

Computer consultants specialize in products and services

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Many advancements have been made in computer technology since brothers Jeffrey and Barry Nashen established Nashen + Nashen Consultants in 1982. A private company, Nashen + Nashen has enhanced the business of numerous small and medium-size Montreal firms by tailoring computer products and services to meet each client's specific needs.

Nashen + Nashen's client base has become increasingly diversified over the years. Their earliest clients were mostly manufacturing and distributing companies. Now, while the hands-on entrepreneurs retain the loyalty of longtime customers, they also provide their products and services to hospitals and other corporate concerns. They derive pleasure from their clients' success, and their dedication to customer satisfaction and providing clients with cost-effective solutions, has earned Nashen + Nashen, IBM Business Partner distinction since 1984.

"We continue to reinvest in skills development," says president Jeff Nashen. "Our philosophy is to treat every customer uniquely. We have a vested interest in our clients' growth and profitability."

He cites the case of a customer in safety products that Nashen + Nashen has serviced for 19 years. "That business has grown 25-fold, and the firm ships products all over the world."

Headquartered at 3400 Jean Talon St. W., the firm now has 15 staff members. In addition to the founders, principals include the marketing manager, Patrick Salois, and the manager of PC and networking systems, Pat Hawari.

"Through our consultative approach, we strive to understand [and foresee] our clients' needs for their businesses. Then we survey the technology landscape and identify solutions that will benefit them most," says Barry Nashen, vice-president.

To keep up with advances in computer technology, Nashen + Nashen takes advantage of its partnership with IBM, by regularly attending IBM conferences, courses, lectures and seminars and reviewing publications.

They have helped many manufacturers and distributors of apparel, plumbing equipment,

school supplies, shoe manufacturers and other industries. The companies benefit from Nashen + Nashen's software programs, customized for accounting, inventory control, sales order processing, purchase order management, sales force management and production control.

"Now that we're doing more Web site development and network installation, we cover a broader base," Barry says. "Besides manufacturers and distributors, we reach corporate customers that represent different types of organizations," primarily in greater Montreal.

"Our staff have immediate secured access to all customers' networks via the Internet. We can provide hands-on help, because we are able to access their systems," Jeff adds.

The brothers visit their customers' workplaces and touch base regularly by phone and e-mail.

"As consultants, we go in and analyze the unique needs of each business," Barry says, "and with this knowledge, we are able to model an effective system. We offer turnkey solutions...

our customers can entrust us with the entire operation. We handle the programming, installation, configuration, cabling, employee training, ongoing support and enhancements. Technology keeps evolving and we keep customers educated in IT [Information Technology]."

"To maximize business potential, company Web sites should be integrated with customer information databases or other necessary support functions, not just company and marketing information.

"But few companies have a seamless connection to back office operations," Barry says. "Integration of real-time information should be made available to clients and suppliers and it should be subject to security on their Web site."

Barry and Jeff earned degrees at McGill University and honed their skills in different areas before forming their own company. Barry earned his bachelor of engineering degree in 1976, studied for his MBA, and then operated an apparel business.

Jeff graduated in 1979 with a bachelor of

commerce degree. In his final year and after graduation, he worked for two software companies.

"In 1982, IBM was more than interested in having entrepreneurs sell their hardware," Jeff says about the time he and Barry formed their own company. "We, in turn, were able to market our software and services."

Nashen + Nashen developed and wrote all the software programs. For the first six months, IBM provided an office in its downtown

use of computer technology. By implementing all-encompassing systems, companies would be able to improve efficiency and profitability, they say.

The Nashens have benefited from advances in the field since the '80s. They cite batch processing as a case in point. In the '80s, it was customary to enter data after the fact. In the '90s, it evolved into real-time processing. In the new millennium, there is more wireless computing. Companies have paperless pick

slips for processing a customer's order.

For example, a transportation company can deliver goods and the recipient signs a tablet, which is a screen. "The transport driver presses 'send' and the information is relayed to the head office," Barry says. "Upon receipt of the message, the transport company's server e-mails an invoice to the customer, instead of typing it out."

In addition, the transport company's Web site is automatically updated so that both the shipper and the consignee can track the delivery. Big businesses are using the Internet, but small and medium ones have a long way to go, he says.

"For example, they could improve efficiency by automating order tracking rather than making phone calls. Instead of faxing documents for client approval, the client could send a link to the document, which resides on the Web site for his or her online approval. At any time, the client could check the status of orders processed on the Web site."

As technology advances, Nashen + Nashen present their clients with innovative solutions. They look forward to acquiring new skills for the emerging technologies. "Here again, we benefit from our relationship with IBM," Jeff says.

In 2003, few families have every member living in the same city, as the Nashens do. Parents Phyllis and George Nashen, their four grown sons and their grandchildren all reside in Montreal. Barry and Jeff have two brothers, Stan and Glenn.



Some members of the Nashen + Nashen Consultants team are, from left, Patrick Salois, marketing manager; Jeff Nashen, president; Barry Nashen, vice-president.

premises. When the fledgling entrepreneurs were ready to hire their first employee, they acquired their own office space and equipment.

"The IBM Partner concept that exists today evolved later," Barry says. "Now, you have to be certified and prove technical proficiency. Candidates must also pass a marketing test and be cognizant of the product line."

Nashen + Nashen takes pride in being designated an IBM Partner, a distinction reserved for only about 50 firms in Canada. "This enables us to equip customers with IBM products, such as servers and PCs," Barry says.

"We started with zero," he says. "Our first few customers paid us in installments, and that way, we were able to pay ourselves a salary. Six months later in the spring of 1983, we opened our first office in the apparel district."

Nashen + Nashen declared a profit from the first year, as the clients put the brothers' technical expertise to work. In addition, the Nashens had to make cold calls to get new customers and market products and services.

They would like to see more small and medium-size local businesses make maximum