

2009 a Swinging Success, 2010 Stepping Up to the Plate

Perspective from the Top



As we close out another good year, I'd like to begin by thanking all of you at The Epitec Group for your hard work, dedication and more importantly, for never giving up.

Last year around this time, I stated growth was our main objective for 2009, and to accomplish that we were going to have to expand our client base; increase our business with current clients; and remain within the top three supplier ranking for each of our clients.

I'm happy to report we made progress in all three areas. Our client base expanded in 2009 to include seven new clients: AT&T; Health Choice Network; Huntington Bank; Team Detroit; Total Health Care; Valassis; and Washtenaw County Road Commission. We've also increased our consultant headcount by 22 percent and remained a top three supplier, according to the performance ranking from our clients.

We also take pride in being named one of Southeast Michigan's "101 Best and Brightest Companies to Work For" by the Michigan Business & Professional Association for the second year in a row, as well as the 2009 Minority Business Supplier of the Year from the Michigan Minority Business Development Council (MMBDC).

Also, we recognized the challenge one of our clients, Ford Motor Company, was facing and



reinstated our Epitec Client Alliance Program **ecap** to help them. Epitec employees who purchased or leased a new Ford vehicle during the first three months of 2009 received a \$600 tax-free reimbursement credit. This program was an excellent example of our commitment to our customers, our employees and the region.

All-in-all, 2009 was a success.

As we move into 2010, the reality is our clients will continue to see tough times. Budget cuts have decreased our clients' staffs and increased their workload, which means they need us more than ever. Technology will help them fill the gap between their current resources and what they need to accomplish, and we've got the talent and skill to provide them with the necessary tools to make their jobs easier.

That being said, we must continue to deliver top-notch service and outperform our competition at client sites. As the staffing industry grows, we must bring more value than our competitors, as well as provide more opportunities to our consultants – just because there is work for staffing companies, doesn't mean our current positions with clients are guaranteed.

Our efforts and successes in 2009 have positioned us for substantial growth in 2010. We have great opportunities to bring new ideas and technologies to companies, potentially changing the landscape of how business is done. In order to continue to meet our goals and objectives, we must live and breathe our mission and vision:

Our Mission: To be a valued resource to our customers. To build a company that will last by being a healthy and profitable organization that continues to grow and is committed to enhancing shareholder equity.

Our Vision: To be a premier information technology organization that people want to work for and companies want to do business with. A company that is employee-focused, customer-driven and process-oriented.

I know if we continue to push ourselves, we'll rise to all challenges we face. I am so proud and thankful to be a part of the Epitec team. Thank you again for never giving up in 2009. I truly look forward to 2010 and all we'll accomplish as a team.

RedPlum Ripe for Savings

People are always looking for ways to save money, and the newest member of the Epitec client list helps people do just that.

RedPlum, the consumer brand of Michigan-based Valassis, provides companies a single vehicle for marketing their goods and services in a variety of ways. Reaching more than 100 million households, RedPlum utilizes weekly direct mailings, door hangers, e-marketing and several other marketing opportunities.



The Redplum.com Web site provides an opportunity for consumers to save up to \$1,000 a year through the largest collection of printable coupons, special offers and deals to local grocery stores, household retailers and restaurants. It offers everything from expert advice and shopping tips to weekly editorials and Web coupon codes.

Another RedPlum feature that helps families is Valassis' partnership with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC). RedPlum's services are used to deliver information about missing children to households across the country. The partnership has helped to safely recover many children, in fact 87 percent of the leads NCMEC receive are directly attributed to RedPlum products.

Valassis is one of the nation's leading media and marketing services companies, offering unparalleled reach and scale to more than 15,000 advertisers for 40 years.

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Microsoft Office 2010: Portable and Efficient

Whether working from a hotel, home, or on a mobile phone, Microsoft's newest version of Office, set for release in the first half of 2010, offers new tools designed to increase portability and efficiency. Changes made to the most popular programs in the suite: Word, PowerPoint and Excel, will make documents easier to view, edit and create.

Put in a good Word

Microsoft Word 2010 is all about efficiency. Gone are the days of adding a photo that displaces everything in the document. With the new Paste Preview function, users can preview changes before pasting information to avoid unwanted changes. An updated spell-checker corrects errors when a word is correctly spelled but is in the wrong tense. Microsoft also has increased Word's visual effects. WordArt is no longer the only tool for creative design, but Word 2010 allows changes in color, gradient and reflection of any word, seamlessly blending text and images.

