

BUSINESS CONNECTIONS

Business success in rural Iowa is powered by partnerships



World Cal, Inc.



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BUSINESS CONNECTIONS

Rural Iowa is proving to be an excellent place to start, relocate or expand a business. It's now home to a growing number of enterprise businesses that are taking advantage of the strong communications services offered by Iowa's independent telephone companies. These services, made possible by the INS statewide fiber-optic network, enable businesses to stay connected from virtually anywhere—even the most remote rural areas.

On page 3 of this *Business Connections* issue, you'll learn more about the INS network and the tremendous investment we're making in Iowa's infrastructure. Then on pages 4 and 5, we spotlight a group of successful companies in Elk Horn that exemplify what's possible in rural Iowa: Liberty Labs; World Cal, Inc.; Liberty Auto Restoration; Danish Villages Energy and Iron Eagle Technologies.

Ripple Effect is a joint program of INS and Iowa Area Development Group that was created to strengthen rural Iowa through financial and technical assistance for business and community development. There's an overview of this program on page 7, including a list of recent projects that have benefited from Ripple Effect resources.

Regardless of where your business is located, reliable and cost-efficient communications services are essential. INS remains committed to help deliver what's needed today and tomorrow.

Sincerely,

Richard M. Vohs
INS President and CEO



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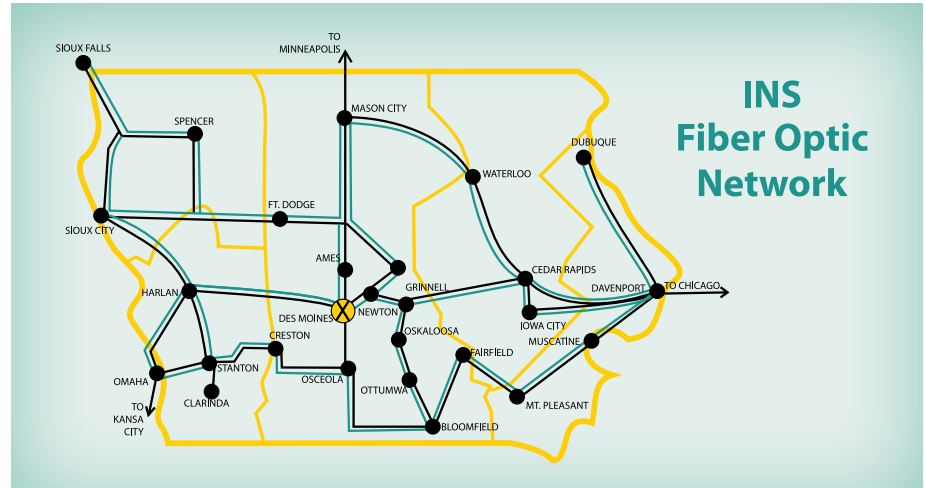
15 Facts You May Not Know About the INS Network

INS has invested millions in our statewide fiber-optic infrastructure

There's been much discussion about the broadband funding under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, and we want to explain our position on it. When using public funds, INS believes the baseline objective should be to provide the most good with the funds available. That includes applying the stimulus dollars to fund broadband projects only towards the small percentage of Iowa communities that have no or limited broadband access. Granting taxpayers' dollars to companies so they can compete in areas where broadband networks already exist will not provide the greatest good for Iowans.

To help clarify INS' commitment to, and investment in, Iowa's communications infrastructure, we've pulled together these 15 facts:

1. Over the past two decades, INS has invested millions of dollars of our own private funding to build and expand our statewide fiber-optic infrastructure, creating one of rural America's most ambitious broadband networks.
2. INS' average capital investment in our network is \$10 million per year.
3. Since 1989, INS and the local Independent Telephone Companies (ITCs) have laid more than 5,000 miles of fiber across Iowa.
4. From a dial-up network in 1993, INS transitioned seamlessly to broadband delivery to all of our customers—without applying for any government monies.
5. Since 1993, the INS network has supported access to Internet services to more than 330 rural Iowa communities.



6. INS designed the first Iowa telemedicine network in 1996.
7. INS, via our fiber network, was the first to provide a centralized Internet protocol television (IPTV) solution for telephone companies and municipalities to offer digital video to their customers.
8. In partnership with local ITCs, INS has provided connectivity, trained thousands of end users and installed new technologies as demand increased.
9. The INS network is an open network available to host any and all customers including healthcare, education, financial and community anchor institutions.
10. INS has not applied for any federal funding; our solid financials and extensive broadband network affords us the opportunity to forgo taxpayer dollars from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration.
11. In anticipation of demand, INS is upgrading to a 40Gbps (Gigabit per second) network and beyond, and we'll continue to do this with private funding because it makes sense for our business and for Iowa.
12. For five years, INS has used dense wave division multiplexing (DWDM) on our statewide fiber network. A DWDM-based network creates a lower-cost way to quickly respond to customers' bandwidth demands and protocol changes.
13. In conjunction with the ITCs, INS has 128 points of presence across the state with 10Gbps Ethernet.
14. INS dispels the myth about a "digital divide" in Iowa; we connect to all 150 Iowa telephone companies, all the wireless companies and national broadband networks.
15. 500,000 Iowans connected through INS enjoy the same or better level of Internet services than their urban neighbors.



