01 1987
23	BEVEL SERVICES INC. 4000 Interstate Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525 (970) 228-2000/(970) 228-4929	\$812,000 (\$1,000,000) -21.00%	72/0/0 69/0/0 0	High-performance tire operation and high-speed rail service used by automotive, marina and commercial customers worldwide.	www.bevel.com www.bevel.com	Ron M. Ferry Dec 01 1999
24	BEVEL SERVICES INC. OF COLORADO INC. 400 S. Airport Blvd Lamar, CO 80026 (303) 778-4761/(303) 778-4748	\$812,000 (\$1,000,000) -21.00%	N/A/70/0 N/A/0 1	Construction and infrastructure services.	www.bevel.com www.bevel.com	Wally Schmitt Dec 01 1998
25	BEVEL SERVICES INC. 4000 1st St., Suite 10 Lamar, CO 80026 (303) 778-4761/(303) 778-4748	\$812,000 (\$1,000,000) -21.00%	100/70/0 90/70/0 1	Franchise, retail, service, specialty franchise, specialty retail, direct sales, event goods & services, direct regional delivery, direct national distribution.	www.bevel.com N/A	Ray Miller March 01 1982

Note: Rank indicates leader and third position, largest and eighth in Colorado Valley and lowest position in Wyoming.  
 (a) Excludes right-to-work companies that posted 2000 revenues of \$100,000 or more.  
 N/A - Not available. SOURCE: BUSINESS REPORT BUREAU  
 PREPARED BY ELIZABETH HANSEN AND DAN HANSEN



# The sky's no limit for i-cubed

By Sue Lenthe  
Business Report Correspondent

FORT COLLINS — i-cubed founder and president Russ Cowart manages his company's head-spinning growth the way most entrepreneurs do: by putting in a lot of hours.

Fort Collins-based i-cubed makes high-tech maps from data derived from satellite imagery or aerial photographs. The maps are in demand by those who need to be able to see and interpret the lay of the land, whether that land consists of rooftops in Vancouver, transportation infrastructure in Caracas, Venezuela, or land-uses in northern Greece.

i-cubed's growth — the company nearly tripled 1998 revenues in 1999 — reflects the growth in some of its primary markets, telecommunications in particular, and the rapidly evolving technologies the company is employing.

Like many new high-tech companies today, i-cubed has its roots in a conflu-

ence of technologies and their applications.

"It was obvious to me that satellites provided a great way to get information anywhere in the world," Cowart said. Adding inexpensive computers powerful enough to handle the data and the growing popularity of geographic-information systems, "it all seemed to say there was a chance for a business along these lines."

The company's full name — i-cubed information integration and imaging — serves as an apt description.

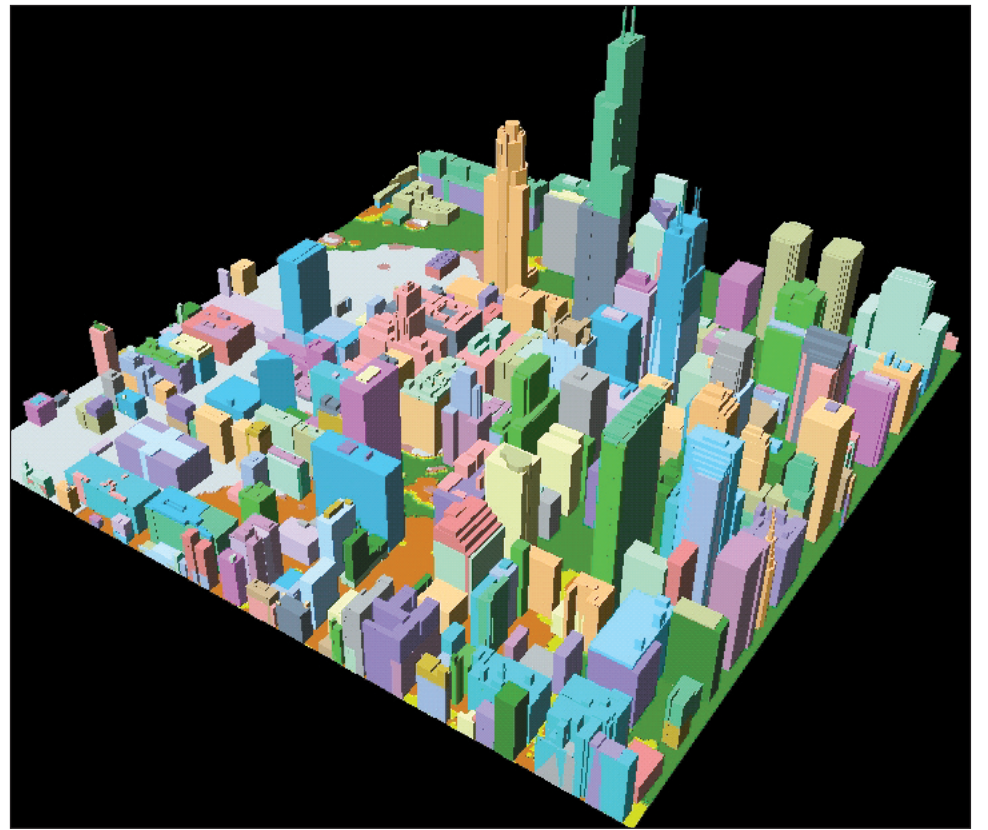
"It's really what we do," Cowart said. "We integrate different types of information, and then we image it to make it tangible in order for someone to be able to see it and understand it."

i-cubed currently focuses on markets in the telecommunications, precision-agriculture and visual-simulation industries, Cowart said. Customers include some of the world's largest players in the wireless-telecom industry. Cowart ticked off a few: Lucent, Nokia, Bell South and AT&T.

i-cubed is playing with the big boys and Cowart is proud of his not quite 5-year-old company's success in that arena.



#5 Fastest-Growing  
Private Company



COURTESY I-CUBED

The Fort Collins company i-cubed created this image of the Chicago skyline for use in radio-frequency engineering.

"We are a small company, and we have gotten customers and repeat customers among the largest companies in the world," Cowart said. "We've done that because we provide better products and better customer service than our competitors."

Getting in the door took persistence. Staying in took building a reputation that gained trust and confidence, an area where i-cubed apparently has excelled.

Then came the turning point.

"All of sudden you have more companies calling you up instead of your calling them," Cowart said.

There's no secret, he said.

"It's not because we have a magic technology that nobody else can duplicate. It's because we work harder and listen."

Competence, quality and a straightforward approach are part of that equa-

See I-CUBED, 14C

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EVERITT (4/C)  
CAMERA READY

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## **SPEED,** from 2C

eled-off productivity, depending upon how the entrepreneur responds to regional peer pressure to grow.

"It's hard to say no to growth," she said. "In today's dot-com market, people are going public left and right, and I think some entrepreneurs decide they need a certain level of revenues to go public. It may put pressure on some to grow faster than they can afford to."

