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LISA NIEKAMP-URWIN  
OWNER, TOMORROW'S  
TECHNOLOGY TODAY LLC

# STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

Tomorrow's Technology Today is successfully growing a managed services practice in an unlikely market—residential and home-based businesses.

By Lisa Niekamp-Urwin • Photography by Andy Snow

**STARTED MY BUSINESS** in 2002 after being laid off from an IT department of a large company. After the layoff, I took a position as the “IT guy” at a small company in the area. Unfortunately, there wasn't enough full-time IT work there, so I did HR, quality testing, and other tasks that were asked of me. This wasn't what I really wanted to do, so one day I mustered up the courage to go to the owner and say, “How about I start a technology business and you are my first customer?” Within six months I had added another customer, and with simple word of mouth, the company grew from there.

A few years later, after the company became better known, people started asking me if I could come to their homes and take care of their computer problems—they had a virus, or a problem with spam or malware. I didn't want to take my business in that direction—going into people's homes—so I declined for the most part.

Then I started thinking about residential and small office/home office (SOHO) businesses as an untapped market. I researched having a retail storefront and decided I didn't want those hours. And then the idea appeared: the hardware store down the road. I met with the owner and discussed how he handled tool repair and suggested we add computers to that list. I would provide packets of forms, the customer would complete the info, the hardware store would drop us an email or give us a call, and we would pick up the machine. We would handle all contact with the customer and return the unit to the store when it was ready.

We tried that for a little bit, but traffic at the store was pretty stale. So we boosted the

marketing on our residential service, putting flyers up around town and advertising in the local papers and at the county fair. That seemed to help, but then when the economy hit its lowest point in 2009, our residential/SOHO business started booming. We then ventured out to two more local hardware stores and it has been great ever since.

People had been sitting at home getting frustrated trying to fix their computer problems themselves, or they tried some of the regional computer shops and had to wait a long time to get their machines back, or they got the machines back and were not satisfied with the service. With us being local—right there at the hardware store—people found it very convenient to try us out. We also made sure we did an excellent job of communicating the status of the work to our customers, and followed up after the work was done—things we continue to do today that help us improve our service with every subsequent job.

## THE MOVE TO AUTOMATION

This was about the time when I had started to investigate products to help automate the business. We were doing all our work manually, and it was very time consuming and tedious. Our technicians didn't need to be sitting around making sure the temp files were cleaned out, defrags run, or updates installed. So we invested in a remote monitoring and management system and started getting some of our small business clients on board.

That's when the lightbulb went on and I thought, “What if we offered residential and home-based business clients an all-in-one inclusive package as well, which would help us

scale this business segment?” We would tune up their PCs and clean up their malware, viruses, spam, and so on, and with the solution on board, they would be protected and monitored. If they got another infection, we would clean that up and it would all be included in a yearly price with no additional labor charges.

It was the right decision. We have now doubled our residential and SOHO business, and have about 200 clients across our entire customer base. With remote monitoring and protection, we could scale to accommodate an influx of new clients, one success at a time.

### Lisa Niekamp-Urwin

Owner, Tomorrow's  
Technology Today LLC

**Location:** St. Henry, Ohio

**Established:** 2002

**Number of employees:** 6

**Web site:** [www.ttecht.com](http://www.ttecht.com)

**Company focus:** We help small businesses in our area with corporate technology. We provide them with the same IT experience as they would have in a larger business with a dedicated IT staff.

**Favorite part of my job:** Getting to solve so many people's problems and walking away with the satisfaction that the technology is really working for them

**Least favorite part:** The economy and how it affects customers that are trying to get by, and knowing what they have to do to survive