

The Bottom Line



Technology Solutions for Small and Mid-sized Companies

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Black | Line Focuses on the Bottom Line

Provided by Mark Thomson, *The Business Ledger*

Computers have evolved quite a bit since 1979 - and Jody Jankovsky can say that he's been with them every step of the way.

Jankovsky, managing partner and system analyst for Black | Line Consulting in Naperville, first began working with computers when he was 12 years old.

At that time there was no such thing as a PC and computers were mainly considered something for hobbyists. Windows was a thing of the future and men like Bill Gates and Steve Jobs were just beginning to develop their ideas and slug it out in Silicon Valley.

Jankovsky worked in his garage with his father and uncle in Aurora where they did contract work for local businesses. The first project he can remember was building a computer for a local dentist.

"The first computer we built was the size of a desk," he said. "The parts were mail order and you had to put it all together. I was hooked. I knew that computers were what I wanted to do."

He continued to work with his father and uncle throughout

his high school years until he decided to attend Illinois State University in Bloomington as a computer science major.

Jankovsky admits that a lot of the program was just review for him as he had already been working steadily with computers for five years. However, he decided to minor in account-

ing, which he said was difficult and would eventually prove extremely useful when trying to get his own company off the ground.

While in college he did some freelance consulting work for a few companies in the Chicago area. It was at this point that he would learn some of the most important lessons of his career.

In 1988, Jankovsky was contracted by a manufacturer to develop software that would track pennies. He accepted the job for a flat rate, but when the job was finished he kept providing "add-ons" at no cost.

"I learned about process then and I really lost my shirt on that deal," he said. "I did the math later and

figured out that I ended up working for about 25 cents an hour. The only benefit is that I learned that lesson when I wasn't even in the work force."

However, Jankovsky knew that his hard work would pay off and because of these early lessons he was able to avoid such mistakes later.

So with a solid amount of computer and business experience under his belt he was able to form his own company.

In 1993 Jankovsky started Advocate Consulting Group, what would later become Black | Line Consulting—the original name was too confusing for many potential customers in this market as they automatically associated it with the health care organization.

With an already built-in client base, he started as a one-man operation, pulling double duty of customer maintenance and trying to establish new business.

"The greatest challenge was going from being an engineer to growing a business," he said. "You have

"Naperville Consulting firm acts as CIO for smaller companies."

Continued Page 2.

BLC Director appointed to Chamber Committee Chair

Mel Sears, Black | Line Consulting's Director of Client Development, has been selected to Chair the Naperville Area Chamber of Commerce's Small Business Council for 2006.

The Small Business Council is intended to provide involvement opportunities, educational forums, recognition platforms and be a general advocate for the small business members of the Chamber. The SBC is one of the Chambers longest standing committees,



about twenty years, and has been very instrumental in creating programs for the benefit of small business.

Two of the most significant contributions from the SBC are the annual Small Business of the Year Awards and the Business Makeover. The Small Business of the Year Awards began in 1998 and continues to be a very coveted award for area small businesses.

The Business Makeover had its inaugural year in 2005 and was a huge success. A Chamber member company was selected and with the help of dozens of other Chamber Members received a business makeover. The second year of that program is about to kick off.

The Small Business Council meets the first Thursday of each month and is open to all Chamber members.

Acquisition Talk:

- "We [BLC] are trying to recruit these small groups," Jankovsky said. "They can bring their customers and continue to be an engineer. Maybe they are like me and think that they can do the job better. That's fine, but now I'm your competition."

Reminder:

BLC Educational Opportunities

BLC offers educational opportunities for clients to take advantage of. These courses are designed to educate and promote awareness of current information technology.

Topics include:

- Customer Relationship Management (CRM)
- Business Continuity - The Step Beyond Disaster Recovery
- RISK Seminar (Raising Internet Security Knowledge)

If you would like more information about these educational opportunities or about others please call Mel Sears, Director of Client Development at 630 388-1700.

Business Fact:

Mel Sears has been a member of the Naperville Area Chamber of Commerce for 2 years. Black | Line has been a member of the Naperville Area Chamber of Commerce since 2003.

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Tips & Techniques

Why am I not in Google?

Now more than ever, people are researching companies, services, and products online. Does your company have a good web presence? Are you showing up in major search engines? If not, you are not alone. Here are some tips to get better placement in major search engines including Google.

The most important thing is content. Search engines like Google, like a text heavy site. One of the few things they are capable of doing is reading text. This helps them determine the relevancy of your site. Search Engines cannot read Flash; this is not to say that you cannot have any flash on your site but be sure to include text. If you are going to have a image heavy site, make sure that all images have an ALT tag. You will check this by rolling over you images, an ALT tag will pop up if you are properly using them.