Trevor Schroeter and Michael Howard



Michael Howard demonstrating antenna calibration

Rural Iowa is Fertile Ground for Growth

These Elk Horn enterprises are flourishing thanks to strong partnerships and infrastructure

It's a success story that began in 1987 in a Boy Scout tent in Michael Howard's backyard and led to a group of technology enterprises with international clients and ties to Mars. Howard is the President and CEO of Liberty Labs and World Cal, Inc., and also runs three other companies in rural Elk Horn, Iowa: Liberty Auto Restoration, Danish Villages Energy and Iron Eagle Technologies.

Simple Beginnings

"All of the companies grew out of Liberty Labs, which offers a full range of accredited antenna calibration services," explains Howard. "We started very simply, in a tent on my 40-acre farm, and then used an ice hut and chicken house before moving to our current facilities. The remote rural area was an asset, since the quiet environment makes the electromagnetic measurement easier. Today, Liberty Labs has the world's largest antenna range and more than 650 clients."

World Cal, Inc. was launched in 2000 and provides calibration of testing equipment. The two companies, Liberty Labs and World Cal, Inc., have become leaders in their industry; one of their most unique accomplishments was the calibration of antennas that are now circling Mars for the European Space Agency as part of the MARS Express Program.

In 2002, Howard started Liberty Auto Restoration. This company restores antique vehicles as well as provides servicing for regular vehicles and modification to electric ones.

Clean Technologies

Danish Villages Energy, begun in 2008, is a nonprofit company that seeks to promote economic development in rural areas through the installation of renewable energy products and education about cleaner, more efficient living. Danish Villages Energy focuses on bringing clean technologies to rural areas to improve

economic development and produce jobs, and also researches methods to create and develop sustainable business plans to allow high technology companies to be successful in rural areas.

Currently, Danish Villages Energy is working to create a renewable energy lab for the Elk Horn-Kimballton Community Schools to give students a hands-on experience and adults an education on doing energy audits at home. Other projects include the development of a community center/fire station with a green building design, and the creation of the Danish Villages Energy Academy—a learning center based on the Nordic Folk Center in Denmark.

Small Town, Big Advantages

Trevor Schroeter started Danish Villages Energy with Howard and serves as its President. Schroeter notes, "We live in the farming community of Elk Horn which has unusually and luckily begun to morph into a high tech hub. How? People here

are very progressive, and they're willing to jump on new ideas which will help the town not only sustain (which is difficult enough for a small town today) but actually grow."

Schroeter continues, "Elk Horn is a town of 650 people and we located successful companies here. The message to other small towns is that they can do it too. What it took was a strong spirit of entrepreneurship, a strong will to succeed and a strong partnership with Marne-Elk Horn Telephone Company. This combination helped turn our ventures into nationally recognized successes, and this town into a hotbed for technology."

Iron Eagle Technologies is the most recent addition to this group of companies. Howard says, "We started Iron Eagle Technologies in 2009 to tie together all of the companies' capabilities. It's primarily a design and consulting firm, and is dedicated to helping businesses and homes reduce paper usage and promote alternative energy production."



Electric car charging station—one of the many green projects supported by Iron Eagle



"Because of Marne-Elk Horn Telephone Company, Liberty Labs could be in a remote rural area, which provides a better testing environment, while still being connected to commercial-grade, high-speed Internet."

—MICHAEL HOWARD, PRESIDENT AND CEO OF LIBERTY LABS AND WORLD CAL, INC.

Lines of Communication

Both Howard and Schroeter credit Marne-Elk Horn Telephone Company with providing the infrastructure, services and support required for the companies to operate effectively. Howard says, "Because of Marne-Elk Horn Telephone Company, Liberty Labs could be in a remote rural area, which provides a better testing environment, while still being connected to commercial-grade, high-speed Internet. They installed fiber optics and brought a T-1 line out for us; this was absolutely key to our growth since bandwidth is critical for research and transferring data. The companies have been able to expand into international markets and now employ 35 people."

"The Iowa Area Development Group was instrumental in our success as well. We got input and direction from them as we launched new projects," adds Howard. The Iowa Area Development Group partnered with INS to form Ripple Effect, a program that provides financial and technical assistance programs for business and community development. (See page 7 for more details.)

Schroeter again stresses the contributions of the Elk Horn community, "There's a Danish 'can do' attitude among the residents here. For example, the whole town got behind the project to bring a windmill from Denmark to Elk Horn. You get a wonderful small-town feeling and everybody waves at everybody else."

