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## ProStar shines bright: Tech firm moving to the next phase

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After more than a decade of research, development and testing, Page Tucker is eager to move on to the next phase of operations for his company, and that's bringing his computer software and services to customers in the pipeline and utility industries on a broader commercial level.

Tucker expects two programs for new and expanding companies in Colorado to help. In fact, ProStar Geocorp could serve as a model for efforts to advance economic development and technology startups, he says. "We could be the poster child for what the business community here in Grand Junction and here in Colorado is trying to promote."



Page Tucker serves as president and chief executive officer of ProStar Geocorp, a Grand Junction company that's developed software and services that help locate and manage infrastructure. (Business Times photo by Phil Castle)

ProStar Geocorp is among the first three companies approved to participate in the Rural Jump-Start Program offering state and local tax incentives. ProStar Geocorp also was one of two companies to receive \$250,000 grants awarded through the Advanced Industries Accelerator Program. The selections were announced on the same day.

The Jump-Start program offers state and local tax incentives for up to eight years for businesses that create at least five net new jobs in the county in which they're located in such high-paying fields as advanced technology, manufacturing and food processing.

The Accelerator Program promotes growth and sustainability in advanced industries in Colorado. Participating companies must demonstrate they have innovative technology and viable products that can be created or manufactured in the state.

Tucker said the programs fit well with the efforts of ProStar to bring its software and services to market. He plans to use the tax incentives and grant to that end, in particular adding what previously were consultants to the staff. ProStar employs four people at its headquarters in Grand Junction and another four people at a regional office in Raleigh, N.C., where the company works with the geospatial analytics and science program at North Carolina State University. But Tucker expects staffing to increase along with the operations of the company.

ProStar began about 12 years ago, Tucker said, with the concept the global positioning technology used to help people navigate in their cars or find a restaurant also could be used to locate and manage pipelines and utilities.

Tucker brought to the problem his experience with Impact Solutions, another technology firm he started to serve the automotive industry. He combined data and geographic information systems to develop software that helped dealerships improve marketing and customer service.

Tucker and ProStar similarly have combined data and geographic information systems to offer what he terms “geospatial intelligent solutions” to the pipeline and utility industries. The patented software and services improve the processes for managing infrastructure, whether its displaying, collecting, storing or using information about the location of pipelines, fiber optic cables or other infrastructure and equipment.

Precision is crucial in developing mapping technology for these uses, Tucker said. While technology that guides a user to within 20 feet of a restaurant might be close enough, ProStar offers technology that’s accurate to less than three feet and sometimes down to a matter of inches.

The other important aspect of the information, Tucker said, is that it’s readily accessible in the field. That means workers can use computers, tablets or smartphones to access the information and use the software in real time. ProStar offers this capability by storing information and software on the cloud — remote computer servers. Since mobile devices include geographical positioning systems, they can be used to display the location of pipelines, utilities and other equipment, Tucker said. In addition, though, mobile devices also can be used to accurately collect data.

For example, a worker can use ProStar technology to locate underground pipes or utilities based on records. But there could be differences between where the records indicate the utilities were installed and where they actually exist. Using ProStar technology, a worker can instantly update records as the utilities are located.

Or ProStar technology can be used from the very beginning of the process in planning pipeline and utility routing and right of ways, then recording exactly where the infrastructure is located as it’s installed, he said.

ProStar has worked with several partners in developing and testing its software and services, Tucker said. That includes Embridge Pipeline, a Canadian-based company that operates one of the largest and most sophisticated oil and liquid transportation systems in the world. ProStar also has worked with Loenbro, a construction and energy services company in the Rocky Mountain region.

In establishing a proof of concept, ProStar is now ready to bring its software and services to customers on a broader commercial level.

Tucker has high hopes for substantial growth for ProStar in terms of sales, revenues and staffing. That bodes well not only for the company, but also Grand Junction, he said. “I think we can have a significant economic impact on the state and our own community and be a positive role model to other tech startups.”



ProStar Geocorp software is available through the cloud, meaning field workers can use tablets and smartphones to access existing information as well as capture and record new information. (Photo courtesy ProStar Geocorp)