

Mag-Net Celebrates Ten Year Anniversary

By Pamela Liu, as published in *Innovate!* Volume 1 Issue 3, July 2005

This year marks the tenth anniversary of Prince George based Mag-Net, which became one of the first local Internet Service Providers (ISP) in 1995. Over the past ten years, Mag-Net has evolved to offer a full range of technical services, including computer repair and support services, network installation and maintenance, web development and hosting, and Internet security.

Although the company was incorporated in June 1995, Mag-Net's roots go back much further to the MagNet Bulletin Board System (BBS) started by Jim Rempel in 1986. The BBS had a dedicated community that used the Internet before most people knew what the Internet was. At the time, Jim was working in the automotive industry and ran the BBS as a hobby.

Jim made the leap to the hi-tech industry full-time when he started the ISP in 1995 with business partner Rob Nelson. The business operated out of Jim's basement, providing dial-up service with only 8 phone lines. Early customers will remember Buster, Jim's cat, who enjoyed napping on the terminal server.

"I had customers signing up in my kitchen," Jim reminisces. "Then I would go out to their homes in the evening to set up the Internet on their computers."

Business was slow at first. It took seven months to reach its 100th customer. Mag-Net soon expanded to serve 400 customers after the first year, requiring an increase in the number of phone lines to 14. After two years, Mag-Net purchased a T1 connection (a big deal back then) and increased its capacity to 46 phone lines.

With such rapid expansion and several new employees, the company outgrew Jim's basement and relocated to the Computime building on 2nd Avenue in the fall of 1998. Mag-Net served over 4000 dial-up customers at its peak.

As high-speed Internet became increasingly popular and attracted customers away from dial-up access, Mag-Net entered a challenging period in the company's history. At the same time as the dial-up customer base was shrinking, however, Mag-Net was serving more and more business clients to meet their demands for reliable computer services. Mag-Net transitioned from an ISP to a service-based business with a focus on computer networking.

"We're a different company than when we started," Rob reflects. "We restructured the company several times to respond to our customers and the economy. But in our current incarnation, we see great potential for growth."

Although Mag-Net's focus has evolved, its commitment to excellence in customer service and technical expertise remains constant. Today, the growing company successfully serves its customers in Prince George and surrounding areas from its present location on Vancouver and 6th Avenue. Mag-Net technicians are in high demand, maintaining office networks for small businesses and larger corporations with multiple locations. Advanced technology allows the technicians to service networks at a distance through remote administration, reducing travel costs and increasing efficiency. Mag-Net's expanded services also include web development and its latest endeavour, Max Website Management System.

"Running this business has been a great education," says Jim. "It has been both challenging and rewarding to take on the different roles of technician and manager."

Mag-Net thanks its customers, staff, and friends past and present -for contributing to its success over the years. Mag-Net plans to be a part of the Prince George community for many years to come. Find out more about Mag-Net and its services at www.mag-net.com and www.poweredbymax.com