

# business trends

## Small Businesses Need Big Answers

(NAPSA)—The past few years have seen companies of all sizes taking steps to cut costs, but it is hitting small businesses the hardest. According to the National Federation of Independent Businesses, in 2003 small businesses reduced spending plans, depriving the weak economy of a much-needed boost. Just 28 percent of 588 small firms surveyed say they plan capital investments, and the survey also found small-company optimism remains flat despite rising stocks and other glimmers of economic strength. But the strongest of these companies have weathered the economic downturn and are now growing at a pace faster than their large business counterparts, according to a recent report.

“The small business community is 23 million strong and includes half of all private-sector employees. The key to their growth is managing costs and resources,” said Mike Lauricella, SMB analyst at Yankee Group.

Small business owners are dreamers who want to achieve and are willing to risk failure to do it. Entrepreneurs need stellar suppliers who provide value with simple, convenient, flexible services.

For many small businesses, communication is key to keeping their dream alive. The Small Business Administration recently released figures stating that 75 percent of small businesses are single-employee companies that spend a minimum of 60 percent of their time away from the office. Those owners are looking for empowerment, choices and control over how they want to communicate. For many, bundling their



**Small businesses save time and money by having the same voice mail for cell phones and office lines.**

communications services together not only gives them a savings advantage, but also the benefit of managing all of their needs with one vendor. Imagine the time a small business owner saves by having voice mail services for the cell phone and office line being the same number. Or by processing and cutting one check every month for local, long distance, Internet and wireless services, instead of four. Companies such as BellSouth provide these types of bundled services.

“I was looking for a communications solution that could be tailored to the growing needs of my physician’s practice,” says Elaine McCarson, practice manager with the Chattanooga Allergy Clinic. “The office needed a system that was flexible. We opened with one physician and a small staff. Today, with multiple doctors and a dynamic practice, BellSouth has grown with us.”

For more information, visit [www.score.org](http://www.score.org) and [www.bellsouth.com/smallbusiness](http://www.bellsouth.com/smallbusiness).



Note to Editor: BellSouth is available in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee.