

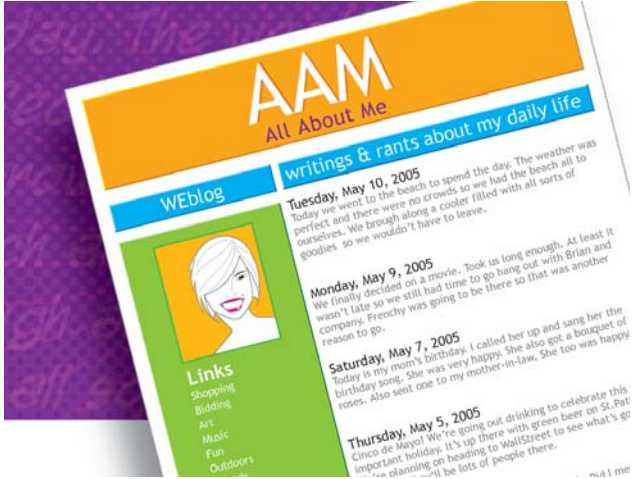
Everything Web

IN CENTRAL FLO

INDUSTRY LEADERS CLUSTER IN ONE OF THE 'MOST W

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ORIDA

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Fact: Online shopping, searching, newsgathering and chatting are at an all-time high. From e-commerce to weblogs, more people are turning to the Web for everything from buying and selling products to expressing opinions.

The numbers speak for themselves. In January 2005, more than 111 million unique visitors shopped online...From 1999 to 2004, e-commerce sales were on a steady rise, growing from \$50 billion in 1999 to \$115 billion in 2004...An estimated 42 million households are expected to have broadband connections this year... With eight million Americans maintaining a blog of their own. Blog readership increased 58 percent last year to 32 million people... And, it's estimated that more than 22,000 blogs are created each day.

Revelation: What you may not know is that a large concentration of the technology powering and enabling this growth is coming from Metro Orlando. Noted as one of the most wired regions in the United States and home to major telecom and software industry leaders and advances, Metro Orlando has been ranked as the leading economic hub of Florida, which is one of the top states for information technology. In fact, more than 20,000 related companies and 270,000 employees call the state home.

Several industry powerhouses have clustered in Osceola County — Central Florida's bustling southwest sector that is already world-renowned for tourism

and hospitality. Here's a snapshot of just a few of these companies:

Channel Intelligence (CI). Buy a Black & Decker product online recently? If so, chances are you encountered Celebration-based CI, which just may be the nation's frontrunner in the channel management industry. CI connects manufacturers to their dealers and consumers through a unique Web-based system that drives sales and provides the information-empowered consumer with a better online shopping experience. The Internet has changed the way people learn about and purchase products. And CI, which helps the manufacturer get consumers to buy their products, is seeing remarkable growth. In fact, the company has established a majority stake in this niche industry. It represents such companies as Black & Decker, Panasonic, Microsoft, Lexmark and Samsung, which have collectively sold billions of dollars worth of products through CI's channels.

The industry touts the company, founded by Microsoft alum Rob Wight, for its distinct technology capabilities that enable customers to find available products (real-time, in-stock status) and where to get them (on-line or off-line). CI's back-end computer software infrastructure also automates product content distribution for manufacturers (providing fast and easy product information updates to retailers) and offers in-depth data management services that enable manufacturers to track their inventory levels and pricing, as well as competitor pricing and availability.



WHY IT'S CONNECTING IN ORLANDO

- **Spurred by industry growth, technology jobs are on the rise throughout the state.** Florida has been ranked the fourth largest Cyberstate by the AeA. In Metro Orlando — Florida's top metro area for job growth — research shows that three of the top four growth occupations through 2011 will be IT-related. These include: computer software applications engineers and specialists, networking computer administrators and network systems/data analysts. This growth is supported by the University of Central Florida's top-ranked computer science and engineering programs.
- **Companies in the IT world want to be close to the talent.** They draw from Orlando industry leaders including Convergys, Fiserv, Lockheed Martin, Oracle, Kirchman and VERITAS. This is in addition to the talent found in the area's digital media and simulation industries.
- **High tech company leaders say the region's telecom infrastructure can't be beat.** This region is highly regarded for its digital infrastructure and broadband connectivity. The fiber systems are pervasive and new, not retrofitted as in other communities. In addition, the region is served by two incumbent local exchange carriers — Sprint and BellSouth. The natural competitive nature between the two translates to an extraordinarily high level of capital investment in systems and infrastructure.

"We are running e-commerce for the world right out of Central Florida," says Wight, who anticipates corporate growth to more than 1,500 people in the next five years.

Marlin Group. Another well-known name in the e-commerce data and infrastructure world is the Kissimmee-based Marlin Group, a family of companies that provides major manufacturers and retailers with Web hosting, order processing, warehouse and fulfillment, data/call center and customer service support. Since 9/11, disaster recovery and business continuity have become top-of-mind in the corporate world. With that, more companies have moved to co-locating data outside of their organizations for added protection. This has propelled companies like the Marlin Group.


Demonstrating its unique technological capabilities and uniqueness in the industry, Marlin broke out of its traditional service mold and launched a

new division this year called Rednote.com, an interactive Internet-based version of Home Shopping Network (HSN) and QVC run by noted HSN veteran Eric Mausolf. With Rednote.com, consumers have a place to shop that is efficient, informative, entertaining and operates on the individual's schedule.

"We're revolutionizing e-commerce," says Mausolf. "We're creating the convergence of live content on the Internet platform."

Hyku. Last year, 32 million people became members of a sophisticated group of Internet users called bloggers. It is estimated that this group creates more than 22,000 new blogs, which are essentially daily online journals. For Web-usability and blog consulting firm Hyku, that's a good thing ... a real good thing. Celebration-based Hyku is in a hot market. Blogging (and other Web-enhanced tools and functions) is on the rise, and

the company's primary clientele (public relations, marketing and ad firms) are among the fastest growing sectors in the economy. As if that isn't enough to demonstrate growth, industry insiders compare the emergence of blog consulting firms, like Hyku, to the heyday of Web consulting firms in the mid-90s.

There's no doubt that weblogs, RSS feeds (a format for syndicating news and content) and wikis (public, group-managed Web sites) are changing the face of business communications. These new tools are being used to capture what people are talking about in real time, which, in turn, is helping companies shape everything from marketing focus and messaging to pricing. Hyku is the behind-the-scenes "information architect" that helps companies effectively utilize these tools and helps with overall Web information order, structure and search capabilities. Their work is high tech, but their goal is simple: to help organizations better utilize technology to effectively communicate their message. 

FOR MORE INFO, visit the following sources:

Electronic Retailer
(retailing.org)

Internet Retailer
(internetretailer.com)

Emarketer.com

Shop.org

OPA & Nielsen/NetRatings

comScore Networks
(comscore.com)

**Information, Architecture
Institute**
(iainstitute.org)

Bureau of Labor Statistics
(bls.gov)

**For more on the
Orlando region, visit
OrlandoEDC.com.**