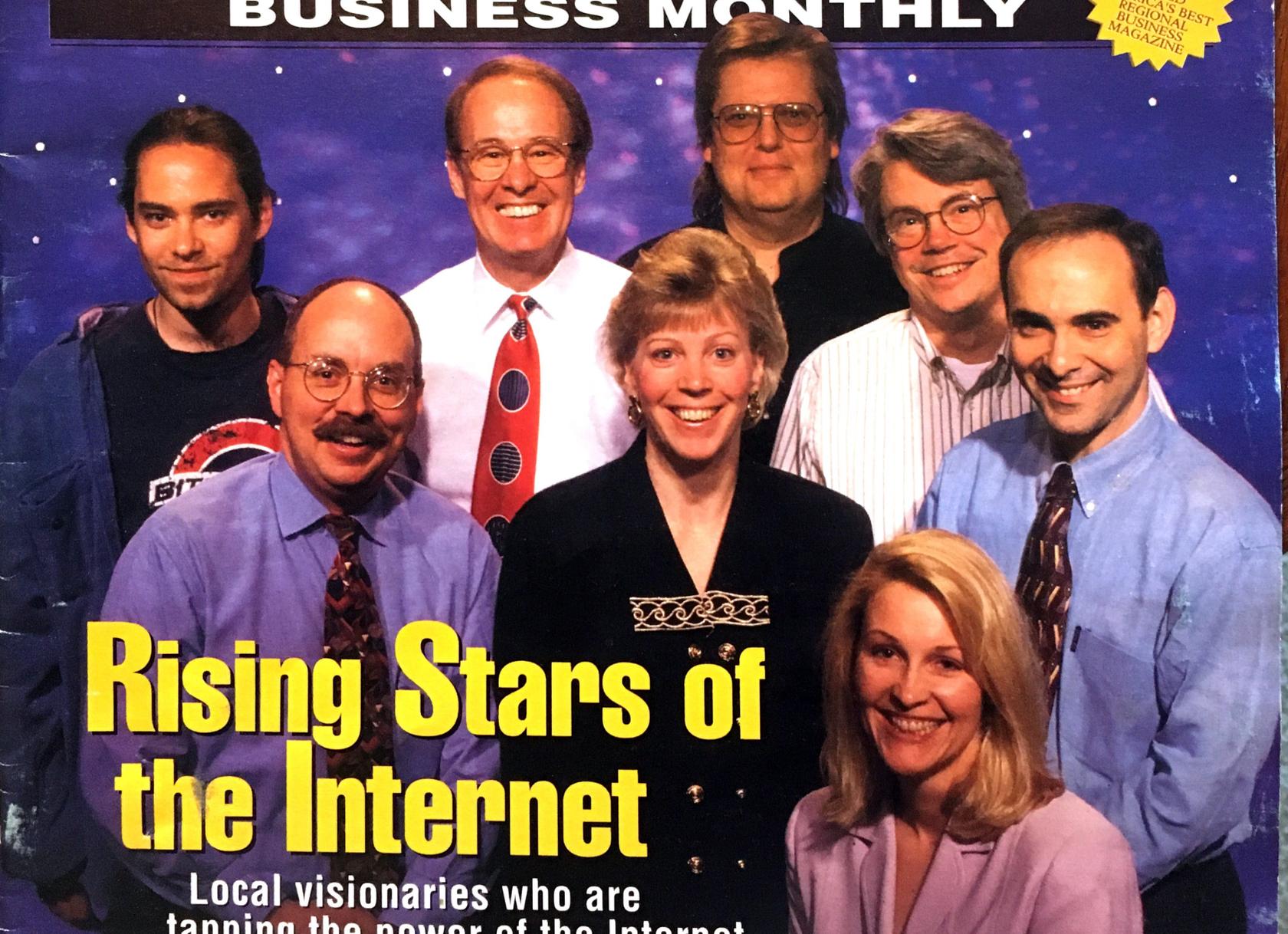


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Rising Stars of the Internet

Local visionaries who are
tapping the power of the Internet



Mike O'Connor
gofast.net, Inc.

What it does: gofast.net is primarily an ISP targeting mid-size companies.

Location: St. Paul

Web site: *www.gofast.net*

Gofast.net is a true '90s company. Created over a handshake and a few beers, it was started in a basement, won a major public-relations battle with a telecommunications giant, and is owned by four telecommuting guys who rarely set foot in the office.

The company was formed in December 1994 by Mike O'Connor, a crackerjack computer consultant, and Ralph Jenson, a senior programmer/analyst at Cray Research, to pioneer Internet access through the use of ISDN (integrated services digital network) phone lines. Three months later, O'Connor was told by US West that his fledgling company could not have access to any more of the high-speed lines.

O'Connor, 47, accused US West of electronic redlining by charging different Minnesota communities different rates for ISDN lines based on discriminatory demographics. O'Connor's grass-roots opposition prevailed thanks to his innovative use of electronic rabble-rousing. His Web site, *www.haven.com*, explained what was at stake and urged fellow Net heads to E-mail their legislators. As a result of O'Connor's efforts, prices were reduced to a more reasonable rate (about \$80 a month) and ISDN lines are now widely available throughout the metropolitan area.

Jeff Alton, the ISDN product manager at US West, defected to gofast.net in the summer of '95 ("He was the guy I was sparring with, and he liked us better," O'Connor says with a laugh). The fourth principal, Dan Cummings, a "LAN guru" from the University of Minnesota, signed on in April 1996.

"The four of us bring a whole lot of intellectual firepower to bear on Internet-related technologies," O'Connor says. "If you put us in a room and point us at a problem, we can come at it in a whole lot of different ways."

The operative word at gofast.net is definitely innovation. Last fall, the foursome attempted a wireless Internet trial from the top of the IDS building; they ran into some technology roadblocks due to poor weather but will try again later this year. They also were one of the first companies to try a new kind of digital Internet delivery called ADSL (asymmetrical digital subscriber line) and recently implemented faster Net access through the use of fiber-optic cable.

Gofast.net's clients include graphics firms, law firms, and small manufacturing companies, the vibrant middle marketplace that ISDN lines are perfect for, O'Connor says.