

Garfield Hts. data center expanding

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Supplying uninterrupted computing power has led to uninterrupted growth for the Garfield Heights data centers owned by Expedient Communications Inc.

The Pittsburgh-based company plans to spend about \$5 million to double the amount of data processing space at the newer of its two data centers on NEO Parkway, said Bryan Smith, regional vice president for Expedient. The newer center, which opened in 2008, is located next to the older one, which opened in 2006.

In the process, Expedient likely will add about a dozen employees to its staff of 40 in Garfield Heights

over the next several months, Mr. Smith said.

Though the older data center hasn't grown physically, it has gained customers over the years, too, Mr. Smith said. To accommodate them, Expedient earlier this month turned on \$2 million of new power generation equipment.

The Garfield Heights data centers have grown significantly faster than Expedient's other facilities in Pittsburgh, Boston, Columbus, Indianapolis and Baltimore, Mr. Smith said, declining to give revenue figures.

"Cleveland is actually leading the way," he said.

The reason, Mr. Smith said, might be because there are fewer competitors in the region, or because

local companies have been strained for resources, which makes them more open to letting other companies manage their computer systems.

"Internal IT departments are being asked to do more and more without additional personnel," he said.

Expedient plans to start expanding its newer data center later this year, Mr. Smith said. The new space — now a 7,000-square-foot, indoor dirt floor — should be a functioning part of the data center by the end of the first quarter of 2012, he noted.

The expansion would bring the size of the building to about 21,000 square feet, 14,000 of which would be data center space. The new center then would be the same size as the older data center. ■

Alumni: Colleges enlist creative efforts

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June 30 compared to levels of fiscal 2010. Those increases were "not a small accomplishment," Mr. Spiker said, given the still-sluggish economy.

"I don't think we're out of the woods yet," he said. "People are still guarded about what's going to happen next. It continues to be something we work at day in and day out, but we're just grateful for the support we receive."

Rally the troops

So far, Oberlin College's alumni fundraising efforts appear to be working. The college's alumni participation rate — now at 42% — has increased by five percentage points over the last two years. This year, the college brought in about \$6 million through its annual fund drive. "It's not one thing we've done,"

said Bill Barlow, Oberlin's vice president of development and alumni affairs. "It's a lot of things we've done that have helped us in the last two years."

For example, Oberlin College hired more staff, invested in new technology and recruited more alumni to make pitches to their classmates.

Kent State University is taking a longer-term approach toward cultivating more alumni donors, according to Gene Finn, the university's vice president for advancement. Shortly after Mr. Finn joined the university in 2007, Kent State launched a fundraising campaign, dubbed the Campaign for Change, geared toward asking current students to donate.

"You have to start to instill that sense of philanthropy when the students get here, which is something Kent State hadn't done before," Mr. Finn. "It could take years."

Kent State, which achieved an all-time fundraising high of \$42.1 million in the fiscal year that ended June 30, saw a decline in alumni giving around 2008. Although alumni participation has started to trend upward, Mr. Finn noted, it hasn't returned to pre-recession levels.

The size of the gifts coming into the university's coffers, however, has grown considerably. The average alumni gift in 2007 was about \$750, while in 2011 that average climbed to \$1,250.

Notre Dame adjusts

The revival of alumni giving isn't universal, however.

The annual fund at Notre Dame College in South Euclid hasn't been the same cash cow as that of other schools. For the fiscal year that ended June 30, the college saw a 7% decline in its annual giving program, which brought in about \$230,000, according to Al DiFranco, the school's director of development.

Because Notre Dame's alumni base hovers at only about 5,200, the college is moving toward other forms of fundraising, such as events, to reach out to a broader constituency. As such, the college saw a 30% total boost in unrestricted giving — a number that includes the totals from the annual giving program.

Also, the college plans to hire a handful of people to ramp up its development efforts, especially considering the explosive growth in enrollment the college has seen over the last decade.

"These positions in the past were

all kind of done by one person," said David Armstrong, who recently took over as the college's vice president of development and general counsel. "We're now making a clear investment to bring people in because we need to strengthen this department and seek higher goals."

Fingers crossed

Despite lingering uncertainty about the economy, University of Akron officials anticipate overall fundraising is going to continue to increase. For the fiscal year that ended June 30, the University of Akron raised \$46.7 million — a new record for the school.

Alumni collections had dropped markedly for the university, from \$6.5 million in 2008 to \$3.8 million in 2009. However, that figure has risen over the last two years and hit \$4.9 million for the last fiscal year.

"Obviously, we believe that there is a very strong and bright future ahead," said Tim DuFore, the University of Akron's associate vice president of development and chief development officer. "That's what we're looking toward."

If the stock market continues to plummet, fundraisers are worried that donors, particularly alumni, once again might hold tightly onto their cash.

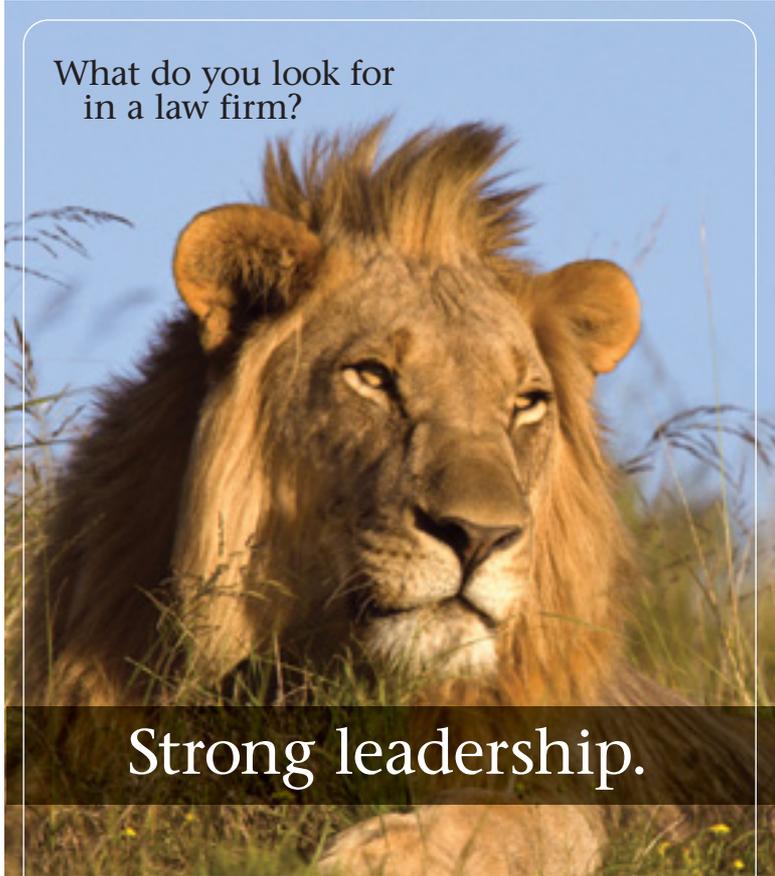
"If you talked to me a month ago, I might have a different answer (about whether the worst was over), but the last couple weeks have been a roller coaster," Kent State's Mr. Finn said. "It's our responsibility in our operation at Kent State to communicate with the alumni and stress things happening here and stress our kids still need support."

Cleveland State's alumni giving was anchored by two wealthy alums over the last two fiscal years, with a \$10 million pledge from industrialist Monte Ahuja in 2011 and a \$6 million gift in 2010 from Bill Julka, founder of Smart Solutions Inc. in Beachwood.

But given the uncertainty of the last few years — and particularly the last few weeks — what could happen with future alumni giving is anyone's guess, according to Rob Spademan, Cleveland State's assistant vice president university marketing and admissions.

"Some of the larger donors that we're talking to and working with still seem to be on track ... but it's hard for us to honestly know what's going to happen," he said. ■

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