



# Ham Lake

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

# BUSINESS REVIEW

## Making the Internet practical, profitable

**D**uring his career as an engineer for a series of high-tech computer companies, Mike Sheets experienced more than his share of high-flying corporate life. He's glad that now he works in the relative peace of his own small company—although it's still nice to have the resources of a corporate biggie to back him up.

Mike operates a franchise of WSI Internet Consulting and Education. He consults with businesses and helps them set up Internet sites designed to function as successful business tools. "If you're paying for your web site, you're not doing it right," he says. Mike maintains that a web site should always have a net positive influence on the bottom line, either through increased revenues or through cost savings.

Mike's career took a lot of turns in the heady days of the

high-tech explosion. He started in Des Moines, working for Digital Equipment Corporation, which was bought by Compaq, which has since been bought by HP. Mike worked for Iowa Network Services, helping build the first commercial Internet service in Iowa. He also worked for a small router company called

Wellfleet Communications, which joined with another company to become Bay Networks, which was bought by Nortel. That company moved him to Minneapolis as systems engineering manager. After five years with Nortel, Mike wanted

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**Mike Sheets believes Web sites should save, not cost money**

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more of a challenge and left to work as director of engineering for a startup company in Maple Grove, Newspeed Internet Systems. Six months later, Cisco Systems bought Newspeed, paying \$450 million for a six-month-old company that had yet to ship its first product.

For the next five years, Mike was one of five Cisco consulting engineers who traveled the world. "I was on planes two and three times a week," he says. "It was exciting but got old very quickly. I was missing too much family life." To spend more time with his wife Laura and daughters Kylie, 14, and Lindsey, 9, Mike decided to buy the WSI franchise. He opened his new business just last October.

"WSI is the world's largest Internet consulting and development company, with 1,100 franchise owners in 89 countries," he says. "We have ten different software development companies under exclusive contract."

After meeting with a company to find out its business needs, processes, and policies, Mike sets out to find the Internet tools that can help increase income and reduce expenses. Depending on their needs, companies can re-

ceive packages including e-commerce shopping carts, email marketing systems, electronic newsletters, online inventory, and customer service tools. "The end result is a very functional web site," says Mike.

Although WSI focuses on small and medium size companies, Mike's first customer was the retailing giant, Best Buy. The company wanted to set up a customer service operation to help people with new computer systems figure out how to set them up properly. Faced with the need to get the project up and running at Christmas, the company came to Mike in early December. They estimated that their internal department wouldn't be able to finish it until mid-January. Mike had a test site up and running in a week. Since then, he has done other test projects for Best Buy.

"There are a lot of companies out there that can build a web site," says Mike. "I want business owners to know that I approach it from a business perspective. I want this to be a true tool that they can use to make their business more profitable." You can contact Mike Sheets by calling (763) 413-8788 or emailing [Msheets@wsigetwebresults.com](mailto:Msheets@wsigetwebresults.com).

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