

SOLUTIONS

FOR BUSINESS



Iowa Trenchless is an Underground Overachiever



Small Businesses Have Big Impact **3**

Spotlight: Iowa Trenchless **4**

Who's Minding Your Business? **5**

Common Misconceptions About Internet Speeds **6**

Managing Your Online Reputation **7**



SOLUTIONS

FOR BUSINESS

PANORA TELCO

Main Office: (641) 755-2424
 Technical Support: (641) 755-TECH (8324)
 Request a Service Call: (641) 755-2424
 Request a Locate: (800) 292-8989
 Mailing: 114 East Main, P.O. Box 189
 Panora, IA 50216

GUTHRIE CENTER COMMUNICATIONS

Main Office: (641) 332-2000
 Technical Support: (641) 332-2225
 Request a Service Call: (641) 332-2000
 Request a Locate: (800) 292-8989
 Mailing: 403 State Street
 Guthrie Center, IA 50115

Solutions for Business is a publication of Panora Telco, 114 East Main, P.O. Box 189, Panora, IA 50216 and Guthrie Center Communications, 403 State Street, Guthrie Center, IA 50115.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, electronic, photocopying, recording, mechanical, or otherwise without the prior written permission of Panora Telco or Guthrie Center Communications. All rights are reserved.

Editorial and Circulation – Contact Courtney Redfern, 114 East Main St., PO Box 189, Panora, IA 50216, (641) 755-2424

Trademarks – All brand names and product names used in this publication are trade names, service marks, trademarks, or registered trademarks of their respective owners.

Additional Issues – Extra issues are available to business customers on a limited basis while supplies last. Contact Courtney Redfern, 114 East Main St., PO Box 189, Panora, IA 50216, (641) 755-2424

Copyright © 2017 by Panora Telco, Guthrie Center Communications, and Cornerstone Publishing Group, Inc.

POSTMASTER

Send changes to:
 Courtney Redfern, 114 East Main St.,
 PO Box 189, Panora, IA 50216



A whole lot happens underground and behind the scenes.

For example, Panora Telco has buried over 200 miles of fiber optics underground in our service area in order to bring you FiberFast Internet and other services. Behind the scenes, there are many IT specialists and technicians working to keep this fiber network running smoothly.

This issue of *Solutions for Business* features a **Business Spotlight on Iowa Trenchless**. This company located in Panora does underground installations using processes including auger boring, rock boring, pilot tube boring, microtunneling, pipe ramming, pipe jacking, and pipe bursting. Panora Telco provides several services to Iowa Trenchless, and you can read about their experiences on pages 4 and 5. Zach Davis, IT Specialist, worked on a security project for Iowa Trenchless and is the topic of the employee profile on page 5.

Check out page 3 for a reminder that **Small Businesses Have Big Impact**. You'll also find **Common Misconceptions About Internet Speeds** on page 6 and tips for **Managing Your Online Reputation** on page 7.

Panora Telco and Guthrie Center Communications will keep working underground and behind the scenes to provide cost-efficient solutions for your business. Contact us whenever you have questions or new technology to explore.



Sincerely,



Andrew M. Randol
 General Manager
 Panora Telco & Guthrie Center Communications





Small businesses employ over half of the U.S. private workforce and outnumber corporations by more than 1,000 to one. This sector is also responsible for creating 60 to 80 percent of new U.S. jobs.

The positive impact of small businesses doesn't stop there. They often sponsor youth sports teams, support area nonprofits, and contribute to the growth and vitality of local economies. Small businesses pay a share of taxes that would otherwise be shifted to homeowners and many provide leadership in such areas as environmentalism and ethics. In addition, they offer a special personal touch that is hard for larger companies to replicate.

Unfortunately, within five years of starting, about 50 percent of businesses fail. There are many reasons for this failure including poor budgeting, bad relations with customers or suppliers, and reluctance to seek assistance when needed. But some business failures are outside the control of business owners, and many of those who "fail" use the experience to learn and go on to succeed in other ventures.

Though much of the responsibility for the success of a business is on the owner and employees, consumers can do a lot to support the small businesses they believe in. In 2010, American Express launched an initiative to help individuals and companies do just that. Named Small Business Saturday, the initiative falls on the Saturday after Thanksgiving each year and encourages holiday shoppers to purchase from small and local businesses on this day. Participating in Small Business Saturday is one way to support small businesses; another is to remember to support them throughout the year.

If you work at a company that purchases products or services from small businesses, let others know when they do a great job. This can be done through word of mouth, by posting positive reviews on the company's website, or via Facebook, LinkedIn, or Yelp.

