

## Contineo looks for growth at home

Spokane company provides bank audits, tech services

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**Contineo President Craig Sanders stands outside his office in Spokane, where the company is focusing more on providing technology to local companies.** [jesset@spokesman.com](mailto:jesset@spokesman.com)

Spokane-based Contineo has seen five straight years of growth, even in a down economy, because of smart marketing of its services to its largest group of customers – banks and financial institutions across most of the western United States.

So, when company President Craig Sanders looked for his next growth market, the choice he made was Spokane, the company's home base.

Launched in 2001, Contineo generates about 70 percent of its revenue – just below \$5 million – outside Spokane County. Most of that comes from performing compliance audits for banks that have to document to regulators they're conducting business according to code.

However, Sanders and his team of 14 want to boost the share they grab right in their backyard.

When the company first began operating under its initial name, Contineo Technologies, it provided technology services – from security systems to networking maintenance – for area customers. After a year or so, the second half of its business, working with banks, started kicking in.

As a result several members of Contineo's staff spend lots of time in and out of airports visiting clients in 20 states, including California, Colorado and Texas.

That growth, he said, was based on strong customer service and aggressive pricing.

Those bank audit and compliance jobs can pay from \$5,000 to \$30,000 per bank, depending on the size of institution.

As banks have fallen victim to recession stresses and federal regulator oversight, the company has no shortage of customers, Sanders said.

Along with the usual accounting and risk management regulation, banks now need help in developing disaster recovery plans, Sanders said. And in light of swine flu concerns, banks today are required to have a plan to remain open if a pandemic keeps most of its workers home.

"Now we need to get back to people we've done business with here, and let them know we're still here," Sanders said. He said he meets others who ask what Contineo does. When he tells them, "I usually hear them say we had no idea you were here in town."

Some prospective customers for tech services will be banks, while others will cover a range of other industries.

Health care providers, like banks, face an ongoing list of technology issues. In addition to internal security assessments, they typically need to establish they're managing a safe and secure data system. Providing that security or proving to regulators that it's fully in place, are services where Contineo expects to find new customers, Sanders said.

"There are plenty of customers (in the Spokane and North Idaho) area who need those services and we have the staff and the ability to provide them," he said. "So in that case, why get on an airplane to travel when we can do the same services here at home?"

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