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**PROFILE: Indesign LLC**

**Engineers designed firm after losing corporate jobs Ownership stake gave workers even more motivation to succeed**

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Eleven years ago, AT&T/Lucent Bell Laboratories announced it was closing its wired consumer product design division in Indianapolis and consolidating operations in New Jersey. That left about 90 employees here with a choice: Move or find another job.

Most went or joined other companies. But 34 decided to stick together and start their own business here—Indesign LLC. Today, the high-tech electronic design and development company near Fort Benjamin Harrison is a \$6 million-a-year business with 53 employees and clients that span the country.

"None of us had any experience starting a business," CEO Jerry Gotway said. "But we believed we could do it. That's what made it possible."

Indesign helps other businesses create products—everything from Internet telephones to medical devices. Some clients come in with high-level concepts, as San Antonio-based LIFETECHniques did with the "smart" pillbox that connects to the Internet so doctors can monitor whether a patient is taking his medicine. Indesign did all the design, from the circuit board to the plastic parts, Gotway said.



Jim Chen, left, and Jim McIntyre work on a project at Indesign, which helps clients develop electronic products.

Other companies bring detailed specifications and have Indesign work with their in-house engineers. Indesign worked with Microsoft, for example, to develop RoundTable, a videoconferencing phone with a built-in 360-degree camera. The Indianapolis firm did some of the electrical and software design, and also helped get the manufacturing process started.

Working with an Illinois company called Lares Technology, Indesign created a printed circuit board for Lares' electronic home-detection monitor.

"We couldn't be more pleased with the work they did," Lares President Kevin Hartman said. "They had some innovative ideas that complemented what we had done and worked with us very well."



Gotway

Gotway said getting to this point in Indesign's history required driven, devoted employees who checked their egos and opened their wallets. To finance the startup, the 34 founders kicked in \$4,000 to \$25,000 each and became part owners.

Even today, new employees are given the opportunity to buy a share of the company's future profits. Most do.

"I think that's a lot of what's fueled their success," said Tom Stahl, who worked at Lucent Bell Labs with Indesign's founders and now is an electrical engineer for Thomson Inc. in Carmel. "People were looking at it like, 'I'm a part owner and I'm going to make this succeed.' I think it's impressive what they've done."

Early on, Indesign's employees also learned to diversify. While everyone had experience developing consumer telephones as well as answering, security and video systems, "that amount of expertise wasn't broad enough to make us the kind of company we wanted to be," Gotway said. They set a goal to broaden into the medical, military and wireless fields.

Gotway recommends diversifying as a matter of course for small businesses. With clients in several sectors, there's less risk they'll suffer downturns at the same time.

Indesign typically finds its clients through Web-based marketing and word-of-mouth referrals. Referrals go a long way in an industry where employees tend to jump from company to company.

Not at Indesign, though. Eleven years in, 22 of the 34 founders are still there, solidifying the company's foundation.

"My advice to other entrepreneurs," Gotway said, "is to pull together a team of really good people. If you have people with good skills, passion for the business and a lot of energy, then you can accomplish what you set out to do. That's what made us successful." •

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**Founded:** Nov. 27, 1996  
**Founders:** 34 former AT&T/Lucent Bell Laboratories employees  
**Owners:** employee-owned  
**Product:** electronic product design and development  
**Employees:** 53  
**Revenue (2006):** \$6 million  
**One-year goal:** Get revenue to \$7 million  
**Industry outlook:** Positive as clients focus on their core expertise.

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