KEEP CUSTOMERS COMING BACK

Repeat customers are the foundation for success. According to the National Federation of Independent Business, most retailers should receive between 25-50 percent of their business from repeat customers. Service businesses (such as those offering landscaping or architectural design) need to have approximately 75 percent of their business from steady clients. How can you foster customer loyalty and increased patronage? Consider these tried-and-true incentives:

1. Set up a frequent business program that rewards customers for returning.
2. Offer extra services, such as free delivery or more liberal return policies, for repeat customers.
3. Invite repeat customers to shop for sale items a day before the sale is announced or run special sales events exclusively for repeat customers.
4. Most importantly, make sure your staff recognizes your company's repeat customers and works to make them feel special. When customers feel valued, they'll go out of their way to do business with you and recommend you to others.





Caption

Iowa Trenchless

In this industry, it's perfectly fine to be a boring company

Iowa Trenchless is a full-service boring and tunneling company located in Panora. Founded in 2002 by Jason and Shari Clark, the company offers services that include auger boring, rock boring, pilot tube boring, microtunneling, pipe ramming, pipe jacking, pipe bursting, railroad crossing, and bone bit design.

Both Jason and Shari Clark are Iowa State graduates, and Jason had experience in the trenchless world doing boring and tunneling. The couple wanted to settle in Iowa and own their own tunneling company, and they ended up in Panora.

A Variety of Underground Installations

During the last 15 years, Iowa Trenchless has tackled even the toughest underground installations. Jason Clark notes, “We do boring and tunneling from 16 inches in diameter to 15 feet in diameter under roads, levies, railroad tracks, parking lots, rivers, creeks, and lakes.”

Projects completed by Iowa Trenchless are varied. “We work for contractors, municipalities, states, railroads, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. And our projects range from pedestrian tunnels to the installation of gas and electric lines or drainage, sewer, and water pipes,” explains Clark. He adds, “We generally stick to a geographic area within an eight-hour drive of Panora. But there have been times we’ve worked on projects much farther away, such as in Washington, DC, Sacramento, Calif. — even in Canada.”

Growing Company, Growing Communications Needs

Iowa Trenchless has 20-30 field employees, depending on the time of year, in addition to an office staff of about six people. The company was the first business in the Panora Telco Business Park in 2004 and has continued to grow. It now owns more than 25 acres of land and four buildings with an approximate total square footage of 26,500. Clark says, “We just keep rolling and growing.”

Panora Telco helps this growing company and its owners stay connected with these communications solutions:

- Seven business phone lines;
- Two residential phone lines;
- FiberFast Internet (for Iowa Trenchless and the Clark’s home);
- SecureIT antivirus and internet security software; and
- 15 surveillance cameras installed by Panora Telco.

Those 15 surveillance cameras were added to the ones previously installed by another company. Panorama Telco wired Iowa Trenchless' four buildings for the new cameras and installed the cameras and the point-to-point radios for the internet connection. Panorama Telco's technicians also set up the NVRs (network video recorders) that store the recordings, did general finishing work, and provided instruction to Clark and members of his staff on the surveillance system.

Why did Iowa Trenchless decide to expand its number of surveillance cameras and use Panorama Telco for the installation? Clark replies, "There were several reasons why we chose to have more surveillance cameras installed in our buildings. First of all, the cost is coming down to have network cameras, so they're more affordable. We also wanted to increase our level of security and have video footage available to help protect us from liability."

Responsive Service from Panorama Telco

During the interview for this article, Clark mentions, "David Garland from Panorama Telco was just here in my office to answer some questions I had about surveillance cameras. I may add more cameras in the near future. It's great to have a local company to do business with. I'd say we have a 'small town' relationship with Panorama Telco. I try to do business locally whenever I can get a good deal and get a good job done."

Clark appreciates the responsive service he gets from Panorama Telco. "When we have trouble with one of our services, Panorama Telco comes right out to take care of it. If we want a change made, they do it quickly. Right now, they're speeding up our internet connections at both Iowa Trenchless and our home," he says.

With respect to the next few years, Clark shares this viewpoint: "I'm feeling optimistic about the future. The new administration has talked about a commitment to rebuilding our nation's infrastructure, which is good news when you're in the business of boring and tunneling."



It's great to have a local company to do business with. I'd say we have a 'small town' relationship with Panorama Telco."

— JASON CLARK, CO-FOUNDER AND OWNER,
IOWA TRENCHLESS



WHO'S MINDING YOUR BUSINESS?

Zach Davis
IT Specialist

Zach Davis joined the team of Panorama Telco and Guthrie Center Communications in June 2016 after graduating from Iowa State University with a degree in Management Information Systems.

As an IT Specialist, Davis has a mix of responsibilities. He notes, "A typical workday for me varies. I could be assisting in the installation of phone, internet, and television services in the morning, and then later be providing IT support for local businesses. I also help troubleshoot and resolve problems with customer equipment, both in the office and onsite at a customer location."

