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Navigating the Sea of Technology



WAYPOINT SOLUTIONS GROUP
IS A BEACON OF
IT SERVICES AND SUPPORT

WIKIPEDIA:

A waypoint is a reference point in physical space used for purposes of navigation. Waypoints have only become widespread for navigational use by the layman since the development of advanced navigational systems, such as the Global Positioning System (GPS) and certain other types of radio navigation. Waypoints located on the surface of the Earth are usually defined in two dimensions (e.g., longitude and latitude); those used in the Earth's atmosphere or in outer space are defined in at least three dimensions (four if time is one of the coordinates, as it might be for some waypoints outside the Earth).

The cloud is the latest buzzword in computer technology. It refers to a version of utility computing: databases, operating systems, memory, microprocessors and the Internet, all rolled up in one, a kind of “virtual” server over the Internet, and many believe it is the wave of the future.

Small business owners might think this new technology is as cloudy to them as most IT concepts.

That’s where Waypoint Solutions Group steps in. It offers companies a complete array of IT expertise—including cloud services—and understanding and support, so business owners and employees can concentrate on running their businesses.

“We are the IT department for many small and medium-sized companies,” says Dan Wilson, president and CEO of Waypoint Solutions Group. “We offer an entire spectrum of services from day-to-day desktop support and email hosting to higher end security and managed services with maintenance and monitoring.”

“Technology’s everywhere and in everything,” says Tony Shannon, vice president at Waypoint Solutions Group. “We help businesses navigate it—whether it’s questions on what kind of new mobile phones to how to purchase or use them, how to set up new computers and A/V TVs for video conferencing, or information on Wi-Fi capabilities.”

Determining Technology Personality

Waypoint works with clients to help them view technology as a way to grow their business. Wilson and Shannon spend time working with clients to learn about their technology personality.

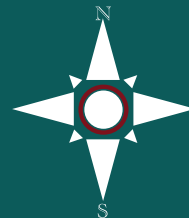
“I must have answered at least 200 questions on Ipads alone in December,” says Wilson, who added that he and his staff purchase and use new products in the field so they can answer questions and show clients how to work with different devices. “We encourage our clients to contact us with any technology questions they have. We provide tech tips on our Facebook page and on Twitter.”

“Each person and company has a technology personality,” explains Shannon. “It’s not a label; it has more to do with the way they process information, confront and adopt technology. Some people are early adopters and others take more time to figure it out before they want to use it.”

No one wants to admit they don’t understand how a new technology works or how it could be used, so Shannon says, “We give them information in small bits so they can understand it and become more comfortable with it.”

Wilson says Waypoint finds out about a client and their technology needs and usage by visiting by asking questions about the business.

“It’s all about being a good communicator,” says Wilson. “When we’re talking to clients, we want to see the light bulb go off. If it doesn’t, we need to restructure our discussion until there’s a deeper level of understanding.”



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(l to r)
Dan Wilson
President and CEO
Tony Shannon
Vice President
Waypoint Solutions Group, LLC



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~Dan Wilson
President and CEO

The Ben Craig Center, a small business incubator that works in partnership with UNC Charlotte, works with Waypoint to manage its workstations, server and back-up server, and access issues, says Robert Aldrich, controller.

"We've also used Waypoint to help us with our IT budget, to recommend what products to purchase, help us find a good deal, and then service our systems," says Aldrich, whose company uses IT help desk assistance and its computer system monitoring to help guarantee that there are no "hacker" issues or operational hiccups.

"It's more of an assurance when you don't hear from them, because that's a good thing," Aldrich says. "We may interact with them about twice a month and Waypoint provides a good value for us; they've certainly met our expectations."

Expanding Need for IT Services

The demand for IT help is huge, says Wilson. The recession and the slowdown in the economy have forced small and medium-sized businesses

to find new ways to save money. Small business owners recognize that they need sophisticated technology to win new customers but they cannot afford to hire their own IT team, he says.

At the same time, Wilson says, small business owners cannot afford to lose customers because a technology problem has shut them down so they are "thinking smarter about the ways they manage their business and time.

"In the last three years our company has grown 78 percent year over year," says Wilson. "In the first quarter of 2011, our revenues were up 110 percent from last year."

Waypoint Solutions Group provides service to companies of all sizes. About 70 percent of its clients are small businesses with employee size ranging from less than five to 75, says Wilson. Waypoint services 150-plus customers in 11 states and six different countries.

Customers can choose from different service level agreements and/or design a customized solution, says Wilson.

Waypoint's team of 22 engineers supports performance, capacity, security, availability and management of IT systems. It has a 24/7 Network Operations Center (NOC) to provide continuous service, including protection against "intrusion," or spam, viruses, spyware or filters. It partners with Microsoft, Calyptix Security, HP, and GTI, and can offer certified services and purchase discounts to its clients.

"Most small businesses evolve in their need for IT support," explains Wilson. "In the beginning, one employee is the technology expert and answers all the questions and helps clear up computer problems. Then, as the company grows, this 'expert' begins to spend half his time taking care of technology and neglecting his 'real' job."

Waypoint also supplements a company's IT support team, says Wilson, providing expertise

in infrastructure development and maintenance, backup and disaster recovery, network security, and 24/7 monitoring, and processes to help the company better plan its future technology needs.

