

### **SAGESTONE, INC.**

IT DOESN'T HOST ANY SOFTWARE, IT DOESN'T SELL COMPUTER HARDWARE, and it doesn't really sell products either. Yet, *Sagestone, Inc.* is one of Michigan's fastest growing tech businesses. What does it do? It sells brainpower...or, at least it allows clients to tap into its vast bank of high-tech and business talent.

### **SMART PEOPLE**

Having one of the highest concentrations of Microsoft certified developers in the Midwest, this company is a pioneer in .NET development and deployment. To best serve their customers, Sagestone analyzes their client's technical needs, researches their market and industry, and then utilizes the latest Web-based and wireless technologies to meet the customer's computer applications needs. Programmers from Microsoft's headquarters in Redmond, Washington, have even flown in to see how the IT firm recently built a program using the latest programming language, C# (pronounced "C sharp"), for one of its clients.

Oh, and they build Web sites for their clients, too.

### **SMART LEADER**

Located in the well-wired Grand Rapids area, Sagestone was started in 1998 by western-Michigan native Keith Brophy. A young, energetic guy, Brophy took his University of Michigan computer science degree to Washington, D.C. where he spent nine years working for IBM, only to return to Michigan and start this very successful high-tech business. "I came back to Michigan not only because my family was still here, but because I simply missed the Michigan quality of life." When asked why his company has experienced the success it has, he says it's because "people here seem to keep the balance of work and life in check. When they are working, they roll up their sleeves and are only satisfied when they give 100%. It's just the work ethic you seem to find here in Michigan."

With over 40 employees, a turnover rate of less than 3%, and a technical and business skill set that spans a vast array of industries, it's no surprise that Brophy's team is one of only 30 companies worldwide that is a member of Microsoft's Global .NET Partner Advisory Council. It's no surprise, too, that some of its employees have relocated to Michigan from other states.

## SMART WORK ENVIRONMENT

Sagestone's offices reflect a work environment balanced between work and the individuals doing the work. Around the corner from a software engineer hard at work on a project, you may run into a life-size cardboard cutout of Princess Leah or Chewbacca. Around another corner, you will find a statue of a huge rabbit—donning a flight jacket—that sits there like it knows it's a one-of-a-kind figure that Sagestone received for its support of a local fund raising community event. And they all—including Chewbacca—have a spectacular view through the nearly floor-to-ceiling windows of the woods that surround the office.

## SMART COMMUNITY

For Sagestone, encouraging high-tech growth in the community goes beyond day-to-day operations. Month after month, for example, the company hosts the high-tech forum sponsored by the regional, non-profit IT Council of the Right Place Program. Forum participants range from employees of other high-tech companies in the area to college students who are getting a taste of the high-tech working world as interns at Sagestone.

## SMART MICHIGAN COMPANY

With customers big and small, ranging from Amway, the U.S. Army and Pfizer to Gemini Publications, Metropolitan Title and Progressive AE., Sagestone ([www.sagestone.com](http://www.sagestone.com)) is a company that has struck the balance between business and hard work with life and community. These are the true ingredients of success, and very typical of the business mindset and workforce dedication found in Michigan.

## MICHIGAN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

*Sagestone, Inc. is just one example of the many successful high-tech companies in Michigan. The state's economy is thriving and there are many benefits that make Michigan an attractive location. The Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) has been a catalyst for creating a business climate where high-tech businesses are able to flourish. MEDC delivers products and services to promote the state's economic growth, targeting high-tech business sectors and tailoring services to meet the needs of individual companies and reflect community diversity. Whether it's assistance for start-ups, the promotion of high-tech clustering, online bidding for business services, or tax abatements, Michigan is a great place for high-tech businesses. Visit MEDC's Web site at [www.michigan.org](http://www.michigan.org).*