What does he enjoy most about his job? "I really enjoy the variety; no two days are ever the same. I also get to meet people in our community and help them when they're having trouble," Davis replies.

When not busy being an IT Specialist, Davis likes to spend time with family and friends, read, and work out.

Common Misconceptions About Internet Speeds

Here's the reality—your business needs more speed for more productivity



There are some common misconceptions about internet speeds, particularly among owners of small businesses. It's unfortunate, since inadequate internet speeds can slow down workflow and prevent a business from keeping pace with customer demands. Here's your reality check:

Misconception: The internet connection our business signed up for several years ago is fine. There's no reason to change things.

Reality: If you haven't given much thought to the speed of your internet connection since it was installed in the last decade, you're doing your business a huge disservice. As your business grows and technology evolves, your internet connection needs to change as well. After all, so much business activity is now done online, and data-intensive applications require faster data speeds. If you want to stay ahead of your competition, you need to be traveling as fast, or faster, than they are.

Misconception: Slow internet doesn't affect my productivity.

Reality: Think how often you use the internet each day and how much time you waste with a slow connection. In some cases, it could take several additional minutes to access key information from a vendor's catalog or upload large photo files. What's your time worth? And what's your employees' time worth?

Misconception: If I have faster internet speeds, my employees will just spend more time "surfing" instead of getting work done.

Reality: Many studies have shown efficiencies in the workplace are far more likely when the right tools are being used. In today's business environment, it's essential to have adequate internet speeds. If they're painfully slow, your staff is more likely to cut corners—not looking for additional vendor quotes, settling for less than complete research on competitors, or electing not to check emails as often—which can cost your business money. Having the right tools for the job also has a direct impact on retaining quality employees.

Misconception: My customers are not affected by my lack of adequate internet speeds.

Reality: Even if your customers never come in direct contact with your internet connection, it can have an impact on their experience with you. For example, if they have to wait for you to pull up information while they're on the phone or in your office, it can give the impression that your business is not as efficient or as professional as others. Today, everyone expects instant results and a sense of urgency is the norm.

To find out more about the high-speed internet solutions we offer, call Panora Telco at (641) 755-2424 or Guthrie Center Communications at (641) 332-2000.



Managing Your Online Reputation

What are people saying about your business online?

In business, bigger isn't necessarily better. There are advantages to being small, including the ability to provide service that's truly personal. As both businesses and customers move toward online interactions, this ability can be leveraged even further. As a small business owner or manager, you can easily monitor what customers are saying about you and use the information to provide better service. You can also use social media to foster strong connections that lead to more sales.

On the down side, any negative information appearing online can be harmful to your reputation. Fortunately, there are steps you can take to find out what people are saying about you, and to repair any damaging remarks.

Monitor

First, monitor the internet for potentially unflattering information about your company. Use online tools to monitor social media sites, especially Twitter and Facebook. For example, you can receive emails when keywords you choose show up on Twitter, or when someone posts a comment on your Facebook page. Also, set up a Google alert for your business name and any product brand names; Google will send you email messages that show your online mentions.

React

If you find negative information posted on another website, ask the owner of the site to remove it. If they refuse, don't waste time trying to force the issue. Instead, create more positive information about

yourself in order to push the negative comments down in search rankings, so it's less likely to be seen. Positive content can be added in the form of new pages on your website, press releases, articles, and posts on other sites. You can also ensure higher search rankings by using search engine optimization (SEO) techniques.

Respond

Within social media sites and other places you can comment (such as blogs), respond to negative comments as soon as possible after they appear. Resist the temptation to reply with anger when someone criticizes your company. Keep the interests of your customers in mind and determine whether a public or private response is more appropriate.

Respond to positive mentions as well. Thank people who compliment your company, and engage them further by asking for an opinion, or letting them know about new product offerings.

Whether positive or negative, look for patterns in customer comments and use them to guide the future direction of your business.

Participate

Actively participate in social media to establish relationships and a reputation as an expert in your field. Posting valuable information, deals, images, or even just entertainment brings you closer to your customers. Remember that strong relationships on social media sites make negative information less likely to be believed.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO GO IT ALONE

As a small business owner, you fill a number of roles including IT Manager. But, you don't have to do it all. Let us evaluate your business. We'll help provide solutions to help you address:

Inadequate Data Security



Cyber threats are real. According to the National Cybersecurity Alliance, 60 percent of small businesses that fall victim to a cyberattack close their doors six months later

Inefficiencies impact your bottom line. Businesses lose 20 to 30 percent of revenue each year due to inefficiencies



Inefficient Workflows

Limited Staff Education



Human error causes breaches. 37 percent of security breaches are caused by human error, which could be prevented with proper training

Call (641) 755-2600 to schedule your FREE evaluation.