Excel at everything



While previous versions of Excel offered a variety of charts and graphs, the new version will introduce a feature called Sparklines, which makes it easier to spot important data trends by creating a small chart in a single cell, providing a unique micro-view of changes.

Advanced users will appreciate the new Slicer feature. This tool is a rich visualization of the PivotTable view, which displays information more efficiently by segmenting and filtering data across large documents. It provides the power to display data exactly how the viewer should see it.

PowerPivot, a new add-in, will give users the ability to create

reports from multiple data sets, including company databases and other spreadsheets. This function can compare important information from various sources for analysis and display. The reports can be kept up-to-date by using the refresh feature, which pulls the most recent information from the data sources and changes the report to reflect current information. When coupled with Microsoft SharePoint and SQL Servers, this new feature also will help IT departments maintain control of data sources, while still giving access to information for viewing and manipulation.

User Power is the Point

The 2010 version of PowerPoint has increased the power of presentations by adding new slide transitions and animation, as well as creative tools to increase functionality. Now there is a feature that will eliminate time spent using expensive video editing software. Users can add pizzazz to their presentations, by simply cutting, captioning and inserting effects from within the PowerPoint application.

PowerPoint 2010 also will convert a presentation into video format, and allow voice narration to be added. There's no reason to be concerned about e-mailing a large file with all these new options, the 2010 version provides the option to send the presentation as a URL, allowing recipients to view it from the Web.

A new Outlook on organization

Outlook 2010 has been updated to resemble the rest of the Office applications, with the newer tabbed system instead of long drop down menus. It also will allow users to create Quick Steps for processes they use on a regular basis, eliminating time spent fishing through the tabs for tools.

In addition, there is a substantial difference in e-mail organization with Conversation View. Email threads can be simplified by using Outlook's "clean up" feature, which removes duplicated information. Users may then choose to ignore future messages, file it in a folder or categorize it for future review.

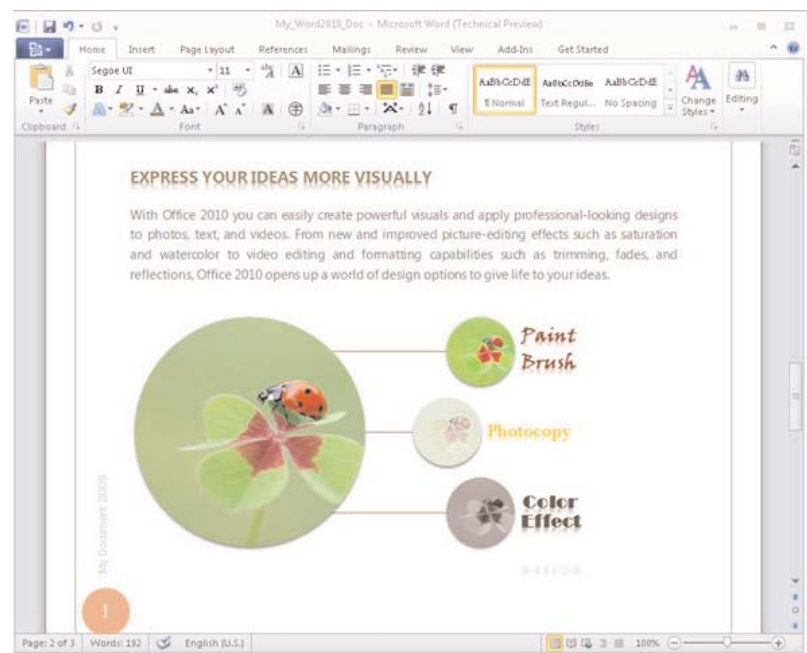
Companies using the new Microsoft Exchange Server will have a few advanced options. Users will be able to receive voice mail and faxes in their inbox, and can choose to receive MailTips that provide pop-up alerts for common e-mail mistakes. MailTips helps eliminate e-mails sent to people who are out of the office, or replies sent to a distribution list instead of a single person. Those who have access to Office Communicator will be able to see contacts availability in their buddy list, and initiate live conversations from inside Outlook.

