

News

**Sinex sets his sights on
NASCAR --**
02/26/2007

Duluth News Tribune

[Visit the Duluth News Tribune for more Northland news.](#)

© 2007 Duluth News Tribune

Duluth businessman Barry Sinex made his name as a software designer, helping airlines maintain jet airplanes. Now, his software also helps keep ships seaworthy. His next prospective market? NASCAR.

Sinex's name has long been well-known in aviation circles. In 1999, he founded Sinex Aviation Technologies Corp., a company whose software now helps some of the world's largest airlines maintain, document and track the performance of aircraft in their fleets. After Sinex left the firm a little more than two years ago, the company changed its name to EmpowerMX.

But Sinex wasn't finished. He launched Sinex Solutions Inc. and turned his attention to other industries. For the next year, he worked with a small hand-picked development team, piecing together a flexible computer platform that could be used to help companies manage and maintain a wide range of equipment.

Sinex set his sights on the maritime industry. His software system went on the market in April 2006. Today — less than a year later — Sinex Solutions boasts a client base of 41 marine customers operating a fleet of more than 600 vessels.

The company has only begun to scratch the market's surface, Sinex said.

The company's clientele includes Seaspan (the largest tugboat operator in the Pacific Northwest) and the New York Water Taxi Service.

Besides handling maintenance, Sinex's software offerings include a product that can be used to issue tickets to passengers via wireless handheld computers. This technology is being used by ferry operators across North America, including the Madeline Island Ferry Line.

Sinex designed his software to satisfy Coast Guard inspection guidelines and automatically report compliance to authorities.

Fleet data for Sinex's customers is stored on secure servers that his clients can access on the Internet. Customers are charged a monthly subscription rate and pay for additional help on a fee-for-service basis.

Sinex said his business turned the corner — becoming profitable for the first time — during the fourth quarter of 2006.

In addition to its namesake, the company employs five people.

Lesley Stewart, Sinex Solutions' vice president, left EmpowerMX with Barry Sinex to help him start his new business.

"I left the company, taking its biggest asset with me," said Stewart, gesturing toward Sinex. "With him, I figured our chances of success were pretty good."

Bob Brown also left EmpowerMX to come to work with Sinex a couple years ago. He's now a senior systems developer for the company and said he's glad he made the move.

"I never would have had the chance to fiddle around with some of this new technology if I hadn't changed jobs," he said, holding a handheld computer.

Sinex drew on earnings from his previous business to launch Sinex Solutions and said the company is debt-free. Now that it's generating a positive cash flow, he said he has the freedom to explore other industries that might benefit from his software.

He has recently turned his attention to car racing, not because it's a huge market, but for another reason.

"It's just fun," Sinex said.

He also sees similarities between caring for airplanes, ships and race cars.

"Being successful in NASCAR is all about reliability," Sinex said. "You can't have an off day. You have to plan everything in advance and know what's going on every step of the way. It's like the airline industry in that you can't afford to have a breakdown."

Sinex sees an opportunity to help race teams boost their performance and make some money along the way. He noted that there are about 11,000 active race teams now competing in the U.S.

In the future, Sinex also sees opportunities to tailor his software to serve railroads, trucking firms, building managers, medical facilities and a host of other users.

He's also interested in re-entering the aviation arena after his noncompete agreement with EmpowerMX expires in another 17 months.

"I love aviation," Sinex said. "And it's what I know the best."

PETER PASSI covers business and development. He can be reached weekdays at (218) 279-5526 or by e-mail at ppassi@duluthnews.com.

© 2005 NorthlandConnection. All Rights Reserved.