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Executive Summary

Computing Development Strategies is a new company that will rely on the proven skills of its founder to take advantage of the growing need for computer training. G. I. Netwell, who brings over a decade of computer training expertise to the business, will lead the company as it establishes itself as a high quality computer training service provider in the Chicago metropolitan area. Computing Development Strategies (CDS) will initially limit its courses of instruction to Microsoft Windows 95, Excel, and Word (or Corel's WordPerfect). In 2000, CDS will begin offering classes, currently under development, on creating and maintaining web sites.

Constantly evolving technologies and software offer small businesses an opportunity to work smarter. But the increased opportunity comes at the expense of increased complexity. Substantial market research establishes that computer training is one of the country's fastest growing service industries. CDS is in a position to capture a significant portion of the local market for computer training. Further, CDS is projected to return a profit in its very first year of operations, due in large part to the size of the market and the relatively low investment required to begin operations. First year revenue is projected to exceed \$350 thousand.

CDS will differentiate itself from its competitors (generally larger firms) through lower pricing and the development of unique electronic workbooks that will serve as training aids. By specializing in just a few of the most popular software applications, CDS gains access to the largest segment of a growing market. This tightly focused approach also makes it easier for CDS to establish and retain a position as an industry leader.

Business Background

The company

Computing Development Strategies is a dynamic technology corporation that is poised to capture substantial market share in one of the fastest growing service industries in the country, computer training. CDS is an Illinois corporation incorporated in 1998 and wholly owned by G. I. Netwell. CDS will establish its base of operations in Naperville, Illinois. CDS intends to offer computer training courses in several software packages that have been almost universally accepted by small- to medium-size businesses and by many individuals. These include Microsoft Windows 95, Excel, and Word, and Corel's WordPerfect. Courses under development will be launched in 2000, providing instruction on how to create and maintain web sites on the Internet.

The owner and principal employee, G. I. Netwell, has extensive experience as manager of the computer training and development department of his current employer, Computerized Business Machines. In addition, Mr. Netwell has developed a marketing strategy that is well suited to building a large market share in the small to mid-size business market. CDS has the potential to gain a reputation for offering quality courses in computer training that provide value long after the classes end.

Assisting Mr. Netwell will be Ms. Sue Howe, an independent contractor who helped train CBM's sales and customer service employees. Ms. Howe has considerable training experience and can meet the high standards that CDS has set for its training services.

The service

CDS was created for the sole purpose of providing computer software training services in the Chicago metropolitan area. The courses in Microsoft Windows, Excel, and Word (or Corel's WordPerfect) are designed to provide employees and owners of small businesses with the skills they need to work efficiently in a computerized business environment. Training in web site development and maintenance, to be offered beginning in 2000, will enable small businesses to

establish their own Internet presence for marketing and promotional purposes.

The training courses will generally be offered at a rented facility located in Naperville, a western suburb of Chicago. The facility is easily accessible, has substantial parking, and is served by public transportation. Where appropriate, however, CDS will provide training at a customer's facility.

A key selling point will be the price CDS charges for its services. Because CDS has been able to negotiate a favorable lease and will have relatively low expenses, it will be able to offer customers a substantial discount compared to larger training companies.

The workbooks

One method that CDS will use to distinguish its training courses from those offered by other companies is through the use of a group of electronic workbooks developed by Mr. Netwell. These workbooks, one for each application, will serve as a training aid during sessions, and as a valuable reference tool thereafter. The workbooks incorporate ideas and concepts proven successful during Mr. Netwell's tenure at CBM, coupled with innovative new concepts developed as a result of his insight into CBM's training operations.

The workbooks will be provided to CDS students on floppy disk or CD-ROM. They abandon the topical approach found in user guides and online help in favor of a workflow approach. Each workbook approaches the software as a user would, but brings them up the learning curve far faster than any tutorial can. The material in each workbook is laid out in a logical and easy-to-follow format. They clearly illustrate the commonly used features of each application, providing numerous examples and shortcuts that apply to a variety of different business and personal situations.

Key personnel

G. I. Netwell is the owner and manager of CDS. He has significant computer software experience and management skills developed as the manager of the Technical Support and Training (TST) group for Computerized Business Machines. He plans to utilize this experience in preparing and presenting computer training programs.

Mr. Netwell was a technical support technician and in-house training instructor for eight years before becoming manager of TST three years ago. He holds degrees in both education and electrical engineering. In addition to installing software and assisting in setting up networks, Mr. Netwell oversaw the development of a series of comprehensive computer training programs for beginning, intermediate, and advanced computer software users. The innovative process of combining personal instruction and hands-on training will be adopted in CDS's computer training programs.

As the manager for TST, Mr. Netwell coordinated a staff of five instructors who trained company employees in various Microsoft software packages such as Word, Excel, PowerPoint and Windows. Mr. Netwell also taught a number of these courses. Utilizing this experience, Mr. Netwell will coordinate the training efforts of a part-time instructor and a training assistant in order to provide CDS's students with the greatest amount of access to the training personnel.

Mr. Netwell also managed a group of six computer technicians who performed all types of repairs to computers and printers. Because Mr. Netwell has a technical background, his staff often consulted with him when complex repair issues arose. This experience will prove to be especially valuable in day-to-day operations. Computer downtime will be minimized because Mr. Netwell can make at least minor repairs rather than waiting for a computer technician.

Marketing Plans

Market analysis

Mr. Netwell undertook substantial research prior to forming CDS. The focus of this research was on the growth of computer training in general and on the geographic market he plans to serve. The research results were quite encouraging. Computer training is at the beginning of a period of great expansion, according to the findings of several respected industry trade journals. Because of the great technological innovations being made in personal and business application software and the anticipated impact of the Internet on daily life, many individuals and businesses are finding themselves overwhelmed with the possibilities that these new business tools offer.

The Management and Decision Information Systems Institute (MDISI) recently conducted a national study of small business training needs. The study indicates that 85 percent of 1500 business owners polled anticipated an immediate need to have one or more employees trained in the use of the popular spreadsheet and word-processing software packages developed by Microsoft. Computer industry figures suggest that computer use in the Midwest does not deviate substantially from the national average. Thus, the findings of the MDISI study are useful in establishing the number of potential students that CDS might serve.

In the greater Chicago area, information compiled by the Northern Illinois Chamber of Commerce reveals that there are 20,000 businesses that are classified as small to midsize (one to 50 employees). The average number of employees is 15. This means that, in the target market that CDS hopes to serve, there are approximately 300,000 potential students. Because CDS is implementing a marketing strategy that stresses quality training at an economical cost, the company will capture a substantial portion of the target market from the larger, more expensive, regional and national training firms. By offering the same or higher quality training at a cost 25 percent less than the larger chains, CDS will be perceived as being in step with the information, time, and budgetary need of small to medium-size businesses and individuals.

According to a recent article in PC World, "Since the need for computer literacy is rising, the demand for PC training and education is also growing. Whether they hire computer training centers or have their own in-house training program, local companies are realizing that investing in hardware is not enough. For a firm to truly be in the information technology mainstream, it must invest in its most precious resource, its people."