Businesses are only as good as the people that run them, said Mary Fischer, director of the Larimer County Small Business Development Center. And in the business world, a product is only as good as

the marketing plan behind it.

"Sometimes high-tech entrepreneurs have a hard time separating themselves from their products," she said, noting that many entrepreneurs have terrific product ideas but no business skills to back them up.

"It's management more than the idea," she said. "You can take a great idea and drive it into the ground."

A third of the 100 fastest-growing companies in Northern Colorado were founded in the last 10 years, with 15 start-ups of the 1990s placing in the top 25. But the majority of companies on the list have been in business for 11 to 30 years, and more than a third of the businesses founded prior to 1990 are family-owned.

"The majority of family-owned

businesses were at one point an entrepreneurial venture," said Family Business Consultants president and owner Carl Spina, suggesting that at its heart, a good business is like a family. "It's the family values transitioned into the business culture."

Spina cited three basic factors that shape a company's longevity: its values and tradition, its ability to pass its values and traditions across generations and its ability to stay on the cutting edge of its industry.

"That's what we see in local family-owned businesses," he said, echoing other regional business watchers who see no place for idle minds in a successful business. "There's a certain amount of flexibility needed for staying on the top."

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**"Growth can kill you."**

**– John Bugarin,  
President,  
Infokinetics Inc.**

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## **ENSIGN,** from 4C

**"We believe in living."**

**– Bill Harris,  
President/CEO,  
Ensign Power  
Systems Inc.**

hearing the Harris approach to life that his goal for Ensign is not to grab the custom power-supply business by the throat and sell out someday for huge dollars.

"Our longtime goal is not to be too big," Harris said. "We want to reach \$10 to \$15 million in sales, and we want to grow 150 percent next year" — a goal the company is well on the way to reaching. "Our objective is not building and selling."

The Ensign formula for success is basic.

"Always be honest with customers. We do what we say we will do," Harris said. "Customer relationships are important. We won't lie to get a job. I know some do that, but we tell what we can do."

The power-supply business involves plenty of pressure.

"If you have no power supply, you have no system, which makes our part crucial," Harris said. "When all their eggs are in your basket, you better perform."

So what do Choate and Harris, creators of the fastest-growing company in Northern Colorado, do every other Friday?

Choate loves sports, including the Denver Broncos and Brigham Young University Cougars. He also loves to read books and is active in his church and youth group leadership.

Harris is interested in backpacking and a special passion: "I like to ride motorcycles," he said. He logged 9,000 miles last summer.

Harris makes a point of explaining the pronunciation and origin of the company name. "Ensign" is not the "sin," as in military-officer ensign, but "ensign" as in "sign."

"It's a flag or standard, something you look up to," Harris said.

And that's what everyone else did in 1999.

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# FASTEST-GROWING PRIVATE COMPANIES Part I

(Locally based, ranked by percent change between 1998 and 1999 revenues)

