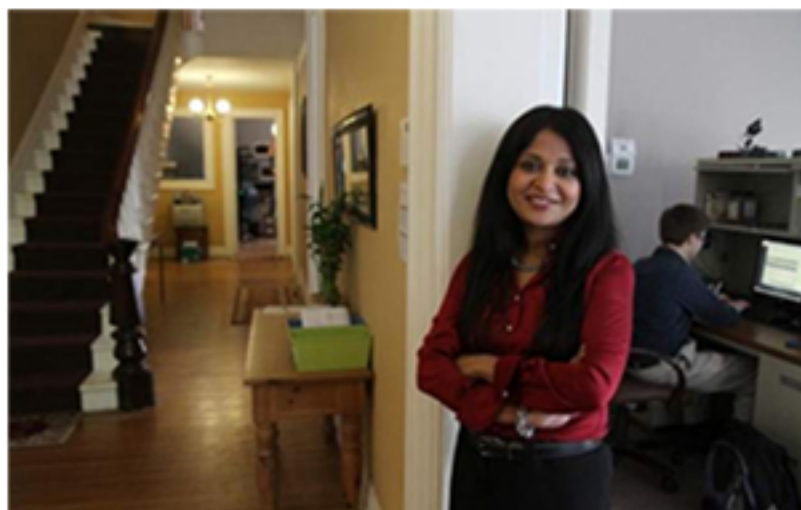


Capstone Technologies learned the ropes, grows



Capstone Technologies had no clear vision as far as its sales and marketing efforts were concerned when it began five years ago.

The Rochester-based company sold computer equipment to large corporations, services to small businesses, and specialized projects to mid-sized businesses.

"Marketing our company was nearly impossible," said CEO Silma Fowler, 42, of Perinton. "We tried to do so much and be so many things that efficiency suffered."

To make matters a little tougher, Capstone specialized in selling technology management and computer support — something potential clients couldn't see. The company needed to define its market and refine its offerings.

After an analysis identified company strengths, a target market, competition and prospective buyers, the company hired a marketing consultant to put together a specific plan for growth.

Capstone would concentrate on small- and medium-sized businesses whose owners had a defined strategic vision for their own expansion. It created several plans for clients to choose from that carefully detailed what they would be getting, based on their needs and budget. Then came the investment in the people, tools and systems that could demonstrate the company's expertise.

Capstone would concentrate on small- and medium-sized businesses whose owners had a defined strategic vision for their own expansion. It created several plans for clients to choose from that carefully detailed what they would be getting, based on their needs and budget. Then came the investment in the people, tools and systems that could demonstrate the company's expertise.

"Getting all of this together wasn't very easy for us because we were going out of our comfort zone and doing things differently than we'd been doing them," said Fowler. "But once we started, we were on a roll."

In addition, case studies and testimonials — not generic comments on the company being responsive, but praise for its response to a computer issue within 10 minutes, for example — have been critical.

"I can tell the business owner how great we are, but nothing gets the point across faster than showing them real Rochester business owners talking about how we are helping their business grow," she said.

The money-back guarantee doesn't hurt, either, though the risk goes both ways.

More than taking away some of the risk for potential clients, "it ups our game," said Fowler. "It keeps us on our toes so we make sure we're doing everything right."

Flanigan is a freelance writer covering the Rochester area.