Working as a team

While all these new features add functionality and efficiency for each program, Office 2010's total package makes working as a team less of a chore. In the past, users would have to work in separate spreadsheets, documents and presentations, and merge the final pieces together. The new Office 2010 is capable of having co-authors collaborating on the same document, all without fear of overlap. Highlighted paragraphs and name boxes show where others are working, helping to avoid crossover. PowerPoint presentations can even be divided into sections assigned to specific authors. And when integrated with Office Communicator, users will be able to chat about changes and challenges without ever exiting the window.

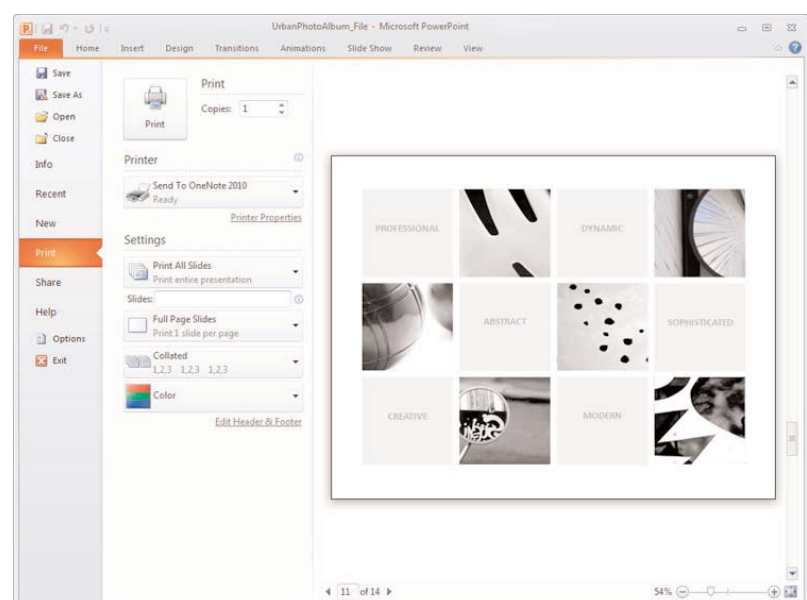
Your inner artist

In Office 2010, Word, PowerPoint and Outlook are equipped with an increased number of SmartArt options. Instead of standard bullet-point text, creative, eye-catching outlines and charts can be created to better illustrate ideas.



Not only will users be able to craft creative presentations and proposals with SmartArt, but they also will be able to utilize picture-editing tools in Word and PowerPoint to give the perfect image. The most common changes, including brightness and color saturation can all be done without leaving the program.

Go Backstage



Backstage View, a more detailed File Menu, lets users save, open, e-mail and protect files easier. This view is used to save in a particular format, share across the Web, or e-mail to coworkers.

Take it on the go

The Internet has changed the way the world does business, and with these updates, Microsoft Office 2010 is striving to do the same. Office 2010's new browser-based version will provide portability to do business everywhere. In an effort to compete with other free software, such as OpenOffice, Microsoft will offer an online version with the same look and feel as the offline version. Documents can be opened from e-mail and changes can be made from any computer connected to the Internet through Internet Explorer, Firefox or Safari. Even though only the most basic features are offered, there is no longer a need to wait to return to the office to view and edit Office documents.

From graphic and video editing in Word and PowerPoint, to advanced data processing, and organization in Excel and Outlook, Microsoft Office 2010 offers the tools needed to collaborate efficiently from anywhere.

Industry Insight

Ruthanne Largent, Assistant Vice President of Technology at MGM Grand Detroit



Ruthanne Largent is the Assistant Vice President of Technology at MGM Grand Detroit. She has 27 years of information systems experience, specializing in leading the design, deployment and operations of business technology in the industries of manufacturing, gaming, software development, retail, hotel, and food and beverage.

Prior to joining MGM Grand Detroit, Largent was Director of Operations and Network Services for Borders Group Inc.; Director of Information Technology at Mechanical Dynamics, Inc.; and Director of Information Technology at MSC Software. She has a Bachelor's degree in Computer Science from the University of Michigan, Dearborn.

Q: Given Michigan's economic climate, where do you see technology jobs fitting in? Is there room for growth amid these circumstances?

A: Michigan is fairly well suited for growth. We have an ample supply of low-cost housing and office space. We still have world class universities and hospitals. And with our water, natural beauty and access to Canada, I am confident Michigan can make a comeback, although I suspect it'll be a long, slow crawl to return.

There can be no doubt technology will play a role, but not in the traditional sense of automating processes for big manufacturers, banks, health care or the like. I suspect the future of Michigan and technology lies with entrepreneurs that find a niche market or niche application, get a toehold, hire a few people and go from there.