Rank	Company Name Address Phone/Fax	1998 Revenue 1999 Revenue Percent Change	2000 Employees Local/Non-Local 2000 Non-Local Local/Non-Local No. of Locations in State	Business	E-Mail Web Site	Founders Founding Year Year Founded
1	BRANDS DESIGN SERVICES INC. 300 N. Lincoln Ave., Suite 200 Leadville, CO 80451-9079 (970) 539-0200/(970) 539-0200	\$1,200,000 \$2,500,000 108%	8/78/A 1/1 1	Desktop camera supply design and manufacturing.	brdesign@brdesign.com www.brdesign.com	Bill Hasty Dec. 21 1985
2	BRIP INC. 2707 W. Eisenhower Blvd., Suite B Leadville, CO 80451 (970) 539-0800/(970) 539-7900	\$1,200,000 \$1,800,000 50%	8/78/A 1/1 1	Sales of household/industrial hardware.	brightr@brightr.com www.brightr.com	Whitney Apple Dec. 21 1995
3	BT SYSTEMS 421 Main St. Windsor, CO 80550 (970) 462-7404/(970) 742-9479	\$1,200,000 \$1,500,000 25%	0/0/0 0/0/0 3	Software development.	bt@bt-systems.com www.bt-systems.com	Scott Hoyer Dec. 21 1984
4	CRITICAL APPLICATIONS SERVICES 200 W. W. Ave., Unit 112 Leadville, CO 80451 (970) 539-1451/(970) 539-0200	\$1,200,000 \$1,000,000 -17%	20/78/A 10/78/A 1	Engineering and prototype manufacturing.	cas@cas.com N/A	Don Johnson Dec. 21 1998
5	CRONIN ENTERPRISES MANAGEMENT & SERVICES 301 Lyons St. Ft. Collins, CO 80524 (970) 473-4400/(970) 483-4800	\$1,700,000 \$2,000,000 18%	28/78/A 17/78/A 1	Emergency state projects and services for government/agriculture and industry.	info@cr.com www.cr.com	Ronald Everett Dec. 21 1999
6	FCB INFO-TECH SERVICES INC. 2000 Highway Road, Suite 340 Ft. Collins, CO 80525 (970) 222-7000/(970) 222-4700	\$1,000,000 \$1,200,000 20%	10/78/A 8/78/A 1	Full IT services and solutions management, networking, servers/hardware.	info@fcbs.com www.fcbs.com	Steve Hoffman Dec. 21 1999
7	GENE SERVICE GROUP LLC 408 N.E. Maple St., Unit F Leadville, CO 80451 (970) 539-0123/(970) 539-0744	\$840,000 \$1,000,000 19%	11/78/A 8/78/A 1	On-site, billing and phone services for printing industry, media printing.	N/A	David White Dec. 21 1998
8	GENIE PROPERTIES CORP. 14478 K25 Franchise Road Leadville, CO 80451 (970) 539-0200/(970) 539-0200	\$1,000,000 \$1,700,000 70%	10/78/A 10/78/A 1	Engineering/total project design, detailing, prototype parts, and prototype parts, model making, testing/production modeling and contract.	genie@genie.com www.genie.com	Dennis Moser Dec. 21 1998
9	GLASSER TRADING ENTERPRISES INC. 700 Pioneer Peak Road Leadville, CO 80451 (970) 539-0200/(970) 539-0200	\$1,100,000 \$1,200,000 9%	8/0/78/A 0/0/78/A N/A	General contractor, utility work and other construction.	glaser@glaser.com	Jeff Hering Dec. 21 1997
10	HEUBLE MACHINERY INC. 438 E.C. St. SE, Unit 211 Leadville, CO 80451-9047 (970) 539-0770/(970) 539-0200	\$1,200,000 \$1,500,000 25%	10/78/A 0/78/A 1	Machine shop specializing in producing, custom production, finishing and tooling.	heuble@heuble.com www.heuble.com	Larry Hasty Dec. 21 1980
11	IGNITION SYSTEMS 20-802 89th St. Windsor, CO 80550 (970) 539-0200/(970) 539-0200	\$1,000,000 \$1,200,000 20%	12/78/A 0/78/A 1	Coating/development.	info@ignition.com www.ignition.com	Scott Patterson Dec. 21 1988
12	IGNITION SYSTEMS 800 71st Ave. Leadville, CO 80451 (970) 539-0200/(970) 539-0200	\$1,100,000 \$1,200,000 9%	48/78/A 40/78/A 1	General contractor, design/build projects.	ignition@ignition.com www.ignition.com	Thomas Apple Dec. 21 1991
13	IGNITION SYSTEMS INC. 2010 Highway 200 Leadville, CO 80451 (970) 539-0200/(970) 481-0270	\$1,100,000 \$1,200,000 9%	70/78/A 0/78/A 0	Electronic pre-press, offset to color printing, variable printing, commercial printing.	info@ignition.com www.ignition.com	Mark Shapell Jan. 1 1999
14	INTEGRATED SYSTEMS INC. 100 Reynolds Drive, Suite 400 Ft. Collins, CO 80525-2110 (970) 222-7000/(970) 222-4700	\$1,200,000 \$1,500,000 25%	26/78/A 20/78/A 1	Computer software development, sales and support services for highway/travel/industry/commercial construction related products.	info@integrated.com www.integrated.com	Scott Moody David Bennett Aug. 21 1991
15	INTEGRATED SYSTEMS INC. 2017 Highway Road, Suite 300 Ft. Collins, CO 80525 (970) 222-7000/(970) 222-4700	\$1,200,000 \$1,500,000 25%	7/78/A 4/78/A 1	Custom software development.	info@integrated.com www.integrated.com	John Smith Dec. 21 1998
16	INTEGRATED SYSTEMS INC. 4800 Innovation Drive Ft. Collins, CO 80525 (970) 222-7000/(970) 222-4700	\$1,200,000 \$1,500,000 25%	70/78/A 40/78/A 0	High-performance low operation and high-speed rail services used by academic, water and commercial research facilities.	info@integrated.com www.integrated.com	Roger M. Ferry Dec. 21 1999
17	INTEGRATED SYSTEMS 3028 W. Drake Road Ft. Collins, CO 80525 (970) 481-1211/(970) 222-4700	\$1,200,000 \$1,500,000 25%	10/78/A 0/78/A 1	Utility design, survey, site planning, landscape planning, design, model making, site location, business development and growth.	info@integrated.com N/A	Jeff Robinson Dec. 21 1987
18	INTEGRATED SYSTEMS 276 S. Main St., Suite 208 Leadville, CO 80451 (970) 539-0200/(970) 539-0200	\$1,200,000 \$1,500,000 25%	10/78/A 0/78/A 1	Project construction and management, space planning and interior design.	info@integrated.com N/A	Donald Hoyer Dec. 21 1987
19	INTEGRATED SYSTEMS INC. 344 E. Fairchild Parkway, Suite 12 Ft. Collins, CO 80525 (970) 539-0200/(970) 539-0200	\$1,100,000 \$1,200,000 9%	28/78/A 0/78/A 1	New process, development.	info@integrated.com www.integrated.com	Gary Hoyer 1997
20	INTEGRATED SYSTEMS INC. 2017 W. Main St. Leadville, CO 80451 (970) 539-0200/(970) 481-0123	\$1,200,000 \$1,500,000 25%	20/78/A 0/78/A 1	Special services for both residential and commercial.	N/A	Michael Patterson Dec. 21 1988
21	INTEGRATED SYSTEMS & SERVICES 110 Highway 200 Leadville, CO 80451 (970) 473-0200/(970) 481-0200	\$1,200,000 \$1,500,000 25%	28/78/A 10/78/A 1	Printing & packing, change in manufacturing operations, space-plan work, design for print.	N/A www.ignition.com	Tom Apple Dec. 21 1999
22	INTEGRATED SYSTEMS 418 S. Grand Blvd. Drive Ft. Collins, CO 80525 (970) 222-7000/(970) 473-0200	\$1,200,000 \$1,500,000 25%	7/78/A 0/78/A 1	Training, Personnel, Local Training, etc.	info@integrated.com www.integrated.com	Bill Parker Dec. 21 1999
23	INTEGRATED SYSTEMS INC. & SERVICES 2000 Highway Drive Ft. Collins, CO 80525 (970) 481-0200/(970) 418-0200	\$1,200,000 \$1,500,000 25%	100/78/A 100/78/A 0	State defense and highway residential military.	N/A	Robert Perry Dec. 21 1998
24	INTEGRATED SYSTEMS INC. 2000 W. Main St. Leadville, CO 80451 (970) 539-0200/(970) 539-0200	\$1,200,000 \$1,500,000 25%	100/78/A 0/78/A 0	Leads and deposits.	N/A www.ignition.com	Donald Hoyer Dec. 21 1998
25	INTEGRATED SYSTEMS INC. 400 E. Wagon St., Suite B-1 Ft. Collins, CO 80525 (970) 222-7000/(970) 222-4700	\$1,200,000 \$1,500,000 25%	7/78/A 0/78/A 1	Signage.	info@integrated.com www.ignition.com	L. Wayne Lytle Dec. 21 1999

Note: Rank includes Leadville and Wald counties, Larimer and Brighton in Colorado Agency and Loveland counties in Wyoming. N/A - Not available. SOURCE: BUSINESS REPORT BARNEY PREPARED BY ELIZABETH HANNEY AND DAN HANNEY





# FASTEST-GROWING PRIVATE COMPANIES Part III

(Locally based, ranked by percent change between 1998 and 1999 revenues)