Howard agrees, and emphasizes the tremendous potential of rural Iowa. "Businesses can take advantage of low taxes, a low cost of living and access to universities. Elk Horn is close to Interstate 80 and only an hour's drive to Omaha or Des Moines. You also have a greater chance of success here than in someplace like California, especially in areas like R&D and think tanks."

Michael Howard will be the keynote speaker at the annual conference of the Independent Alliances Telecom Group (INDATELgroup) in June—INDATEL Symposium Network. For more information, call INS at 800-469-4000 or visit www.IowaNetworkServices.com.

Protecting Against Data Loss

Choose the right backup method for your business

Data loss can occur for many reasons including hardware failure, human error, software malfunctions, natural disasters and computer viruses. How protected is your data? Depending on how integral the data was to your business, its loss can be devastating.

The first step to determining a good backup strategy is to identify where your data is located. Do you have accounting files on a server? Art assets on a workstation hard drive? Client files in your e-mail program? All of this data needs to be backed up. Next, plan a schedule. The longer between backups, the more time you'll spend rebuilding lost data. Finally, consider different backup methods.

Tape Libraries

Tape libraries offer relatively inexpensive storage after an initial investment. The tape library can be attached to your network and filled with tape media, and the tapes rotated on a set schedule. Tapes are also very easy to take offsite to a secure location, protecting your data against an onsite disaster. Although cost efficient, tape does have disadvantages. It can take longer to recover data from tape, and it's not the ideal solution for partial and very frequent backups.

Network Attached Storage (NAS)

Network attached storage connects to your network and backs up your data



using hard drives instead of tape. The advantages of a NAS are many, including faster access to backup data—lost data can be restored in minutes. If the drives are configured with redundancy in a RAID (redundant array of independent disks), your data is even more secure. The disadvantages of a NAS are largely based on how many users need to access the storage. Since the NAS is essentially a file server, it's limited by its hardware and how many users that hardware can handle.

Storage Area Network (SAN)

A storage area network is a standalone device on your network filled with hard drives. Unlike a NAS, a SAN is much more configurable, offers internal redundancy to protect against mechanical drive failure and gives the easiest access to your backup data. With a good backup method and a SAN, your data is very safe. This backup solution is more expensive than the others, but for businesses that need top-of-the-line backup, a SAN is the ideal choice.

Online Backup

Online backup is not an onsite backup; instead, by utilizing an online backup service, your data is stored in an offsite datacenter that protects it against an onsite disaster. However, Internet speed can greatly slow down the connection to your backup provider and affect the speed of both backups and restoration. Depending on the provider and the amount of data, online backup can also be expensive.

Review the options and find the best backup method for your business. Especially in this economy, lost data is something you simply can't afford.

For more details, contact Jason Lamping, Marketing Manager, at 888-387-5670 x7682 or lampingj@alliancetechnologies.net.



INS in the Community

Funded by INS, Ripple Effect Strengthens Rural Iowa



Strong partnerships make stronger communities. That's why Iowa Network Services (INS) and Iowa Area Development Group (IADG) came together for a common goal to strengthen rural Iowa. The resulting program is called Ripple Effect and provides a portfolio of financial and technical assistance programs. This alliance between INS and IADG is designed to advance the business and community development vitality of rural Iowa by partnering with Independent Telephone Companies in their economic development initiatives.

In addition to dollars, INS contributes leadership, vision and commitment to local communities through Ripple Effect to foster local development initiatives. Ripple Effect works with Iowa's Independent Telephone Companies to provide:

- Direct financial assistance through low-interest loans to emerging and expanding companies.
- Planning grants to communities and their economic development partners for various types of community development projects.
- Development of financial incentive packages for business development leads including loans and grants.
- Assistance with evaluating business and project plans of potential development partners and customers.
- Research of, and access to, other financial assistance sources.

- Preparation of USDA loan and grant applications.
- Education and training.
- Business marketing and outreach.

Funds are available for strategic planning, labor shed analysis, housing needs assessments and many other community planning initiatives. INS has committed \$1 million to this rural Iowa initiative,

and Independent Telephone Companies are required to match the financial assistance provided by Ripple Effect.

For more information about the Ripple Effect program, contact Susan Cosner, Vice President, Community Initiatives, Iowa Area Development Group at scosner@iadg.com or 515.223.4817, or visit www.insrippleeffect.com.



Recent Ripple Effect Projects

Ripple Effect makes available low-interest loans to business applicants and planning grants to Iowa communities and their economic development partners for various types of community development projects. Recent Ripple Effect projects include:

- Financing for a new grocery store for residents of Armstrong
- Planning for a youth sports complex in Jefferson and a community center in Stanton
- Assistance to insurance provider Delta Dental to help place dentists in rural communities without easy access to this type of health care
- Loan to help with the expansion of Country Maid, Inc. in West Bend
- Loan to Davis County Hospital for the purchase of magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) equipment

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