Evolving IT to Client Needs

"We're big enough to have an in-house person do our IT work," says Mike Griffin, a partner in Griffin Brothers, a company with 225 employees and 100 computers and servers for its 15 locations. "But I'm not sure that one in-house person could take care of servicing our tech needs at different locations and provide the expertise in standardizing our equipment and systems and the monitoring, preventative maintenance and planning involved in it. Waypoint provides more resources and expertise."



"Waypoint has the expertise to coach you, give you standards and technology options relative to your budget. They support all our IT needs and solutions for our boardroom and conference rooms and necessary capabilities. They set up and service our server, computer workstations and laptops, website and email capabilities."



~Gary Hummel
Client

Griffin Brothers uses Waypoint for all its IT needs. Griffin says Waypoint supplies it computer structure and networking needs, including a T-1 Internet backbone connection, provides the network links for all its locations, operates its Internet-based VOIP phone system, and provides technology assistance, as needed. He says when the company decided to make changes in its PDAs or smart phones, "We went straight to Waypoint to help us decide the best options." ➤

"We're a growth company," says Griffin, whose business includes a diverse group of holdings including tire and automotive centers, a golf course, a real estate development company, and a construction and demolition debris management company, including recycling facilities. "We're always building and we depend on Waypoint to help us with our technology installs and work with the permitting processes to get it all done.

"Over the winter we opened a new recycling center in Harrisburg," says Griffin. "Waypoint was there helping us throughout the process, overseeing the installations early morning and late at night in sub-freezing temperatures.

"IT is the backbone of our business. We're extremely dependent on the Internet and technology to provide customer service," says Griffin. "Our CFO is pretty demanding and we've found that Waypoint keeps things going well and allows us to keep a laser focus on our core businesses."

Choosing the Right IT Provider

"We were looking for someone who could take us from early inception to way in the future," says Gary Hummel, executive vice president of the US Airline Pilots Association (USAPA), an organization based in Charlotte that represents over 5,000 US Airways pilots based across the country.

The union established its headquarters in Charlotte in 2008 and worked with Waypoint to develop its technology capability in its 8,000-square-foot office for five full-time employees with remote office space for members to work.

"Waypoint has the expertise to coach you, give you standards and technology options relative to your budget," explains Hummel. "They support all our IT needs and solutions for our boardroom and conference rooms and necessary capabilities. They set up and service our server, computer workstations and laptops, website and email capabilities."

Hummel says the need to have reliable communication around the clock with its pilots is imperative, particularly in a situation such as the US Airways plane crash on the Hudson. During that incident, pilots across the country needed to be informed about breaking news of the situation, says Hummel.

USAPA is in the process of moving its headquarters to a new office and Waypoint is overseeing that transition.

"Waypoint is integral in our office move," says Hummel. "They've worked with our architect and interior designer to help with infrastructure needs such as Wi-Fi access, VOIP telephone service and A/V hookups. I rely on them to



"We're passionate about technology—this is who we are and how we do it. To us, it's not a job, it's our lifestyle. Dan and I have been technology freaks our whole lives."



~Tony Shannon
Vice President

provide us with cost-effective solutions today and set us up for the future.

"I know how to fly an airplane," says Hummel, an executive who transitioned to his organization for a short-term leadership position, and will then return to his job as a pilot. "If it's anything to do with hardware, software or technology needs, I rely on Waypoint to service us."

Resolving IT Issues

According to Shannon, some customers reach out because they are in pain, angry or frustrated because of their technology problems," says Shannon, and they need immediate assistance to deal with a technology breakdown.

Suite 1000 President Laurie Leonard approached Waypoint after some disastrous problems.

"We had four IT provider failures in a row before we found Waypoint," says Leonard, who runs a small business which provides telephone answering and administrative services to customers across the country with 20 employees.

"Before we worked with Waypoint, it used to take an act of Congress to get someone to come to our office, and one of my stations was down the whole time I was waiting," says Leonard. "Now, if I call Waypoint, they open a ticket about the problem and I get continuous updates on how they are correcting it. Waypoint is our outsourced IT department."


Leonard talks to Waypoint about once a month and says it's not more frequent, "because they've already dealt with any concerns."

She uses Waypoint to service her computer workstations, monitor the system and provide assistance on performance issues and application updates.

Before working with Waypoint, Leonard took on the job of figuring out her company's IT requirements, spending much time reviewed options and purchases.

"I think small business owners sometimes spend a lot of time on things that they don't understand as if that time doesn't have any value or opportunity costs," says Leonard. "Having an efficient, stable and dependable IT system is important—and it's effective and cost-effective."

Wilson estimates about 80 percent of his clients come from referrals or word of mouth marketing. "We have one client who is the result of referrals to the 6th power," says Wilson, adding that Waypoint clients feel comfortable reaching out to the company whenever they have technology questions because the company makes them feel comfortable asking and responds quickly and accurately.

"We're passionate about technology—this is who we are and how we do it. To us, it's not a job, it's our lifestyle," says Shannon. "Dan and I have been technology freaks our whole lives." 

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Principals: Dan Wilson, President and CEO;

Tony Shannon, Vice President

Branch Offices: Greenville, S.C.; Freehold, N.J., Miami, Fla.

Employees: 22

Established: 2002

Business: Provider of flat rate IT infrastructure design, implementation and support for businesses of all sizes. It offers 24/7 customizable IT managed services and project management for customers in the transportation, military, medical, legal, accounting and retail markets.

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