Rank	Company Name Address City, CO	1998 Revenue 1999 Revenue Percent Change	2000 Employees 1999 Employees Local/Non-Local No. of Locations in State	Products	Website	Owner Name Date Acquired
51	WELLS MANUFACTURING INC. 2000 Duff Ave. Broomfield, CO 80020 (303) 439-2222, (303) 439-2222	\$12,700,000 \$18,000,000 42.5%	188/7/2 195/7/2 1	Water-based coatings, hydraulic clamping equipment, stainless steel, stainless tubing and environmental processing and systems.	www.wellsmanufacturing.com www.wellsman.com	Richard Boney Dec. 31 1999
52	WELLS MANUFACTURING INC. 130 Turner Ave. Broomfield, CO 80020 (303) 439-2222, (303) 439-2222	\$7,700,000 \$9,000,000 16.8%	12/7/0 12/7/0 1	Home appliances.	www.wellsmanufacturing.com	Richard "Moose" Ogilvie Dec. 31 1999
53	WELLS MANUFACTURING INC. 2000 Duff Ave. Broomfield, CO 80020 (303) 439-2222, (303) 439-2222	\$12,700,000 \$18,000,000 42.5%	24/17 41/18 1	Plastic house fittings, tubing and hoses, air hose and safety air couplers.	www.wellsmanufacturing.com www.wellsman.com	Maude Strangor, Day Strangor Dec. 31 1997
54	WELLS MANUFACTURING INC. P.O. Box 0 Broomfield, CO 80020 (303) 439-2222, (303) 439-2222	\$1,200,000,000 \$1,200,000,000 0%	422/1,878 422/1,878 7	General contracting/interior.	N/A www.localphoto.com	Jerry Magness May 31 1997
55	WELLS MANUFACTURING INC. 2000 Duff Ave., Suite A Broomfield, CO 80020 (303) 439-2222, (303) 439-2222	\$11,427,422 \$12,991,277 13.7%	28/7/0 19/7/0 1	Construction.	www.wellsmanufacturing.com N/A	Steve Fisher, Bill Wood 1999
56	WELLS MANUFACTURING INC. 4000 Duff Ave., S.E., Suite 0 Broomfield, CO 80020 (303) 439-2222, (303) 439-2222	\$10,416,000 \$12,000,000 15.2%	11/7/0 11/7/0 1	Wholesale distribution and selling.	N/A	Jim and Sherry Lambert Dec. 31 1999
57	WELLS MANUFACTURING INC. 2000 Duff Ave. Broomfield, CO 80020 (303) 439-2222, (303) 439-2222	\$7,300,000 \$8,500,000 16.5%	45/7/0 28/7/0 2	Equipment trailers, truck body parts and service of truck and trailer equipment.	N/A www.wellsmanufacturing.com	Carl Boney Dec. 31 1999
58	WELLS MANUFACTURING INC. 1320 Blue Canyon Drive Ft. Collins, CO 80526 (970) 499-1400, (970) 499-1400	\$1,800,000 \$1,800,000 0%	54/7/0 28/7/0 1	Electric signs, neon signs and neon.	www.wellsmanufacturing.com www.signsolutions.com	Michelle Harshbarger Dec. 31 1999
59	WELLS MANUFACTURING INC. 2000 Duff Ave., Unit 100,00 Ft. Collins, CO 80526 (970) 499-1400, (970) 499-1400	\$1,800,000 \$2,140,000 18.9%	11/7/0 7/7/0 1	Electronic assembly, assembly and development, industrial control equipment, test software, engineering and instrumentation.	www.wellsmanufacturing.com www.wellsman.com	Donald A. Rogers Dec. 31 1999
60	WELLS MANUFACTURING INC. 2000 Duff Ave. Broomfield, CO 80020 (303) 439-2222, (303) 439-2222	\$1,800,000 \$2,140,000 18.9%	22/7/0 22/7/0 1	Commercial printing, electronic publishing, electronic digital services and specialty label printing.	www.wellsmanufacturing.com N/A	Paul Boney Feb. 28 1999
61	WELLS MANUFACTURING INC. 1320 Blue Canyon Drive Ft. Collins, CO 80526 (970) 499-1400, (970) 499-1400	\$1,800,000 \$2,140,000 18.9%	10/7/0 42/7/0 6	Moving services.	N/A	Jim Brown Dec. 31 1999
62	WELLS MANUFACTURING INC. 1320 Blue Canyon Drive Ft. Collins, CO 80526 (970) 499-1400, (970) 499-1400	\$1,800,000 \$2,140,000 18.9%	30/7/0 27/7/0 1	Medical contracting.	N/A	Tom G. Walker Dec. 31 1999
63	WELLS MANUFACTURING INC. 2000 Duff Ave., Suite 100,00 Ft. Collins, CO 80526 (970) 499-1400, (970) 499-1400	\$1,800,000 \$2,140,000 18.9%	25/7/0 14/7/0 1	Water systems, environmental consulting, systems and database development.	www.wellsmanufacturing.com www.wellsman.com	Larry Boney Dec. 31 1999
64	WELLS MANUFACTURING INC. 1320 Blue Canyon Drive Ft. Collins, CO 80526 (970) 499-1400, (970) 499-1400	\$1,800,000 \$2,140,000 18.9%	8/7/0 8/7/0 1	Custom bag, slitting and gluing for mill and concrete products.	www.wellsmanufacturing.com www.wellsman.com	Pat Whitehouse Dec. 31 1999
65	WELLS MANUFACTURING INC. 2000 Duff Ave., Suite 100,00 Ft. Collins, CO 80526 (970) 499-1400, (970) 499-1400	\$1,800,000 \$2,140,000 18.9%	302/7/0 302/7/0 1	Contractor, landscape, hospital, retail.	www.wellsmanufacturing.com www.wellsman.com	Dean M. Pratt Dec. 31 1999
66	WELLS MANUFACTURING INC. 2000 Duff Ave., Suite 100,00 Ft. Collins, CO 80526 (970) 499-1400, (970) 499-1400	\$1,800,000 \$2,140,000 18.9%	N/A/N/A N/A 1	Capacitors and filters (metal).	www.wellsmanufacturing.com	Wally Schreiber Dec. 31 1999
67	WELLS MANUFACTURING INC. 2000 Duff Ave. Broomfield, CO 80020 (303) 439-2222, (303) 439-2222	\$1,800,000 \$2,140,000 18.9%	8/7/0 7/7/0 2	Home building.	N/A	Paul Boney Dec. 31 1999
68	WELLS MANUFACTURING INC. 2000 Duff Ave. Broomfield, CO 80020 (303) 439-2222, (303) 439-2222	\$1,800,000 \$2,140,000 18.9%	1/7/0 N/A/N/A 1	Computers.	www.wellsmanufacturing.com www.wellsman.com	Jim Boney Jan. 1 1999
69	WELLS MANUFACTURING INC. 1320 Blue Canyon Drive Ft. Collins, CO 80526 (970) 499-1400, (970) 499-1400	\$1,800,000 \$2,140,000 18.9%	48/7/0 48/7/0 1	Recent concrete products, including small hydraulic.	www.wellsmanufacturing.com www.wellsman.com	Cindy Boney Oct. 31 1999
70	WELLS MANUFACTURING INC. 2000 Duff Ave. Broomfield, CO 80020 (303) 439-2222, (303) 439-2222	\$1,800,000 \$2,140,000 18.9%	20/7/0 18/7/0 1	Increased digital printing, copying and electronic publishing.	www.wellsmanufacturing.com N/A	David Boney Dec. 31 1999
71	WELLS MANUFACTURING INC. 1320 Blue Canyon Drive, Suite 100 Ft. Collins, CO 80526 (970) 499-1400, (970) 499-1400	\$1,800,000 \$2,140,000 18.9%	2/7/0 2/7/0 1	Various automotive and trailers.	www.wellsmanufacturing.com www.wellsman.com	Mary Wilson Dec. 31 1999
72	WELLS MANUFACTURING INC. 2000 Duff Ave. Broomfield, CO 80020 (303) 439-2222, (303) 439-2222	\$1,800,000 \$2,140,000 18.9%	98/7/0 76/7/0 1	Automotive retail.	www.wellsmanufacturing.com www.wellsman.com	Tim Brydman Dec. 31 1999
73	WELLS MANUFACTURING INC. 2000 Duff Ave. Broomfield, CO 80020 (303) 439-2222, (303) 439-2222	\$1,800,000 \$2,140,000 18.9%	175/208 175/196 1	Resin manufacturing and retail.	N/A www.wellsmanufacturing.com	Patrick Boney Dec. 31 1999
74	WELLS MANUFACTURING INC. 2000 Duff Ave. Broomfield, CO 80020 (303) 439-2222, (303) 439-2222	\$1,800,000 \$2,140,000 18.9%	18/7/0 N/A/N/A 1	Computer sales, system integration, upgrades, repair, networking and internet.	www.wellsmanufacturing.com www.wellsman.com	Henry Boney Dec. 31 1999
75	WELLS MANUFACTURING INC. P.O. Box 20000 Ft. Collins, CO 80526 (970) 499-1400, (970) 499-1400	\$1,800,000 \$2,140,000 18.9%	5/20 6/20 1	Christian Business Directory, as well as 25 other products nationally.	N/A www.wellsmanufacturing.com	Easy Boney Dec. 31 1999

