

In tough times, technology can help with saving money

By **GENE STOWE**
Tribune Correspondent

Businesses seeking to save money in tough economic times are turning more and more to technology – and to making sure they're getting the best price for the services, says Bryan Baker of Com Control Inc.

Baker is seeing his business surge on two fronts – increased interest in the telephone bill auditing service his company provides and increased interest in a developing regional fiber hub based out of South Bend that links now free-standing operations across the Midwest.

The auditing service mirrors a similar spike during dot-com bust of six or seven years ago.

"We incorporated in 2000. Fortunately that was the time the tech bubble burst and businesses were looking for ways to save money," Baker says. "The telephone bills are incorrect, sometimes drastically. When things are tough, everyone looks at the bottom line. We're doing the same thing now, but with more volume experience and automation."

The results of these audits can produce both tangible and intangible savings, such as centralizing databases, servers and perhaps saving on labor costs.

In the earlier bubble, around 2000 and 2001, "companies weren't spend-



Tribune Photo/SHAYNA BRESLIN

Bryan Baker, president of Com Control, stands next to the company's logo at his business located in the Commerce Center in downtown South Bend.

Many businesses are seriously looking at the lower-cost markets like Michiana

and are pushing for more connectivity throughout the region, with South Bend and

says. "We are really seeing these efforts sprawling out from what we have started

the St. Joseph Valley Metronet (SJVM) at the hub.

For example, a project that Com Control did for Michigan City economic development leaders five years ago is materializing because of immediate business demands.

"In tight times, local corporations have a great amount of control in engaging economic development efforts to help them help themselves," Baker

right here."

The foundation for these next-generation "alternate access" connections are fiber-optic runs along the rail lines that pass through the region.

"We have fiber projects of this nature that are going to connect Chicago to South Bend, and on to Indy and Detroit," he says. "Recent activity will be connecting a half dozen companies from around the region to South Bend and SJVM to take advantage of the great service and prices available here through SJVM."

More than a dozen of the local network initiatives in process, in such places as Lafayette, Grand Rapids, Plymouth and Michigan City, are interested in integrating into this regional network.

"They typically operate as independent islands with limited to no interconnectivity," says Baker, envisioning a regional nerve system of connectivity that would boost economic development. "Even during tough times, things are still growing."

0540E101

TRIBUNE
BUSINESS WEEKLY

www.Southbendtribune.com/tbw
To Subscribe call (574) 235-6468