



## Trust X Alliance Member Q&A

Michael Minnich CEO, NetGain Information Systems

Michael Minnich, CEO of NetGain Information Systems, describes how his company—one of the first to offer businesses internet and unified communications tools in 1995—recognized the hosted computing and cloud trends early on and transitioned into one of the top 500 cloud service providers and MSPs in the world.

### Start at the beginning, how did the business get started?

We launched NetGain in July 1995, in West Central Ohio—45 minutes from Columbus, Ohio. We were not only the first local ISP, but also the first to offer fiber-optic internet access and the first to provide a hosted VoIP phone service (Selsius, acquired by Cisco in November 1998). To stay competitive, we developed “work anytime, anywhere” solutions, building fiber-optic access to our clients and offering hosted Cisco telephony. Over the next several years, we’ve worked collaboratively with other partners to build and interconnect fiber networks to and from major data centers as well as the new Ohio Internet Exchange ([www.ohioix.net](http://www.ohioix.net)). At the beginning of 2018, we upgraded our core network to 100Gbps and began delivering unmetered internet and VoIP services to the SMB market.

NetGain has grown into a top cloud and managed services provider—on the MSPMentor 501 List of the world’s top MSPs—specializing

in business continuity and disaster recovery services delivered over our private fiber network. Our Business Recovery Center—located just outside Dublin, Ohio—has over 200 workstations, a data center, printing services and more within the business recovery center. Clients use the facility to test their business recovery plans by simulating real-world scenarios from natural disasters to other events that cause disruption, like a water main break in the middle of winter.

### What are the most common needs of your customers? How have you seen that evolve?

In the last few years, we’ve seen a growing need for consultative services, mostly due to the advent of the cloud and the options available—private, public and hybrid. Clients also want assistance creating a strategy to differentiate their businesses and solutions that will help them achieve their business goals. And, lastly, clients want day-one security solutions.

### If you could go back, what would you do differently with the business and why?

Focus sooner on building a fully managed security operation center (SOC). Enterprises can afford advanced security, but most SMBs can't. The advent of public cloud solutions has exponentially increased the SMB need for an SOC with all the necessary software tools to defend and protect an organization's data from breach, corruption or loss.

### With so much emphasis on the customer experience, what are customers looking for in and from a technology business advisor such as you?

MSP customers want a strategic partner offering sound advice to help them overcome challenges. They want MSP and cloud services optimized for their success. If their business goes down for 24 hours, the probability of that business' survival diminishes. Customers want affordable, predictable costs for IT services that deliver more value, putting time and resources at their disposal so the management can focus on growing their businesses. To do that, we've changed the way we hire. We look for people who are able and willing to spend more time with C-level clients, or business owners, to develop strategy and vision and then build the right solutions for them.

### How has your company's role changed over the years?

We've taken a more prominent role with planning in the last few years. We've been providing managed services since 2006, but we're meeting more frequently with more clients to assist them in business discussions regarding costs and performance advantages and how they can leverage new platforms for the highest return.

### What's your company doing to stay ahead of technology trends and business model shifts?

We read voraciously and have a CTO who's very active in the industry and sets our technical direction with a solid, yet forward-focused lens. We share what we learn and what we're doing internally through lunch and learns, morning huddles and IT Glue, where we document everything. For our clients, we share information through our blog, newsletters, virtual CIO briefings and lunch and learns. These communications are to educate our clients on a variety of security and technological topics— from basic phishing exploit avoidance and email do's and don'ts to the benefits of virtualization.

### What's your approach to using technology within your own business and how does that help you better serve your customers?

Our team embraces change. We're continually sampling new technologies that could help us improve our solution offerings and make it easier for our clients to do business with us. We want to give our clients convenient ways to reach us whenever and however they want.

For instance, we implemented Webex Teams internally to manage projects with outside contractors, keep everyone informed and archive a project record. That gives us the ability to review and improve our project processes as well as support the new installation moving forward.

### What business trends or challenges do you see in the midmarket and how are you addressing them?

Clients report that their number one challenge is the ability to hire and retain a future-ready, mobile workforce. Our hosted solutions allow people to work anytime from anywhere, and they enable employers to hire telecommuters outside the Central Ohio region.

We also see our clients challenged by budget constraints and security issues, which we're

addressing with solutions and services that help them operate more securely, productively and cost-effectively. The last challenge is managing the “bring your own device” (BYOD) environment. Employees are taking devices into the field—some without data encryption or two-factor authentication—or even the ability to locate a lost device. That device may not be backed up and may fail. To address those kinds of risks, we provide a mobile device management (MDM) solution to help clients manage their BYOD operations.

**How has Trust X Alliance positively impacted your business?**

For over 23 years, we’ve had valuable relationships with Ingram Micro, manufacturers, consultants and peers. Trust X Alliance has allowed us to band together with an extensive and exclusive pool of other member companies, to increase our reach and improve our business. For example, if NetGain has a client that needs something in Washington state, we can use another Trust X partner in that state to provide the services we need.

The access to industry leaders’ advice and knowledge sharing is also valuable to our business. When we wanted to move into managed services, we consulted Paul Dippell, whom we met through Ingram Micro. We’ve participated in a Service Leadership Mastermind group. And we’ve enjoyed access to industry research from Gartner, Forrester and others.

**What has surprised you most about being part of Trust X Alliance?**

The business acumen and willingness to share with the partners has surprised me the most. Until you plug into a group like Trust X Alliance, you think you’re the only one with a particular problem. It’s great working with others to solve a common challenge, and collaborating to build stronger companies on both sides.

Just a few more details:

NetGain Information Systems

[www.netgainis.com](http://www.netgainis.com)



**Service specializations:**

- Cisco Premier Certified Partner
- Cisco Advanced Collaboration Architecture Specialization
- Cisco Open Stack Private Cloud
- Cisco Cloud and Managed Services Advanced
- Cisco Managed Business Communications
- Microsoft Silver Partner
- Microsoft Small and Midmarket Cloud Solutions Provider
- Veeam-Powered Service Provider

**Percentage of growth, 2016 to 2017:** 9.4%

**Headquarters:** Bellefontaine, Ohio

**Reach:** Regional, but serving some national clients

**Number of office locations:**

Two—Bellefontaine and Dublin, Ohio

**Best business advice ever:** Marry your vocation and avocation (hobby). Do what you love. Love what you do.

**Little known fact about your company:**

Bill Gates’ keynote presentation at the 1995 COMDEX show (entitled “Information at Your Fingertips”) inspired our early decision to become an internet service provider and to focus on networks.

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