Note: Ranks include Lander and Wolf counties, Larimer and Brighton in Colorado and Albany and Lewis counties in Wyoming. List includes region-based companies that posted 2000 revenues of \$100,000 or more. N/A - Not available. Nil - Not previously ranked. SOURCE: BUSINESS REPORT SERVICE. PREPARED BY ELIZABETH HANNEY AND DAN HANNEY.



# FASTEST-GROWING PRIVATE COMPANIES Part IV

(Locally based, ranked by percent change between 1998 and 1999 revenues)

LAST YEAR'S RANK	COMPANY Address Phone/Fax	1998 REVENUE 1999 REVENUE PERCENT CHANGE	2000 EMPLOYED LOCAL/STATEWIDE 2000 NEW EMPLOYED LOCAL/STATEWIDE NO. OF LOCATIONS IN COLORADO	INDUSTRY	E-MAIL WEB SITE	FOUNDER OR CHIEF EXECUTIVE RANKED YEAR END YEAR FOUNDED
72	<b>QUINCY BARRING INC.</b> 2000 W. Franklin Parkway Fort Collins, CO 80521 (970) 225-0200/(970) 225-0200	\$2,325,000 \$4,781,000 206%	200/700 100/700 1	Decorative and glassware.	quincy@quincy.com www.quincy.com	Paul Hays Dec. 21 1981
77	<b>MAJESTY SIGNAGE &amp; GRAPHICS</b> 240 W. Drake Road Fort Collins, CO 80524 (970) 225-4900/(970) 225-4900	\$1,420,000 \$2,900,000 204%	18/700 14/700 1	Interactive media and specialty development, marketing and public relations graphic design and printing.	julie@jmsignage.com www.jmsignage.com	Mike Hays Dec. 21 1992
78	<b>JAMES GIBSON CO. INC.</b> 4125 Main St. Trinidad, CO 80547 (970) 494-0900/(970) 224-9900	\$1,900,000 \$3,500,000 184%	40/700 37/700 1	Modern cabinets and bathroom vanities for both residential and commercial use.	N/A	Scott Olson Dec. 21 1988
79	<b>ALAN SCHWAB INTERNATIONAL</b> 2000 Darden Blvd. Fort Collins, CO 80526 (970) 452-0200/(970) 452-0107	\$2,077,000 \$3,900,000 187%	20/700 20/700 1	State-of-the-art educational materials and programs for teaching recreational water safety.	alan@schwab.com www.schwab.com	Ed Christoff Dec. 21 1970
80	<b>STORAGE SYSTEMS AND SERVICES</b> 1400 Hwy. 66/Box 1000, #2 Fort Collins, CO 80521 (970) 494-1717/(970) 494-0200	\$1,800,000 \$3,200,000 178%	25 - 45/700 N/A/700 0	Moving, storage and transportation services.	lance@stss.com www.storage.com/CO	Earl Lampson Mar. 21 1977
81	<b>THE SPARKLE SHOP</b> 220 Woodstock Ave., P.O. Box 2707 Broomfield, CO 80027 (970) 424-2471/(970) 424-2471	\$1,260,000 \$2,140,000 170%	20/700 20/700 1	Event services, TV, displays, tables, post, mail service, lighting, coordinating and support.	garcia@sparkleshop.com www.sparkleshop.com	Rick Marlow Dec. 21 1991
82	<b>SMITH-JENKINS CONTRACTING SERVICES INC.</b> 4700 Royal Vista Circle Fort Collins, CO 80525 (970) 225-1800/(970) 225-8277	\$1,207,000 \$2,050,000 170%	75/700 45/700 0	HAZARDOUS waste for chemical, gas and water/sewer utility projects.	info@smj.com www.smj.com	Jeff Meyer May 21 1980
83	<b>SMITH &amp; SONS MECHANICAL FC</b> 225 Franklin St. #200 Longmont, CO 80501 (970) 778-0900/(970) 778-0900	\$1,000,000 \$1,700,000 170%	4/700 4/700 1	Fabrication mechanical services.	smith@smfc.net N/A	Gene Shiner Dec. 21 1990
84	<b>ST. JOHNSON ENGINEERING CONSULTING GROUP INC.</b> 2000 E. College Ave. #200 Fort Collins, CO 80521 (970) 225-4400/(970) 225-4400	\$1,200,000 \$2,030,000 169%	7/700 7/700 1	Mortgage services.	N/A	Victoria Johnson Dec. 21 1985
85	<b>ELECTRICAL SERVICES CONSULTANTS INC.</b> 212 W. Military St. Fort Collins, CO 80521 (970) 225-0200/(970) 225-0200	\$1,000,000 \$1,600,000 160%	20/700 20/700 1	Electrical engineering, design & planning for electrical utilities & industrial companies specializing in high voltage, GIS & substation.	es@elct.com http://www.elct.com	Pat Hines Dec. 21 1993
86	<b>SMITH SIGN SERVICE LLC</b> 400 30th St. Greeley, CO 80639-0101 (970) 338-0200/(970) 338-0200	\$200,000 \$330,000 165%	8/700 8/700 1	Signs and related services and products.	smithsign@earthlink.net www.smithsign.com	Paul Smith Dec. 21 1983
87	<b>THE JENKINS ENGINEERING CO.</b> 2420 E. Harmony Road Fort Collins, CO 80525 (970) 225-0200/(970) 225-0200	\$2,700,000 \$4,400,000 163%	120/700 120/700 1	Mechanical, electrical and electronics for commercial buildings.	jenkins@el.com www.el.com	Bob Walker Sept. 20 1988
88	<b>PERKINS ENGINEERING INC.</b> 2522 Shawnee St., Suite 210 Broomfield, CO 80021 (970) 494-0200/(970) 494-0200	\$2,700,000 \$4,400,000 163%	8/700 8/700 1	Land development, zoning, planning, engineering design, construction drawings, construction administration, water, sewer, stormwater, etc.	info@perkins-engineering.com N/A	Eric A. Perkins Dec. 21 1985
89	<b>JAMES WATSON (JAMES WATSON) LLP</b> 717 W. 10th Ave. Longmont, CO 80501 (970) 688-0400/(970) 442-0107	\$1,200,000 \$1,900,000 158%	20/700 20/700 1	Accounting services.	info@jw.com www.jw.com	Larry Watson Dec. 21 1988
90	<b>SMITH INC. CO.</b> 4000 Canyon Ave. Fort Collins, CO 80521 (970) 225-0200/(970) 225-0200	\$2,200,000 \$3,400,000 155%	20/700 20/700 1	Fuel, tires and lubricants.	gas@smithinc.net N/A	Tim Hines June 30 1997
91	<b>ARCHITECTURE BY MILLER &amp; SMITH CRT.</b> 4000 Innovation Blvd., Suite 2 Fort Collins, CO 80521 (970) 225-0200/(970) 225-0200	\$1,500,000 \$2,300,000 153%	18/700 14/700 1	Design build, interior design, remodeling and custom homes.	info@millersmith.com www.msc-llc.com	Bob Peterson Dec. 21 1990
92	<b>SMITH CONTRACT SERVICE</b> 400 West St. Broomfield, CO 80021 (970) 424-5711/(970) 424-0107	\$1,400,000 \$2,100,000 150%	10/700 10/700 1	Prepare and refuel tank delivery units.	preps@smith.com www.smithcontract.com/frag.htm	John E. Smith Dec. 21 1998
93	<b>PROFESSIONAL SERVICES CONSULTANTS INC.</b> 1120 Argonne Ave. Broomfield, CO 80021 (970) 494-1800/(970) 494-0200	\$1,100,000 \$1,650,000 150%	2/700 2/700 1	Networking services, sales software support, network support Windows/UNIX, Intranet packages.	info@psconsult.com www.psconsult.com	Eden Aronson Dec. 21 1990
94	<b>MAJESTY SIGNAGE &amp; GRAPHICS</b> 200 E. 11th St. Longmont, CO 80501 (970) 688-0200/(970) 688-0200	\$200,000 \$270,000 135%	20/700 20/700 1	Moving and storage services.	N/A	Eden Christoff Dec. 21 1988
95	<b>MAJESTY SIGNAGE &amp; GRAPHICS</b> 200 West St. Broomfield (970) 424-0200/(970) 424-0200	\$1,200,000 \$1,600,000 133%	7/700 7/700 1	Multi-level storage and sales.	info@majesty.com N/A	Doris Anderson Dec. 21 1987
96	<b>SMITH CONTRACT SERVICE AND SERVICE CONSULTANTS INC.</b> 2000 E. College Ave. Fort Collins, CO 80521 (970) 494-0200/(970) 494-0200	\$1,200,000 \$1,600,000 133%	20/700 20/700 1	Professional health care before and after, before opening health, weight loss, nutritional, exercise, smoking, body pump, earlier programs, pre- and post-natal fitness.	info@smith.com www.smithcontract.com	David Meyer Dec. 21 1995
97	<b>MAJESTY SIGNAGE &amp; GRAPHICS</b> 2000 E. College Ave. Longmont, CO 80501 (970) 748-0200/(970) 748-0200	\$1,200,000 \$1,600,000 133%	47/700 14/700 1	Graphic, book, portfolio, promotional, GMS, business cards, signs, brochures, printing and book sales.	info@majesty.com www.majesty.com	Brad Thompson Dec. 21 1988
98	<b>CONCRETE SERVICES CO. INC.</b> 2000 Poudre Ave. Broomfield, CO 80021 (970) 424-0200/(970) 424-0200	\$1,200,000 \$1,600,000 133%	20/700 20/700 1	Commercial/industrial contracting for new and renovated projects.	info@csco.com www.csco.com	Kevin Shinnick N/A 1994
99	<b>STANLEY SERVICE INC.</b> 2420 E. Harmony Ave. Fort Collins, CO 80521 (970) 225-0200/(970) 225-0200	\$1,100,000 \$1,400,000 127%	200/700 170/700 0	Automobile sales.	stan@stanley.com www.stanley.com	Douglas E. Stanley Dec. 21 1990
100	<b>THE SPARKLE SHOP</b> 2000 E. Harmony Ave. #2 Fort Collins, CO 80521 (970) 225-0200/(970) 494-0101	\$1,207,000 \$1,400,000 116%	20/700 10/700 0	Office moving and residential relocation.	info@sparkleshop.com N/A	Lynn Adley Dec. 21 1998

