

Cridersville entrepreneur finalist for Ernst & Young award

By TIM RAUSCH
419-993-2097
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trausch@limanews.com



COLUMBUS — On day one of Integrated Mobile in January 2004, it was just Greg Pugh, a former physics teacher who had gone into technology sales and then started his own company in Columbus.

Two years later, the 34-year-old Cridersville native is a finalist for Ernst & Young's Entrepreneur of the Year regional honors. Integrated Mobile has more than 50 employees and manages the mobile phones for 250 companies in the Fortune 1000, including Firestone, Nation-wide Insurance and Abercrombie & Fitch.

"Personally it is a great honor and recognition for work. For our company, it is great, the public relations that it will generate," Pugh said of being a finalist. He will find out if he won the award on June 29. If he does, he will then be eligible for national honors.

The company is in the business of "managed mobility services," keeping track of the thousands of mobile phones used by the large corporations.

Pugh said cell phone companies are designed to handle individuals, not corporations. Integrated Mobile consolidates contracts with the carriers, gets new phones and teaches employees how to use them.

It is a business far from his beginnings. Pugh graduated from The Ohio State University with a degree in physics and education. He taught high school physics in Maryland for three years in the 1990s.

"In the spring of '98, I was jealous of my wife that the whole dot com thing was taking off, and I figured I would take a chance and see what I could do outside of teaching," Pugh said. "I took a summer job teaching software to corporations, and I tried to learn the software before it came out."

Pugh went into technology sales in Columbus for CompUSA. He had a few other sales jobs and consulting positions until 2003, when he pitched an idea to his boss to create a new division to handle changes in the mobile phone industry.

"There was a buzz around mobility, what more could you do with your phones," Pugh said. "And they said no. But I felt so good about it that I had to do it myself. Raised no capital. I felt it was a gamble that I could get it going. I got a client in my first month of business and that was enough to keep the doors open."

Integrated Mobile started out selling technology that allowed sales personnel to read credit cards and print receipts from their cell phones before evolving into its management business.