

# THE INDIANAPOLIS STAR

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2010 ★ "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" II COR. 3:17 ★ 75 CENTS ★ CITY EDITION

## Small businesses saving at all costs

From used furniture to Web invoices, companies pinching costs to survive

By Dana Hunsinger

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As the co-owner of Cartridge World in Indianapolis, Dustin Horner is reaping the benefits of companies looking to cut costs in any way they can.

That includes having Horner's company refill their ink and toner cartridges instead of buying new.

"They are walking in and asking how we can save them money," said Horner, who is also director of operations for Cartridge World's Indiana region.

In this tight economy, small-business owners are finding they can save money in all sorts of ways, from buying used office furniture and computers to switching suppliers for cheaper deals to ditching printed materials in favor of online.

"They are trying to survive by reducing overhead by as much as they can without cutting into muscle," said Detlef Rathmann, chair of Indianapolis' SCORE, which provides counseling to small-business owners.

For Cartridge World, small businesses have become a major sector of its clientele in the down economy.

The Emeryville, Calif.-based company has done so well in the recession that it is expanding nationwide and locally. In August, a Brownsburg location opened. In September, a Fort Wayne store opened. The company plans to nearly double its Indianapolis locations from 8 to 14 within the next year or two.

"There is no doubt the recession has brought opportunity to us," Horner said. Cartridge World's same-store sales jumped by double digits in 2009 and are on pace to do the same this year.

That's thanks in part to customers such as Chris Quillen, general manager at Hubler Nissan, who saves about \$400 a month by having his ink cartridges refilled. He knows firsthand how buying new can



Dustin Horner, co-owner of Cartridge World at 7225 U.S. 31 South, readies an order for Hubler Nissan on the Far Southside. "There is no doubt the recession has brought opportunity to us," said Horner, who has seen business rise as companies save by refilling ink and toner cartridges.

MATT KRYGER / The Star

### HOW COMPANIES CAN SAVE MONEY

- » **Renegotiate leases.** Many landlords have space sitting vacant and are desperate to keep current tenants renting.
- » **Go paperless.** Whatever you can do online, do it. Saves printing costs and postage.
- » **Turn the lights out.** If possible, get a timer system.
- » **Buy used equipment** instead of new.
- » **Re-evaluate insurance** and policy costs.
- » **Recycle and reuse.**
- » **Start a blog.** It's free advertising.

Source: Star research

drain a budget.

"It kills me because I have to pay \$200 per cartridge," Quillen said, referring to a couple of cartridges he has that can't be refilled. "It's definitely worth it to save money when you can."

Other small-business owners agree times are tough. In fact, 73 percent say right now is not a good time to expand their business, according to an August survey by the National Federation of Independent Business. Of those, 66 percent cite

the weak economy as the main reason.

"They don't think the prospects of recovery are good anytime soon," said Bill Dunkelberg, the author of the report. "You aren't buying new equipment because you can't promise you will justify that. You stop spending when you are so uncertain."

What's hurt small businesses the worst is the length of the current economic downturn.

Typically, such downturns have lasted less than a year, and businesses have had the money to survive that length of time.

"Now we are looking at two years," Dunkelberg said. "Your financial resources are running thin. It's getting tough to survive."

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### Costs

» Businessman Aaron Martin is buying more supplies online.

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Aaron Martin is finding his own way to survive as the owner of On Your Dock Detailing, a boat cleaning company in Indianapolis. He has switched suppliers of cleaning products, primarily buying from online sources that he says give him better deals than local retail stores.

"This has allowed me to maintain the quality of products I use while still cutting costs," Martin said. Among other cost-saving methods: electronic invoicing by e-mailing PDFs rather than printing and mailing bills.

"A lot of these things have saved my business quite a bit of money, but at the same time I've found it has made us significantly more efficient," he said.

And whether it's about efficiency or just getting a good deal, small businesses are pulling out all the stops, including buying used office furniture and supplies to make ends meet.

"There's always been a huge demand for good used office furniture that goes up and down with the economy," said Wes Hawk, owner of Office Furniture Mart in Indianapolis.

Business owners are looking for everything from used cubicles and filing cabinets to gently used chairs and desks. The best part about used office furniture is that it doesn't typically become outdated like home furnishings might, Hawk said.

"It doesn't evaporate. It doesn't go out of style. It just hangs around," he said.

★ Call Star reporter Dana Hunsinger at (317) 444-6012.