Note: Region includes Larimer and Weld counties, Longmont and Brighton in Colorado; Albany and Laramie counties in Wyoming.  
 May include region-based companies that posted 2000 revenues of \$100,000 or more.  
 N/A - Not available      N/A - Not previously ranked

STATISTICS BY JAMES WATSON REPORT SERVICE  
 PREPARED BY ELIZABETH HANSEN AND DAN HANSEN



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**Eddie Speir has expanded his business from a one-man computer-consulting company to a computer-software and network-management company that will post at least \$2.5 million this year, making it one of the region's fastest-growing companies.**

1/4s  
JORDY CARTER

# 3t's key to biz growth

**By Luanne Kadlub**  
*Business Report Correspondent*

WINDSOR — Eddie Speir's entrepreneurial spirit began to soar when he was old enough to mow lawns in his Denver neighborhood. He also painted addresses on sidewalks, shoveled snow and made and sold his own lollipops. He did whatever he could to earn a dollar.

Some things never change. Speir is still an entrepreneur, but this time he's earning more than pocket change.

His computer-software and network-management company, 3t Systems, is one of the fastest-growing companies in Northern Colorado. Revenues have doubled each of the last two years and are expected to do so again this year.

The company earned \$450,000 in 1998 and \$1.2 million in 1999. Speir said his company will surpass \$1.2 million in June, and most likely will post \$2.5 million, if not more, in 2000.

What has helped the company double revenues in consecutive years has been following up on leads, pure and simple.

3t Systems began as a one-man business 16 years ago. Speir, a graduate of the University of Northern Colorado, had his own smaller one-man computer-consulting company when he acquired Network Management in 1996.

Soon after, he hired his first employee. He now has 14 employees in software development at the Denver office, seven working out of the office on Windsor's Main Street and one person in Dallas.

Speir operated the company under the name Network Management until last year. He decided it was time for a name change when "we were doing business in states that already had Network Management companies. Also, (the name) has a connotation of just network administration."

The new name evolved as Speir spent time talking to prospective employees and clients about his company. He kept emphasizing truth, trust and teamwork.

"We came up with the name, 3t



3t Systems

**#4 Fastest-Growing  
Private Company**

"We saw a need and a lot of confusion."

— Eddie Speir,  
President,  
3t Systems

Systems, to define the way we do business," said Speir. "If you're telling the truth, and your clients and employees know everything is above board, then you will have an environment of truth. With that foundation of truth, you have an environment of trust in which you can achieve teamwork."

3t Systems specializes in both software development and network consulting.