Q: What significant changes have you seen in Southeast Michigan's technology economy over the last 15 years?

A: The introduction and acceptance of the Internet has been the biggest factor impacting all aspects of business and industry in the past 15 years.

The resulting integration and application development has provided huge advancements in productivity, which resulted in some headcount reduction but also new businesses in new sectors.

Overall, technology application and design are now being driven by individuals or small associations instead of large companies that participate on technology standards boards. The pace of development also has changed due to improved tools, open standards and the need to gain value from business affecting technology.

Now that technology isn't just used to help run the business – in many cases the business can't run without technology – application and development of new solutions has increased in priority. The IT departments are now at the table with the other executives, determining how to run the business.

Q: Where do you think Southeast Michigan's technology economy is heading in the next 15 years?

A: I believe the future lies in smaller companies, driven by entrepreneurs who see value in Michigan. Value may be defined by family, resources, cost of living or others.

Creating a climate of entrepreneurship has to be done at the state and local level. A sense of appreciation and acceptance for entrepreneurs: low taxes, easy access to capital, a higher learning curriculum that understands the value and fosters it.

My husband is a lifelong small business owner and he constantly reminds me that technology start-ups can be established anywhere. That means they can come here, but we have to send the message we want them.

Q: What new technologies coming down the pipeline in the next 5 to 10 years will improve or revolutionize the way we do business today?

A: I certainly won't understate the importance of technology, but I think the revolution will come from smart, motivated, entrepreneurial people finding new ways to use existing technology and then improving upon that. Many industries and social challenges are just now beginning to look at how technology can impact challenges.

Other areas that beg for improvement are supply chain management, food and product safety, homeland security, compliance with government regulation, energy, and the environment. All of these areas offer opportunities to incorporate more or better technology. It's people that understand the challenge and the technology that will drive the change.

The other day I was reviewing the Peter Drucker book "Managing Change." This book is 14-years-old. It was written before most people had ever heard of the Internet. In it, he speaks of the "knowledge economy" and the need for a new educational paradigm. Even then there was an understanding that education can no longer be K-12, then college and maybe an advanced degree. It's a lifelong experience where you're constantly seeking to learn new things about your industry and the world around you.

Again, individuals with a solid world view, a deep understanding of the challenges and insights in technology will be the ones driving the 'change' bus.

Q: What obstacles do you anticipate IT professionals in Southeast Michigan will face in the near future, and what suggestions do you offer to overcome these obstacles?

A: Many of us got caught up in a single industry focus, whether it was automotive, health care, education or others. As a result, when the crunch hit, many IT professionals were caught with a narrow range of skills and limited contacts outside their immediate space. In addition, the fact that many IT professionals believed they were part of the new knowledge economy and thus protected from today's joblessness realities, has really handicapped some folks.

I think facing this reality, knowing that you need to not only retool your skill sets, but constantly improve them, and stepping outside your comfort zone to seek new challenges and opportunities is the new norm.

For some that may be hard to face and overcome.

But technology is here to stay and those that work hard, maintain their networks and stay current will always be in demand.

Epitec Gives Holiday Cheer

The holidays are the perfect time to reach out to those in need, and this past holiday season, Epitec was proud to spread some holiday cheer.

Epitec's corporate staff adopted 18 young women from the Vista Maria Home for Girls, a residential home that helps girls ages 11-17 with treatment for mental health, substance abuse and other psychosocial issues transition into a productive and healthy adulthood. Our donation provided everything on the girls' wish lists.

Epitec also sponsored a holiday party on Dec. 17 to support Boys Hope Girls Hope, a nonprofit organization helping young scholars meet their full potential by providing them with value-centered homes and educational opportunities.

Epitec matched the almost \$2,200 raised by our field and administrative teams to purchase gift certificates to a local mall for all of the students.

We also repaired the second story of the Boys Hope Girls Hope house.

Thank you to everyone who gave to our charities this holiday season.

before & after

before & after

before & after



Epitec Receives Top Honors



For the second year in a row, Epitec has been recognized as one of Southeast Michigan's "101 Best and Brightest Companies to Work For" by the Michigan Business & Professional Association, a business trade organization representing over 20,000 businesses. The award honors companies that recognize employees as their greatest asset, and is based on survey responses from employees, selected at random, about their work environment.

