South Bend Small Business Development Center

Identifies the Best Sites—Quickly and Accurately

Problems

- Data research too time consuming
- Growing caseload

Goals

- Provide clients with demographic information
- Have access to online data reports and reliable customer support

Results

- Faster analysis time
- Better quality of information provided to clients

Web Services Used

Business Analyst Online

Background

According to the Association of Small Business Development Centers (ASBDC), small businesses account for 99 percent of the more than 22 million businesses in the United States. Each year, ASBDC member programs, such as the South Bend Small Business Development Center (SBSBDC), assist more than 500,000 companies and help establish the solid development of small businesses across America.

SBSBDC of the Indiana Small Business Development Network is part of a national nonprofit organization funded by local partners, states, and the Small Business Administration (SBA). For more than 20 years, SBSBDC has offered a wide range of marketing and business planning services to help area companies become established or expand. These services include training, market research, and access to business-related information via software, Web sites, and SBA publications.

Challenge

"One of our biggest challenges was finding the best method to provide demographic information to our clients so they can feel confident about their business decisions," says Jan Fye, regional director of SBSBDC. "Site location becomes a very important factor for the companies we assist. Last year, we met with more than 700 clients, 54 percent of whom were start-up companies. The demographic information we provide must be accurate so our clients have a basis from which to validate or rethink their business plans."

SBSBDC was spending too much time trying to conduct data research on cumbersome Web sites. To manage its growing caseload, SBSBDC searched for a better, more efficient Internet data solution. It needed a vendor that could provide quick-and-easy access to a large selection of online demographic data reports and reliable customer service support.

Implementation

SBSBDC asked ESRI to provide a more efficient answer to these marketing research and reporting challenges while adhering to tight budget constraints. ESRI recommended a Premium subscription to Business Analyst Online. This service allows subscribers unlimited access to data reports, maps, and interactive Internet features during the subscription period. Now SBSBDC staff members can quickly and easily access accurate, current data to generate demographic reports and maps from Business Analyst Online for all their analysis needs.

Says Fye, "ESRI's Premium Web subscription allows us to create accurate reports and guide our clients through the business planning process. Using variables, such as the consumer expenditure data, has enabled us to help all types of businesses, including coffee shops, therapy centers, and bakeries, to make sound decisions about locating, opening, or expanding their businesses."

Results

The ESRI Premium Web subscription has dramatically reduced the time that SBSBDC staff spends preparing analyses and increased the amount of information they can provide to their clients.

"The biggest advantage of using the ESRI online data and reporting capabilities has been the variety of demographic information and services provided by ESRI," says Fye. "We are very excited to use a service that can encompass all of our clients' business needs."

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