"The two cross paths quite a bit and will cross paths more as technology converges," Speir said. "Because we have information on both sides, we can give our customers the best of both worlds to navigate information technology for their companies."

3t Systems specializes in custom applications for the mortgage, health-care and insurance industries.

For the mortgage industry, 3t came up with a Web-enabled workflow management system that runs the entire operation from loan origination through closing documents.

"We saw a need and a lot of confusion," Speir said. "We plugged that hole with our application."

The application is called "Little Miss," though the acronym is LLTMS, which stands for Loan Librarian Task Management System.

Working with a variety of businesses "is the best part of our business," Speir said. "We've got a lot of people who just love to learn and solve problems. There's no better place (for that) than software. We're redefining business."

Not all clients require major fixes. Some companies require minor fixes, such as when e-mail breaks down or

**See 3T, 15C**

Realtec



# Lopiano's caters to customer needs

By Heather Grimshaw

Business Report Correspondent

MILLIKEN — As one customer said, "with great service, exceptional food and competitive pricing," why would you go anywhere else?

In a nutshell, that's how Sandy and husband Mike Farnsworth have expanded their catering business during the past 12 years — by word of mouth.

It's a homegrown approach to marketing that mirrors the way in which the Farnsworths started Lopiano's, a privately owned catering company that operates out of the Mad Russian Events Center here.

Lopiano's, which ranked 11th on *The Business Report's* list of 100 fastest-growing companies in Northern Colorado, caters in-house and off-site parties and meetings and serves food for special Mad Russian events, which usually book a year in advance.

The business started as a lunch-delivery service in Fort Collins. Sandy started out helping the owner of Italian Express, a local delivery service, and when he decided to close up shop, she and Mike took over where he left off.

With \$3,000 of their savings — half of which was borrowed from family members — the Farnsworths bought two pieces of equipment, invested in groceries and leased space in a warehouse. Within nine months, they had made \$160,000 selling \$2 sandwiches and pastries and had built their clientele up to 200 businesses in Fort Collins, Greeley and Loveland.

To accommodate the demand for their services, the Farnsworths added a driver per week to run lunch items to small businesses, and after 11 weeks, they had 11 drivers, and business was booming. Sandy remembers the croissant sandwiches were favored among her customers, though she had a wide variety of options available.

Unlike the lunch trucks that honk their horns outside construction sites and office parks, Lopiano's routes were serviced by employees who drove their own cars and walked into buildings with coolers full of deli meats and freshly made pastries.

Soon after the couple had leased warehouse space, a knock on the door introduced them to Bob Voshel, a 65-year-old retired pastry chef who had heard about Lopiano's and wanted to bake pastries for them. At the time, the Farnsworths didn't have an oven but told Voshel to come back in a few weeks. Soon after, Sandy bought a \$25 oven at a Colorado State University auction and put Voshel to work.

"He made everything from scratch," Sandy said, "and everybody loved his puff pastries."

Being in the right place at the right time has enabled the Farnsworths to push traditional business boundaries and form a full-service catering company with clients throughout Northern



Lopiano's Catering

#11 Fastest-Growing Private Company



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Lopiano's, owned by Sandy Farnsworth, shown above, grew 67 percent in revenues last year. The catering business operates out of the Mad Russian Events Center in Milliken.

Colorado and Denver. In the 12 years they've been in business, the Farnsworths have explored a retail operation for a short period of time, run a food-service operation for the Fort Collins Plaza Inn Hotel and gained a business savvy that has helped them build and retain a loyal clientele.

"I've used Lopiano's so many times I couldn't tell you how many," said Mike Flesher, vice president and corporate secretary of Mountain Plains Farm Credit in Greeley. "(Sandy) will sit down and listen to what we want to accomplish and is always flexible in the way in which she achieves that goal."

With customer comments like these, it's not surprising the company reported \$500,000 in 1999 sales — a marked increase from its \$300,000 in 1998.

Sandy attributes part of the growth to the new location, which is well known and can easily accommodate small and large parties. She is also appreciative of her tenured staff, some of whom have been with the company for six years. And then, of course, there is the power of persuasion and a client base that recommends the company to friends, family and colleagues.

The Anheuser-Busch brewing department is a good example of a repeat customer that learned about Lopiano's through recommendations.

"There are so many people here who know (Sandy) and have used her for their personal events," said Shelley Cole-Allen, secretary of the brewing department for the Fort Collins-based brewery.

The department often calls on Lopiano's to serve shift dinners at midnight or breakfasts at 6 a.m. and has never had a problem with service or

See LOPIANO'S, 14C

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## I-CUBED, from 6C

tion, Cowart said.

i-cubed's neighborhood is international.

"Over the past couple of years, we've probably done 300 different projects around the world in the telecom market," Cowart said. "We've done projects in Australia, South America, China, Russia, Europe, Africa."

Cowart intends to extend i-cubed's reach and take advantage of a growing Latin American telecom market and demand for mapping there by opening an office in Lima, Peru. A sales office in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, is in the works as well.

Meanwhile, i-cubed is meeting and exceeding its founder's expectations.

"The first couple of years were pretty tough," Cowart allows, but not so the last couple. "In the last two or three years, things have been going pretty well."

"Pretty well" looks like 270 percent growth in revenues from 1998 to 1999 and a first quarter in 2000 that shows 280 percent growth.

"We're close to tripling every year now," said Cowart, who prefers not to discuss specific revenue figures for his company.

"We were hoping to double, so we're doing a little better than we expected."

For i-cubed, growth has meant a burgeoning staff and office space to house it. From its original staff of one, i-cubed's numbers have grown to 15 full-time employees and a part-time staff that swells from three to 20, depending on the work load. i-cubed staffers hail

from diverse backgrounds including forestry, civil engineering, landscape architecture, geography and geology.

What his employees have in common, Cowart said, is technical training in remote sensing or geographic-information systems.

Cowart, 43, has a degree in geology from Colorado College and masters-level training in natural resources economics from the University of Colorado. He spent 15 years at FMC Minerals, resigning a position as technology manager for subsidiary FMC Gold Co. to launch i-cubed.

Growth has brought i-cubed upstairs, as well, moving it from a 600-square-foot basement office to 4,000 square feet of airy, windowed space on the third floor at 201 Linden St.

For Cowart, navigating i-cubed's growth has meant "a lot of hours. I don't know how you add them all up."

The investment of time doesn't stop with the company's head, however.

Cowart said it's not unusual to find i-cubed employees in the office on weekends, early mornings and at night.

He describes an internal culture colored by a deep dedication to the product and the client.

"Our corporate culture is pretty important," he said. "We spend a lot of time trying to maintain that and making sure that the people we hire are a good fit for that."

Again, he said, "there's no magic...We let people know what is expected, and more important, they interact directly with customers, and they know what the customer expects."

It's a culture Cowart intends to cultivate, nurturing it with elements like mutual respect, shared common goals



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**Russ Cowart, founder and president of i-cubed poses in front of a Fort Collins map his company produced from four aerial photos.**

and a flat management structure.

i-cubed's reputation for quality reverberates inside the company, Cowart said. His employees take pride in their work.

