



Steve Burgess

Guidant Partners
Nashville, TN

Member Since: 2009

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Guidant Partners founder and CEO Steve Burgess has watched the Information Technology industry evolve for the past 23 years. As a college student in the late 1980s, he turned his computing hobby into a side business, but quickly uncovered the huge demand for IT products and services. The Nashville-based company now has 25 employees and revenues of \$3.5 million.

Keeping up with the ever-changing technology industry has been a challenge. "Products and services that are profitable today are a commodity tomorrow," says Burgess. "Even skill sets that are valuable today are of little value tomorrow in this industry."

Along with evolving his own skills and those of his staff, Burgess also updated his business model. "Originally we billed clients on a time and materials basis, but this model created multiple issues," he says. For one, the model was reactive – techs were dispatched only when a client had a technology problem. This made it difficult to forecast long-term revenue and gauge appropriate staffing levels.

There was an inherent irony, as well, to the model. "Clients want the best and most knowledgeable technician to work on the problem," Burgess explains. "The challenge is that the more knowledge a technician has, the faster he completes the work. The faster he completes the work, the less money the client is billed. The better he



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becomes at his job, the more he costs me to hire. So, we made less money providing better service.”

Guidant Partners switched to a flat fee model where clients pay a monthly fee for any issues that arise as well as preventative maintenance. The change has stabilized cash flow, improved customer satisfaction and enabled a higher caliber of staff to be retained.

Burgess’ foresight and willingness to change from an industry standard model has served his company, and his customers, well. He’s also demonstrated his commitment to the business by reinvesting in it in the form of staff, facilities, equipment and even his recent membership in TAB.

“I am fortunate to have both a very wise and experienced TAB facilitator, and a very experienced and successful TAB Board,” he says. “When I started my business, most of what I learned was from the school of hard knocks. It’s great to now have a group of individuals who can challenge me and help me avoid making the same mistakes they did.”

Burgess says his involvement with TAB has also taught him to run his business by the numbers. “Too often,” he admits, “I have failed to follow through on the ‘inspect’ part of ‘expect and inspect.’ I have learned to manage my business objectively by the numbers. It is making a huge difference in my management style and the growth of the business.”

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About The Alternative Board

The Alternative Board® (TAB) helps forward-thinking business owners grow their businesses, increase profitability and improve their lives by leveraging local business advisory boards, private business coaching and proprietary strategic services.

TAB works with successful business owners who feel that their current practices are not elevating their businesses to the next level. We bring together owners, CEOs and presidents of non-competing companies to meet in a relaxed, confidential setting to give and gain practical, real-world advice on their specific business issues and opportunities.