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Pixius expects only growth

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Forecasting 30 percent growth puts Pixius Communications in pretty rare company these days.

Pixius, 1634 E. Central, sells broadband Internet access via broadcast radio towers. The company began operating its latest towers in the Zenda and Durham areas in recent weeks.

The company now has about 5,300 subscribers and is planning growth at 30 percent a year for the foreseeable future. That would mean a doubling of sales in little more than two years.

The company has about 30 workers and annual revenue of more than \$2.6 million.

The transformation of the Internet from optional to necessary has allowed the company to largely shrug off the recession, said Ron Kastner, chief operating officer for the company.

"Internet has become part of our everyday lives," he said. "Even if you were laid off, you'd need it to search for a job and submit a resume."

Pixius serves Wichita with its signal, but it shies away from direct competition with Cox Communications and AT&T, which focus on Wichita and nearby towns. Those companies can supply Internet more cheaply and tend to lock in customers with bundled telephone, mobile phone and television service.

Pixius' real niche is the rural areas outside of any town. Many small-town telephone companies don't provide broadband service far beyond the borders of their towns, he said.

For instance, Zenda Telephone Co. provides DSL three miles outside of Zenda for \$39.95 a month, and dial-up beyond that.

However, Zenda Telephone general manager Brenda Dixon said, Pixius would be the fourth Internet provider in the area, including Alltel.

"Competition is alive out here," Dixon said.

Pixius believes it is competitive on cost and quality of service with those providers, Kastner said. Pixius charges \$41.95 a month.

Pixius broadcasts its broadband signal from towers to homes within a 10-mile radius. It is a much sturdier signal than a wi-fi network, and requires a special receiver, Kastner said.

The company has 50 towers and expects to add 14 more this year and up to 20 more a year after that. The company seeks to get at least 100 customers per tower.

It is in the final stages of applying for a second frequency for its signal. That will make the system more robust, Kastner said.

The future looks bright for the company, Kastner said. There remains plenty of rural Kansas left to grow into.

"We seek to serve the unserved and underserved," he said. "And, so far, we've been pretty successful at it."

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