"When they send a product out there, they created it, and it's got a little bit of their reputation wrapped up in it."

And it's fun, he said.

"That's one of the reasons they work the hours they do. It's interesting work for them, as well."

Outside i-cubed's walls, Cowart describes a business arena where the pressure to perform can be tremendous.

"It's an extremely demanding customer."

That's understandable, he said, considering a client may have just forked over hundreds of millions of dollars for a license to use a particular frequency.

i-cubed represents the first step toward beginning to get a return on that money, Cowart said, "so there's tremendous pressure for timely turn around of these products, and there are tremendous penalties if you can't do that."

Cowart attributes i-cubed's staying power in the face of that pressure to knowledge, innovation and some caution.

"We find ways to get things done cost

effectively and time effectively," Cowart said. "We don't commit to anything we can't get done."

Customer education is a critical part of maintaining a reputation for getting the job done right and on time, Cowart said. To help diverse customers, from airline pilots to engineers to farmers, understand what is realistic given technology and time available, i-cubed has developed a series of presentations and white papers.

"Sometimes, we'll lose a customer to a competitor because the competitor promises more than we're willing to promise. We often get those customers back the next go-around because they found out, in fact, the competitor couldn't deliver what they said they could."

Cowart adds "pragmatic" to the words he uses to describe his company and links that to success, as well, describing a middle ground between intensive research and development, and simply acting as a conduit for technology.

"I think we've found that sweet spot in the middle where we balance knowledge of technology enough to make it practically applicable."

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## LOPIANO'S, from 13C

quality.

"(Sandy) always puts something pretty on the table and uses real china," says Allen-Cole. "And having someone who will come in at oddball hours is a big deal to us."

When asked about favorite menu items, Allen-Cole says the Lopiano's eggs on the half shell are frequently requested from staff members.

"They rant and rave about those eggs," she said.

The personal touch Sandy adds and the flexibility with which she operates her business is not only appreciated by customers, but it sets Lopiano's apart from its competition, which varies from local hotels and other catering companies to grocery stores and warehouse clubs.

"A lot of catering companies will come in with their packet of information about their offerings and basically

say 'take it or leave it,'" says Flesher, "but Sandy is incredibly flexible and will work with us on food options that fit within our budget. We now use them exclusively. They're our company caterer."

Prior to entering the food business, Sandy worked as a salesperson for Mary Kay Cosmetics and Mike worked at a local steel company. The sales and marketing experience has helped Sandy interact with customers, while Mike focuses on finances and maintenance issues.

Specializing in theme events, Lopiano's serves food from all regions and can accommodate any kind of menu request, Sandy said.

"Having no specialty can be a challenge, but we like to prepare and offer all types of food," she said.

So far that approach has paid off.

"When a guest walks up and says, 'Wow, that was really good,' I know I've made the right (catering) decision," says Flesher.



## HELP, from 3C

Wymisner said, is what the future employment market will bring.

"In some respects, Colorado has been outpacing the nation," he said, "and in some respects, Larimer County has been outpacing other parts of Colorado."

But will it last, Wymisner asked.

"We are growing more jobs than we have employees to fill them," he said.

A drive across town attests to that, he said, citing the "help wanted" signs replacing product advertisements atop taxis and in front of retail and service outlets.

With virtually no unemployment, the challenge becomes how to recruit employees from outside the region and how to keep current employees close to home, he said.

As the cost of living, especially housing, continues to escalate, those tasks will become increasingly difficult, he said, and worst-case scenario, businesses may opt to locate elsewhere.

"It's the downside of a booming economy," Wymisner said.

Whether Fort Collins and Larimer County will remain the region's leaders in employment growth is unclear as well.

"Larimer County has 60 percent of the population, so they should have 60 percent of the job growth if the two counties are growing equally," Green said.

But the latest numbers from the state demographer's office suggest another change may be on the way.

From 1990 to 1998, census data and population estimates put growth at 24 percent for Larimer County and 27 percent for Weld County. Looking ahead, however, growth from 1998 to 2005 is expected to slow to 16 percent in Larimer County, with Weld County dropping only to 25 percent.

Whatever happens with growth, though, Wymisner said, "it will have to return to a sustainable level."



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**Wayne Plechaty tests a flow cytometer the Fort Collins company Cytomation is building for the University of Edinburgh in Scotland. Cytomation's employee growth ranks it 12th among the region's fastest-growing companies.**

## 3T, from 12C

more bandwidth is required. Other companies use 3t as their own IT department.

"We come in and help them out," Speir said.

Other times it may mean spiffing up a client's Web site, which is what 3t Systems did for Voice of the Martyrs, an organization based out of Bartlesville, Okla. 3t turned "a very strong newsletter into almost an Internet-based broadcasting company," Speir said.

The site features first-person accounts of Christians being persecuted worldwide. To help with the job, which required heavy graphic applications, 3t called in rgb Studio Inc. in Fort Collins.

"We're very happy working with 3T Systems," said Scott Rogers, marketing director for rgb Studio, which supplies graphics and Web content. "We're a good fit with what they do and what we can help them with. When we first sat down with Eddie, we were hearing stories about how they're committed to getting the project done and done right, even at the expense of losing money. That builds customers and brings them back for more business. That's how we do business, too."

3t Systems has also partnered with Gateway in Fort Collins and

Denver.

"We handle all of the consulting for Gateway stores," Speir said. "If somebody goes in and says they need this server and these machines, we're the ones who will go in and do that."

Most of 3t's business so far is generated in Colorado with small to medium-sized businesses. Lee's Hardware Floors, however, is the only Windsor client for the Windsor-based company.

"Eddie has helped us with networking, getting our whole system set up and making sure it's working properly," said Cindy Beeson, office manager and retail store manager. "He also advises us on the technology that we need that works with our size company."

Beeson said Lee's has used other companies but prefers 3t Systems.

"They're very responsive, very helpful, very professional, reliable and conscientious. In other words, they seem to know what they're doing."

What sets 3t Systems apart from other computer consulting companies?

"We're committed to it, even when it hurts," said Speir.

Sometimes, he said, projects don't proceed as planned.

"It's not an exact science making computers work," he said, but when

3t absorbs unexpected costs in getting a job done "you have a client for life."

Speir has handed over much of the day-to-day running of the business to president Mike Detweiler.

"He's a mastermind at operations and an excellent salesman," Speir said.

This frees up Speir to pursue acquisitions, which he said will take the company to the next level — pre-IPO. He expects the company to go public in about three years.

Capital to build the company has all come internally. When the company seeks additional capital in the future, Speir said the company will first turn to friends, family and even clients who "are excited about what we're doing."

In addition to getting the company into a pre-IPO stage, Speir said he wants to consolidate offices in Windsor. Prospective employees are more attune to moving to Windsor, he said, than putting up with the traffic in Denver.

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