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# TRAVERSE CITY BUSINESS NEWS

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### Current Issue

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## CloudAccess: Sky-high success in Traverse City

By Carol South



TRAVERSE CITY – CloudAccess logged on to the local business scene less than three years ago. Since then, the innovative company has ridden the Joomla! wave, leveraging the open source content

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ridden the Joomla! wave, leveraging the open access content management system (CMS) for website development so effectively, the company is now picking up about 100 new clients each day.

What's Joomla? Essentially, the rising star on the World Wide Web and – if you want to get technical about it – community-driven software that's considered one of the best and easiest ways to make and update webpages, and manage their content. The beauty of Joomla!: It's free, built on the genius of 600,000+ developers, and transcends expertise; it manages your content so you don't have to.

As such, it's ranked as the No. 1 tool to create and manage website content. It also runs 2.7 percent of the Internet.

And that's where Cloud Access comes in. The TC company is designed to support all those millions of Joomla! users. The main way it does this? By helping businesses effectively use Joomla! and its open source technology.

"It all revolves around open source," said Gary Clark, co-founder of the dynamic CloudAccess.

What is open source? Software or technology in which the source code (computer programming language) and other rights normally reserved for copyright holders can be shared, studied, changed and improved upon by all users.

Clark sees the "game" of the open source world as a battle of intellects.

"That's what open source is about: getting better," he said. "Joomla! is not locked code, it's open code."

And thanks to CloudAccess, Joomla! help is readily available at a level any end user can manage. Cloud Access offers Joomla! tools, training, templates, services, video demos and support to bridge any gap of technological sophistication and website development experience.

Considering current (mid-February) estimates say there are 14.8 billion websites online, Joomla! is behind nearly three percent of those cornered, and Cloud Access is behind it – well, it's easy to see just how far the company is from Clark's basement beginnings as a professional services company. Self-taught with a hungry and facile intellect, Clark previously founded and ran an Internet Service Provider that grew to 4,000 customers.

"If people wanted a custom application built ... I would build an application for them," recalled Clark. "Then one of our biggest clients, a publishing company, came to our doorstep because they were having some troubles using Joomla!, and they trusted us with some bigger contracts."

Creating and supplementing the online tools at cloudaccess.net is a roster of employees based both in Traverse City and Poland. These company founders and employees boast in-depth experience with Joomla! in the realms of engineering, support, guidance, creative services and leadership.

“When people want Joomla! service work and want custom coding or applications, they might come to us because we have humans picking up the phone and coding,” said Clark. “Our data center is in Traverse City, and we’re working on building a bigger data center here right now – something the community should know. In Traverse City, we don’t really have a nice center where people can come in and put their machine on the Internet – that’s a big prob in Traverse City, not a tier 1 network.”

CloudAccess’ human capital is key to the company’s success. Clark and his five co-founders replicate the open source approach at their sites in Traverse City and Poland. That is how the company can build 22,000 accounts a month with a staff numbered in dozens instead of 300 or more people.

People still matter in a high-tech world and CloudAccess has the best, says Clark.

“I have a loyalty to someone that built the business with me. That loyalty is inside of me,” he said.

While steady growth has meant additional employees, the nearly zero turnover is a testament to the philosophy’s success. A click of a mouse brings employees an office or continent away into a Skype meeting. Project management software open to everyone provides instant updates.

Clark relishes the speed and flexibility of this instantaneous availability, believes that it juices the creativity and productivity of his “really good humans.”

“I’ve trained everyone to be like this, – agile,” he said. “It creates natural accountability.”

The cliché of “thinking out of the box” barely covers the philosophy of Clark and, by extension, Cloud Access. To him, the box is ready for reinvention every day – and not as a defining restraint but a platform from which to launch.

The 21st Century business model showcased by CloudAccess is about adapting and leading – being flexible – “If every day you wake up and think the same way about business, then you’re doing something wrong,” Clark says. “That’s what the Internet is about, building those systems and making them usable: catalytic systems.” BN