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Tech-savvy entrepreneur bolsters clients' computing powers

San Antonio Business Journal - by [Mike W. Thomas](#)

In the early 1990s, Rex Black was fresh out of college and working in the defense industry in Los Angeles. With degrees in computer science and engineering from the [University of California at Los Angeles](#), Black was able to land a good-paying job.

But shortly thereafter the so-called "peace dividend" became a big issue in Washington. People wanted to know why the government was spending so much money on military projects when the country was at peace. So the peace dividend was created by cutting back on the very same programs that were propping up the defense industry in L.A. The defense contractors reacted by shedding lots of jobs, including Black's.

As a result of the layoffs, Black decided to move to San Antonio where he hoped to land another programming job in a more stable environment. But over the next two years, he would be hired and laid off two more times as a result of bad decisions that he says other people were making. At that point, Black decided to go into business for himself.

"If I'm going to be out of work because of a business decision gone awry, I'd rather it be my decision," Black says.

So Black launched his own consulting and staffing firm in 1994 called [Rex Black Consulting Services Inc.](#) (RBCS). The company specializes in doing testing and quality assurance work on high-tech software and equipment. The company also provides staff augmentation and outsourcing services as well as training and consulting.

Black's early misfortune has today given way to a prospering company, even in the current economy, with a growing list of heavy-hitters as clients.

Last year, the company brought in \$2 million in sales, which was up from \$1.5 million the year before that. This year is not shaping up to be the greatest, Black acknowledges, but his firm is still doing well considering the overall shape of the economy.

"Fifteen years ago, I started consulting and developing training materials to help local companies increase the quality of what they deliver, reduce risks associated with delivery and save money associated with problems in the field," Black says. "Keeping our fixed costs low and conserving cash has allowed RBCS to weather downturns before, and is working for us even in this tough economic situation."

Building a client base

RBCS now has clients all across the country in the banking, finance and insurance sectors; defense and government contractors; software companies and PC makers. In San Antonio, clients include Randolph Air Force Base, [Clear Channel Communications Inc.](#), Digital Defense and Harland Clarke. Other clients include [Bank One](#), Chase Manhattan, Morningstar, State Farm, [Lockheed Martin](#), [Hewlett-Packard](#), [Microsoft](#), Dell and [Texas Instruments](#).

"Our clients run the spectrum," Black says. "We do both hardware and systems testing, and we can generally do it faster and at a price that other companies cannot."

RBCS is a small firm with only three full-time employees, but it works within a network of professional contractors and consultants so that it can easily access the expertise and personnel it needs for any task.

Roy Belovoskey, test and release manager at Clear Channel Communications, says RBCS has been helpful in providing testing-staff augmentation and in refocusing the way testing is done at the company.

"It used to be that the role of the tester was not formalized and developers generally tested their own code," he says. "RBCS has helped lead a transformation across the industry, bringing testing into the architecture design stage and that has resulted in higher quality code and fewer bugs to work out later."

Belovoskey says when he was first tasked with setting up a testing department for Clear Channel three years ago, he started reading books to bone up on the latest trends and noticed that Rex Black was in most of the books. Soon thereafter he realized that Black was in San Antonio and sought him out for advice.

"It is nice to know that we have someone close by who is the best of the best," Belovoskey says. "His reputation in the industry is well-known around the world and it has been a blessing for us."

Black says that in the future he plans to go more heavily into e-learning and licensed training because these are the areas where his services are most highly sought after.

"The amount of money lost by bugs in software is phenomenal and much of that is avoidable," Black says. "Our goal as a company is to

help our clients realize this and recapture that loss. The end result is that the quality of what they deliver increases.”

Testing is more critical today than ever because of the increasing complexity of products being introduced into the market, Black says.

For instance, he adds, a **Mercedes Benz** now has more than 100 times as much computing power as was involved in putting the first man on the moon.

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