



Business & Money



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Brainerd Dispatch/Nels Norquist

Greg Arvig, Nextera president, said his newest telecommunications venture is aimed at small- and mid-sized business where the latest technology can provide services once affordable only to much larger companies.

PHONE / Workers won't miss a call with system

A customer could take the office phone home or have a duplicate office phone already there. Plug the phone into the Internet and calls to the office will ring simultaneously at home. Customers dial the same office number they are familiar with and will never know they reached their business contact at home. The phone also has applications with business travelers as people are connected to the home office by dialing a four-digit number.

"It doesn't matter whether you are in Brainerd or if you're in Denver, you can still have that four-digit dialing," said Becky Parker, Nextera vice president of marketing.

For workers it is a double-edged sword, they'll never get away from the office but they'll never miss a call either. And in the business world that may make the difference between landing the client or not.

Say your children are going to school in Chicago, Nextera offers remote numbers so a Brainerd customer can get a Chicago number where you can call back and forth without long-distance fees. It also gives businesses the opportunity to have virtual offices via a phone number.

"There are over 1,600 cities that we can have telephone numbers from," Parker said.

Nextera has a Web portal, meaning customers can manage their own systems by viewing call data and billing information and changing call features as needed.

Rivers said he uses the Web site as voice mails on his phone are sent

to his e-mail where he can listen to the messages via his computer. E-mails also may be routed to his phone.

About two months ago, Nextera purchased the assets of Small Business Networks serving business customers in the Twin Cities area. Nextera has an agreement to purchase a Minneapolis company that provides wireless Internet almost exclusively to businesses.

"The metro area is going to be a big piece although we are headquartered here and are going to stay here," Arvig said.

Nextera offers local service in Brainerd, Baxter and Little Falls. Earlier plans to explore the cable television market are still being reviewed but there are no immediate plans to pursue it at this time.

With plenty of competition in the telecommunications industry, Arvig said he thinks there is room for everyone with the expected area growth. With the whole Internet explosion, Arvig said additional services will continue to be layered on top of existing options. Video over the Internet would have been unheard of five years ago, he said. Now that is commonplace.

"I think if we were offering the same exact service as everybody else we probably wouldn't have done what we are doing," Arvig said.

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Nextera tackles new phone frontier

By RENEE RICHARDSON
Senior Reporter

BAXTER — Having a mobile office these days is as easy as grabbing the desk phone on the way out the door.

And that's one of the offerings at Nextera Communications, a young Baxter-based company established in 2005. Nextera has focused on getting systems in place and is now hitting its stride in sales the last six months, said Greg Arvig, chief executive officer who created the company's business strategy.

"We are kind of a next generations communications company which is where the next era piece came from, so it's all IP-based, Internet Protocol, which is kind of unusual for telephone companies right now. It's kind of where the trend is going."

Arvig is a familiar name in area telecommunications as the founder and CEO of two companies — USLink and InfoTel Communications. He formed

USLink in 1986, which acted as the first regional long-distance company. And Arvig formed InfoTel Communications as industry deregulation opened the doors for competitive local markets. USLink was sold and InfoTel merged into a national company.

Nextera offers traditional telephone services with a twist regarding the IP-based additional services. The company has a hosted Private Branch Phone Exchange or PBX system that runs over the Internet and is hosted from Nextera's equipment site in Brainerd.

Arvig said for customers it eliminates thousands of dollars in up-front costs as they get the added services of a PBX system to handle multiple office phones without needing to purchase the equipment. Customers buy desk phones, or handsets, and add more as the company grows without ever having to add phone lines or do software

upgrades. It's a way for a small business to seem much larger.

And small- to mid-size businesses, with 150 employees or less, are Nextera's target market. Nextera provides local, long-distance, high-speed Internet and the IP-based services.

Brent Rivers, insurance agent at Fiducia Benefits Group in Brainerd, said the company has been a Nextera customer for about a year. Rivers said Nextera serves both Fiducia and a second business North Star Resource Group. Calls can be easily routed between the companies and Rivers said he can simply take the desk phone with him.

"Plug it into the Internet anywhere and it's just like you are working at your office," Rivers said. "I can hit a four-digit extension and get anyone we work with here. ... It's very fluid and very nice to work with."

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About Nextera

► Nextera Communications, with offices at 7115 Forthum Road in Baxter near Home Depot, was established in 2005.

► The company employs 25 people statewide with 12 employees in the Brainerd area.

► The number of Brainerd lakes area employees is expected to increase within six months to a year as about 10 more people, from office staff to technicians, are added here.