



# Staying above the clouds

Wauwatosa technology firm grows by being ahead of ever-changing trends

BY STACY VOGEL DAVIS  
svogeldavis@bizjournals.com

When Gregg Tushaus started Tushaus Computer Services Inc. in 1993, few people had heard of the Internet, much less terms such as “cloud computing” and “mobile apps.”

Today, the 150-employee company looks completely different from the one Tushaus started as the sole employee selling software, hardware, support services and coding. The company, based in Wauwatosa’s Milwaukee County Research Park, now has offices in Madison and Appleton and opened its second cloud hosting center in Appleton in March.

‘It’s amazing that they’ve **DONE IT** IN THE TIME that they’ve done it.’

**Dan Steininger**  
BizStarts Milwaukee Inc.

It has added 28 employees since Jan. 1, and business is up 15 percent in the first half of its fiscal year. The company serves clients of all sizes, from sole proprietorship companies to Fortune 500 businesses, mostly from Wisconsin. Big-name clients include the Milwaukee Bucks, Rockwell Automation Inc. and MillerCoors LLC.

The company saw a dip during the recent economic recession after 16 years of continuous growth, but it used that time to improve itself, Tushaus said. It invested in a new service management system and spent \$1 million on its new cloud hosting center.

“We didn’t lose our heads and pull back,” he said.

The new, 1,500-square-foot center made sense as the company listened to its customers, Tushaus said. Cloud hosting, which provides flexible server and storage space for clients, makes up about 10 percent of the company’s business right now, but is a growing opportunity. It provides better margins than product sales, and demand is rising. Even when the business saw a 10 percent revenue decline in 2008, cloud hosting continued to grow.

It’s the latest evolution for the company as it continues to adapt to client needs. When Tushaus founded the company in 1993, more than 90 percent of his business was product sales. Over time, services such as cloud hosting, mobile application creation, security and support have come to make up 55 percent.

“It’s always changing,” Tushaus said. “That’s what makes it fun.”

While clients once were interested in the type of product and amount of storage space, now they’re mostly just interested in what the technology can do for them, Tushaus said. The company takes a project-based approach, meaning it’s trying to find solutions for the client rather than push a specific product.

## TUSHAUS COMPUTER SERVICES INC.

**LOCATION:** Wauwatosa with offices in Madison and Appleton

**OWNER:** Gregg Tushaus, CEO and chief technology officer

**EMPLOYEES:** 150

**2010 REVENUE:** \$27.2 million (Oct. 1, 2009, to Sept. 30, 2010); on track for \$31 million this fiscal year

**SERVICES:** Software development, networking, mobile device management, software and hardware sales, e-commerce, cloud hosting, business technology consulting, managed services and technical support

Gregg Tushaus...  
“We didn’t lose our heads and pull back.”

PHOTO BY SCOTT PAULLUS

It’s an approach customers appreciate, said Tim Popp, network planning manager for Bradley Corp. in Menomonee Falls. The company has been a Tushaus client for 10 years.

“They’re not looking to make a sale just to sell us items,” Popp said. “They’re really trying to help us out and improve the way we do IT (information technology).”

Bob Berthelsen, information technology director for Waukesha Elmbrook Health Care and ProHealth Solutions, said he considers Tushaus his IT department. Waukesha Elmbrook supports a dozen clinics, and Tushaus hosts the servers for applications responsible for tracking schedules, insurance information and other business data.

Waukesha Elmbrook switched to Tushaus in September after working with an East Coast provider because it was looking for a more flexible company closer to home. Tushaus met that requirement and is about 30 percent cheaper than the previous company.

“They gave us greater flexibility, greater control and we saved money,” Berthelsen said.

After flat revenue in 2009 and slight growth in 2010, Tushaus has grown 15 percent so far in its fiscal year that began Oct. 1. It’s on track to take in \$31 million in revenue this year and expects to hire about 15 more employees in the second half of the year.

Dan Steininger, a member of the Milwaukee County Research Park Board and president of BizStarts Milwaukee Inc., said Tushaus is a great example of a successful start-up technology company and proves there are successful information technology companies in Milwaukee. BizStarts, a nonprofit promoting high-growth start-up companies, gave Gregg Tushaus an “inspirational entrepreneur” award in 2010.



Steininger

“They (Tushaus) have got a gold standard of certifications and business relationships,” Steininger said. “It’s amazing

that they’ve done it in the time that they’ve done it.”

Steininger said he hopes Tushaus’ success inspires other entrepreneurs to start technology companies in Milwaukee. The city is centrally located between the coasts, and there’s less competition for talent here than in the Silicon Valley, where giants such as Google Inc. and Microsoft Corp. steal employees from under each other’s noses.

“We have a lot of advantages as a region,” he said.

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