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# T O L E D O FREE★PRESS

*A tradition for Toledo's future*

## SPECIAL REPORT

# Information technology firm finds home at UT incubators

By Toledo Free Press Staff Writers



Ugly Data Inc. chose to locate in two incubators at UT that provide environments for small businesses to grow rather than at sites across the country. Dan and Amy Miller, the couple that owns the information technology company, are pleased with their decision to locate their new business at the UT incubators. The Millers said they chose to locate there after considering sites in Chicago and Atlanta.

“We needed a place to call home and here we are at UT,” said Amy Miller, president of Ugly Data, who is originally from the Toledo area having graduated from Springfield High School. “We couldn’t have done this in Chicago. It was too expensive to locate there.”

Toledo offered the right proximity to potential clients from Fortune 100 companies to the small business environment of the incubators. It is centralized to Detroit, Chicago and New York, allowing the firm to have easy access to its clients, Amy Miller said.

The university allowed Ugly Data to move into the incubator spaces, providing it with affordable space customized to meet the firm’s needs with plenty of room to grow. It also offered potential to grow within the university as well as outside it.

“Ugly Data is a great partner for UT and can help other incubators. It was a strategic reason for bringing them here,” said Megan Reichert-Kral, director of the Office of Research and Development for the Clean and Alternative Energy Incubator at UT.

“We can offer hosting services to other incubator companies that don’t want to deal with it,” Dan Miller said.

It works both ways as Ugly Data is working with Platform Lab, another resident at UT’s incubators, which provides testing and training service for the company and its clients.

Ugly Data is a managed service provider that offers outside solutions for designing and hosting critical database server and security functions for companies that require control over their information technology applications. These types of clients rely on their hosting providers for 100 percent access and reliability, Dan Miller said.

The company uses space at two UT incubator locations. It operates data centers with servers at one on the Health and Science Campus and another "mirror" center located at the Research and Technology Complex on the main campus.

Most of the time, the Millers work out of their home offices, but they may outgrow that space soon. They are looking to expand locally and nationally when the opportunity is right.

"We expect to add more personnel to our Toledo offices in the near future and plan to take advantage of the internship program at UT," Amy Miller said. "We will seek local talent and UT graduates to help fill positions when we decide to expand."

"I've seen a lot of entrepreneurs and they know where they're going and what they need to do to get there," Reichert-Kral said.

Ugly Data is self-funded by the Millers, who have a combined 33 years of experience working for Hewlett-Packard. Dan worked at HP for 20 years and Amy did for 13.

The couple's jobs at HP involved too much traveling for their family with two young children. They lived in the Chicago suburbs for 10 years before moving to Toledo.

"It was necessary to be grounded for the family. We like Toledo as a community and the people here," Amy Miller said. Ugly Data is serving local, national and international clients in Chicago, Minneapolis, Florida, Georgia and Louisiana from its new locations in Toledo. It is marketing its services in Northwest Ohio and has a handful of local clients, Amy Miller said.

Fraser, Clemens, Martin and Miller, an intellectual property law firm located in Perrysburg, is working with Ugly Data to host and manage its file server, Web site and e-mail service to eliminate the risk of losing its data.

"We expect to move forward with it very shortly," Rick Martin, a partner in the law firm, said. "They are helping us to develop inexpensive remote access for our attorneys in Detroit, Florida and any others traveling and accessing data on their laptops."

The Regional Growth Partnership was so impressed after meeting with the team from Ugly Data, it started its first hosting account with the firm. Due to its satisfaction, the RGP is planning to bring its other hosting sites to Ugly Data, Larry Grough of the RGP said.

Ugly Data also provides hosting and testing services to DBA 24-hours, a software provider located in Edinburgh, Scotland. It also serves as external consultants for the software firm.

"They are providing us with solutions to test the applications of our software before we release it to our customers, assuring them that the software is working properly," Sean McLean, owner of DBA 24-hours, said. "The response we get from them is immediate."

How did the Millers come up with the unique name Ugly Data? They saw a lot of ugly buildings when they were looking for places to locate their data business.

"We had another name that we hated. It started out as a joke, but the name stuck and nobody forgets it," Amy Miller said.