



Tucson-based Internet provider ranks high with customers

By Christy Krueger, Inside Tucson Business
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Sitting among giants in the land of Internet providers is a Tucson-based company that knows how to play with the big boys. Although its client list may not be as lengthy as some others, [DakotaCom.Net](#) says it's sitting pretty in its field because it knows how to keep customers happy.

At one point the Tucson area had several small start-ups in the industry, but "most of the service providers here didn't last," said Chris Phillips, vice president of sales and marketing for [DakotaCom.Net](#). "We're the largest privately-held local Internet provider in Southern Arizona."

Two others who are still in the business are Simply Bits and Login. [DakotaCom.Net](#) has 4,000 business and residential customers, mostly in Tucson, Nogales and Sierra Vista with a few scattered throughout Phoenix and Casa Grande.

"The interesting part is we've been a company in transition," Phillips noted, referring to a customer base that was 70 percent residential three years ago. "Now we're 75 percent commercial service and 25 percent residential," resulting in more services being offered, such as complete business telephone systems.

Founded in 1995, [DakotaCom.Net](#) as it looks today resulted from a series of acquisitions. Then in 2006 owner Bill Bosmeny merged his company with Steve Millaway's Gain Communications.

Phillips, who headed various Internet service providers in Colorado in the 1990s, moved to Arizona and joined Gain in 2005 as vice president of operations. After the merger with [DakotaCom.Net](#) he was promoted to his current position.



Christopher K. Phillips, VP Sales and Marketing for [DakotaCom.net](#), stands beside the sealed air controlled server room at DakotaCom. Stuart L. Mattingly photo

The union of the two companies was fruitful, as [DakotaCom.Net](#) has seen a 15 to 20 percent annual revenue growth in recent years.

“We still have growth even though we’ve swapped out from one side to the other,” Phillips said of the company’s new emphasis on its commercial division, known as [DakotaPro.biz](#).

In the growing world of technology, it’s easy for a company to lose its identity. But [DakotaCom.Net](#) sets itself apart in several ways, Phillips explained, beginning with its customers.

“We as a company cater to small and medium size businesses in town, and we take a consultative approach for solutions to meet needs and budgets.” He added that it’s possible to simultaneously increase productivity while cutting expenses, an attractive goal in today’s business environment.

Another feature that makes the company different, he said, is, “We run a 24/7 facility, staffed. We haven’t turned on the alarm system in two-and-a-half years because someone is always here. If customers have trouble in the middle of the night, they can call without getting sent to India.”

Customers also find it convenient to have a single source for their business technology needs while welcoming the cost savings. Phillips credits the company’s success in part to its working relationships with Internet and fiber optics carriers - such as Qwest, Cox Communications and Time Warner - to get the best prices and pass them on.

Both residential and commercial clients can feel comfortable working with a local entity that also has a philanthropic stance. Phillips said owner Bill Bosmeny is very invested in this community and started a program offering deeply discounted Internet service to about 100 nonprofits and charities in the Tucson area.

All points combined have helped [DakotaCom.Net](#) win numerous awards. Phillips called a 2006 Better Business Award “a significant one – only 17 companies in Tucson received it. The reason we received the award is we use a trouble ticket here. If there’s a customer problem, we send a survey and get comprehensive feedback. We’re in touch with customers. In 2007 we were voted second best internet provider in Arizona by customers.”

That’s saying something in today’s automated world where consumers are often treated like numbers and spend precious time getting nowhere. How many of us are likely to rank our internet provider at the top of our favorite services list – especially after being sent to India more times than we’d like to count.

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