



—ERICA BULLOCK

Infinetix Corp.'s Bruce Weyrauch, Peter Van Doren, and Burke Norton say the company specializes in embedded design for a diverse range of businesses.

VALLEY FIRM ENGINEERS BIG PICTURE FOR CLIENTS

Infinetix targets startups as area for growth

By Erica Bullock

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Spokane Valley-based Infinetix Corp. is a contract electrical engineering company that has been operating mostly under the radar for 30 years, however, the company's leaders are shifting focus this year to become a more recognizable and well-known resource for Spokane-area startups.

"One of our biggest challenges is getting our name out there," says Burke Norton, vice president at Infinetix.

The company specializes in embedded engineering, which allows for the control and connectivity of machines and other devices through circuit boards, microprocessors, and operating systems, Norton explains.

Infinetix president Peter Van Doren says embedded design has evolved from a control box that performed tasks as required to an interconnected cloud-based design, including internet-connected gadgets, appliances, or other devices.

Co-founder Bruce Weyrauch explains that the underlying principles are similar in the development of small electronic devices for interconnectivity, which means that the types of devices can vary.

"We've taken on an endlessly different kinds of projects over the years," Van Doren says. "We just do it all."

A few of those projects include blackjack tables, card shufflers, blood analyzers, and medical respirators.

Infinetix occupies about 8,000 square feet of office, lab, and storage space at the Montgomery Commerce Center, located at 2127 N. Van Marter Road, in Spokane Valley.

"One of the things we're starting to do is be more involved in the community," says Van Doren.

The company plans to leverage business association memberships as a way to connect with new businesses, Norton says. Infinetix is a member of Greater Spokane Incorporated and is involved in the Evergreen Bioscience Innovation Cluster and Washington State University Spokane's business incubator, SP3NW.

Van Doren says, "It's (about) getting our name out to a different generation of people. We also bring in interns every year, and that's been a great way for us to give interns experience working with the customer ... but at a rate that's reasonable for a startup (to afford)."

He says the ideal customer for Infinetix is the large customer that has a specific need to fill, or the small customer that has a product or a revenue stream and an idea that requires electronics, but they don't know how to go about it.

"For the larger customer, we're filling a specific need or

we have a specific skill set that they need," he says. "For the smaller customer, a lot of times they can't hire an engineering team, so we become their engineering team. The problem is a lot of startups don't have a lot of money to really afford to do that development. To do a full development is expensive," Van Doren says.

Infinetix has experience working as a consultant for early-stage startups, and can help take an idea and create a path to a real-world application. For established companies, Infinetix often assists in product redesigns.

Corporate clients include Liberty Lake-based Itron Inc. and Minds-i Inc., and Sandpoint, Idaho-based Percussionaire Corp.

"We work with Itron, which is a multibillion dollar international company," Van Doren explains. "We're not doing everything, but key pieces for them. Then other customers, we are their engineering team and we do pretty much everything on the electronic design and embedded software."

During the pandemic, Infinetix stayed busy by working with Percussionaire, a North Idaho company that manufactures respirators. At the same time, vendors stopped visiting in person, and the word-of-mouth marketing that previously worked to gain new business took a hit.

"Now, it's a building process to get that going again," Van Doren says.

Norton contends the company stands apart from other competitors in that it helps clients see the bigger picture.

"Sometimes engineers will focus on the one thing they're supposed to do and not pay attention to the overall project," he says. "Since we do contract work for a lot of different companies, we're more successful if we're focused on the customer's success."

Weyrauch adds, "It's not just about building a gadget."

Infinetix executives decline to disclose the company's annual revenue. Van Doren adds that diversity has been the key to the company's long-term operations, including diversity of clients and industries, and diversity of experience in the workforce.

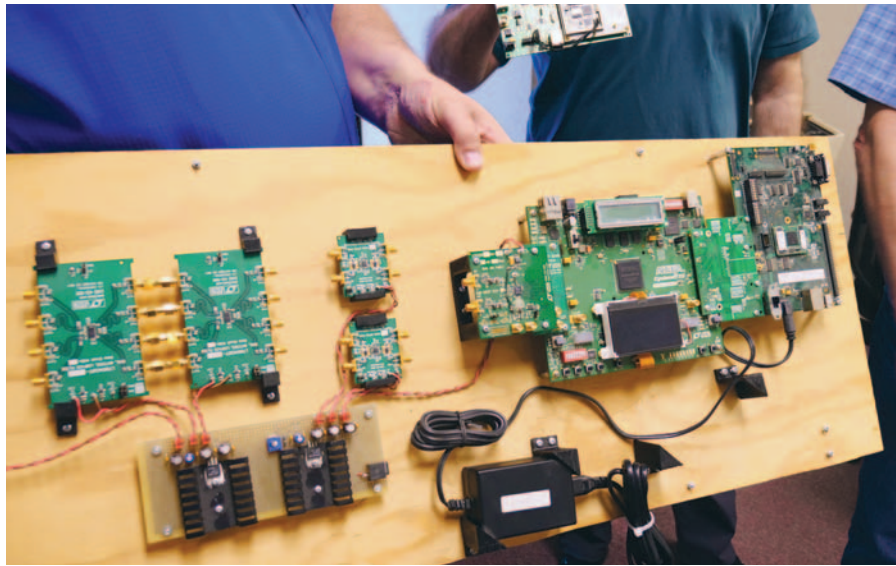
The company has about 20 full-time employees and one part-time employee.

"We have the experience of 20 people to help a new company get started," says Weyrauch. "That can be way more valuable than if they have one full-time employee that may not have certain skills needed. That's where a lot of people have found value in having us help them."

"It's not just about building a gadget."

Bruce Weyrauch
Infinetix Corp.

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Infinetix president Peter Van Doren holds an example prototype of off-the-shelf components the company has used to create a proof-of-concept design for customers.

INFINETIX: Company has worked in Valley since 1987

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We can provide a lot more breadth of knowledge.”

Company leaders tout a workforce culture where employees are treated with autonomy and respect, which they attribute to better retention rates and low turnover.

“From an organizational standpoint, we’re not hierarchical at all,” says Weyrauch. “Anyone can walk in and talk to anyone else at any time about pretty much any project. That empowers engineers to have the freedom to think about a problem.”

Weyrauch has been working at the same space at the Montgomery Commerce Center since 1987, where at first glance, the facility still looks unchanged from three decades ago. Almost every flat surface at Infinetix is covered in computer equipment, tools, and schematics. The company’s longtime presence is on display through old photographs and a makeshift museum of past projects the company has helped develop.

“My partner Leon Schmidt and I

started Infinetix in this same building,” says Weyrauch. “There were three of us to begin with, Leon and I and a technician, and we slowly grew from that and ... over the years grew to about 20 people.”

For the remainder of 2024, company executives are planning more community engagement by attending events, workforce expansion and succession planning to ensure continued longevity, and industry expansion into clean energy, aerospace, and military contracts, they say.

“This year, we’re also starting to work on our ISO certification, as a lot of those industries require additional quality control systems,” explains Van Doren, adding that certification with

International Standards Organization will take about a year to complete.

Van Doren says Infinetix plans to grow its workforce to fill in some of the gaps and to have the next generation of company leaders in place before longtime employees begin to retire.

“We have to start hiring, but it’s going to be a challenge,”

Van Doren says.

He adds, “If you want the most money, Google and Facebook can pay way more than we can. If they’re looking for the coolest product, it’s hard to beat Elon Musk and what he’s doing. But, if you want to be critical and if you enjoy a multitude of projects, multitudes of industry, and to always be learning, that comes with us.”

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Number of employees
at Infinetix.