Link Popularity is also very important. It is a good practice to exchange links with sites that are relevant. For example, a consulting firm may want to exchange links with a local telecommunications company or a consulting firm based in another area. When linking to your site, use Key words, like "Chicago Computer Consulting Firm — Black | Line Consulting" instead of using only the company name; Google will see this as a terminology that you should be searchable by.

You can create an account with Google by visiting: <http://www.google.com/webmasters>. Here you can get other pointers on setting up a search engine friendly site.

Google Tricks — For use in the Google Search Engine:

1. [site:www.yourcompany.com](http://www.yourcompany.com) — This will show you what pages you have indexed in Google.
2. [link:www.yourcompany.com](http://www.yourcompany.com) — This will show what pages are linking to your site.
3. [info:www.yourcompany.com](http://www.yourcompany.com) — This will show all of the information Google has about your site.

Not listed at all, list yourself in major search engines.

- Google: <http://www.google.com/addurl>
- Yahoo: <http://submit.search.yahoo.com/free/request>
- MSN: <http://beta.search.msn.com/docs/submit.aspx>

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Inaugural Survey Given to BLC Clients; Answers helpful

In December 2005, Black | Line Consulting distributed it's first ever Client Satisfaction Survey. The BLC Client Development team is constantly striving to provide our clients with the highest level of support and services that is possible. To better understand our client's needs and perception of our services we developed a survey questionnaire.

We asked to be graded in five major categories: Consulting Services, Project Services, Support, Account Management and Accounting

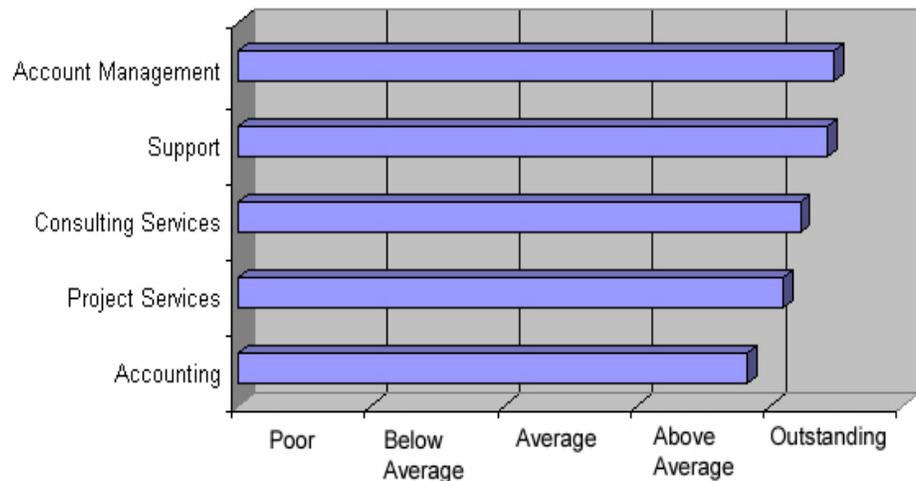
Each major category had specific areas to be graded and asked for a grade of 1-5, with a one(1) being poor and a five(5) being outstanding.

The category averages were:

Consulting Services	4.23
Project Services	4.1
Support	4.43
Account Mgmt	4.48
Accounting	3.83

A grade of 80 would be an average of 4's or an overall "above average" rating.

We are proud of the result and determined to use this information to improve client satisfaction.



Continued From Page 1: BLC has a very aggressive growth strategy for 2006

to be able to adapt. Half of new businesses fail within the first year."

Now the firm houses a team of 14 employees, including nine engineers and the first employee Jankovsky ever hired. It has branched out to include full-time customer service client development positions. It boasts a clientele of more than 100 businesses and is planning to add more on this year.

"We have a very aggressive growth strategy for 2006," he said. "We realize that technology is at its pinnacle. If you want to stay competitive you have to add technology. Now companies are reducing people cost and putting more of it into technology."

Black | Line aims to be a one-stop-shop for customers as well, offering networking, software and corporate services. The corporate service is called the "Small Business CIO," a program that allows Black | Line to meet with smaller companies that don't have the resources to compete with corporate companies and provide services that a typical full-time chief information officer would.

"What we do here is we plan for growth," said Jankovsky. "If they want to increase sales by 50 percent we figure out what they need to do strategically and set them up with the software that they will need. Most small to medium sized companies don't have a CIO." Jankovsky believes that

there is plenty of business in the suburban area and that he has an advantage over the majority of his competition.

Black | Line has more engineers available to customers than most smaller firms, he said.

And while he can sympathize with the small two-man crew that is driving all over the Chicago area to keep its customers happy, he would rather see them come and work for him.

"We are trying to recruit these small groups," he said. "They can bring their customers and continue to be an engineer. Maybe they are like me and think that they can do the job better. That's fine, but now I'm your competition."