Epitec also was named a 2009 minority business Supplier of the Year from the Michigan Minority Business Development Council (MMBDC), a non-profit corporate services organization creating growth opportunities for Michigan minority businesses. This award recognizes companies' successes in the areas of growth and development, operational performance, direct spending with other minority-owned businesses and community involvement.

In addition to these awards, Epitec was recognized by *Crain's Detroit Business* as one of the 2009 Largest Staffing-Service Companies in Southeast Michigan based on 2007 revenue.

Thank you for your continued dedication to excellent service this year – it sure paid off!

Please send any questions or comments to support@epitecgroup.com. Your input may become a topic in future issues of *Epitalk*.

Consultant



Jake Covert

STATS

Title: Senior License Administrator

Hire Date: January 2005

Responsibilities: Jake is responsible for architecture, operations and maintenance of more than 25 servers and 250 vendor daemons as a member of Ford Motor Company's Central License System (CLS).

Successes: He was invited to speak at the SoftSummit® licensing conference on behalf of Ford Motor Company.

Education: Advanced Electrical Engineering Study received from the United States Army.

iSpot Exclusive: Jake is vice president of his local Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) and enjoys taking karate with his son.

Corporate Employee



Whitney Laba

STATS

Title: IT Specialist (Network Nerd)

Hire Date: May 2009

Responsibilities: Whitney maintains the Epittec corporate network through server and network device administration, and computer and printer support.

Why she chose this field: CIT is challenging and keeps you on your toes. You are constantly learning, so your skills don't become obsolete like technologies.

Education: Associate's degree in Internet and LAN security from Baker College

iSpot Exclusive: Whitney was a Baker College "Outstanding Graduate" and was the student speaker for her 2008 commencement ceremony.



(L-R) John Swyt, Kumar Pothapu, Shan Kumar, Shashank Muddam (Epittec), Chad Dattilio, Tony Martin, Dani Aoude, Eugene Furman, David Foy, Sylvia Sesostris, Charlotte Wright, Mustali Antaria, Kurt Gregg, Kathy Morris, Chris Baker (Epittec), Damon Davis, Lisa Serra, Roger Beaty, John Shuell

The Epittec Group, led by Roger Beaty, is working with Team Detroit on digital development for several of its clients. Team Detroit is a combination of five advertising agencies including: JWT; Y&R; Wunderman; Ogilvy; and Mindshare.

The team's primary role is to provide Web site maintenance and updates for Fordvehicles.com, Lincoln.com and Mercuryvehicles.com. One of the initial projects was converting Fordvehicles.com from a Windows-based site to a more convenient Java format through FreeMarker Templates. The team hopes to have the other two sites converted by the end of 2010.

In addition to the conversion, the team designs ways to display vehicle information in a dynamic and practical manner, utilizing a variety of Integrated Development Environments (IDEs), to offer unique video, image and text Web 2.0 user experiences.

Another project the team is working on is called Tier 2, which is an information manager for Ford's Quick Lane® Tire and Auto Centers. Tier 2 manages customer information related to sending coupons, offers and oil change reminders. The team maintains the program, and builds the HTML templates and designs for the customer e-mails.

With each project, the Epittec team develops simple programming to implement the quick changes requested by Team Detroit.

Milestones

October

- Sharat Babu Mandava (3 years)
- Edward Kisela (3 years)
- Arslan Shaikh (9 years)
- Chung-Jian Huang (10 years)
- Diane Madigan (12 years)
- Jeffrey Bonarek (14 years)

November

- Baskar Govindasamy (3 years)
- Sreedevi Kanikanti (3 years)
- Yolanda Jones (3 years)
- Otis Glenn (4 years)
- Srinivas Bodhanampati (5 years)
- Russell Carlson (5 years)
- Brad Brucker (8 years)
- David Kirunchyk (10 years)
- Michael Gardiner (11 years)
- Mark Ruma (12 years)
- Kathy Muntz (15 years)
- Daniel Wiest (16 years)

December

- Candace Boerner (3 years)
- Vathsala BalaseeniAyyilau (4 years)
- Tariq Naseem (9 years)
- Rickey Gibson (17 years)

January

- Nan Zhang (3 years)
- Venkat Kadali (4 years)
- Jennifer Gentry Saulski (4 years)
- Jake Covert (4 years)
- GT Madavan (9 years)
- Noordin Amlani (10 years)
- Fred Gordon (19 years)



From Start To Finish, We're There For You.

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