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## **IT luncheons good places to share frustration and find a few answers**

**BY LISA MILLER**  
News Journal

**MANSFIELD** — Charles C. Smith is a one-man technology department at Eagle Mark 4, an Ashland Road company that refurbishes small vehicles for the shipping port industry.

As Eagle Mark 4's information technology manager, he is in charge of everything from the Web site to project management. He called Monday's chief information officer luncheon at the Holiday Inn an information extravaganza.

Looking around the room and noting that some of the people had been in the field for years, Smith said as a young person, with just 14 years experience, he was trying "to feed off everything that they'll tell you."

That's exactly the kind of networking Bob Leach and Bob Cohen of the Braintree Center for Business Innovation want the luncheons to foster.

Cohen appeared pleased with the attendance by some 45 representatives from education, utilities, health care, manufacturing, banking, economic development and government, including Mansfield Mayor Don Culliver, at one of his first public appearances since taking office Friday.

The luncheons provide one of the few opportunities for one-person IT operations such as Smith's to talk tech, Cohen said.

Leach, who heads the Northern Ohio IT Alliance that sponsored the luncheon along with Embarq, underlined the importance of the get together for IT managers from around the area. "It's very important we do this as a regional group," he said.

Patricia Stipanovich, technology integration manager for Embarq, was the guest speaker. Her work at the company has included roles in finance, corporate strategy and network services. She described Embarq as 108-year-old new company that began in 1899 in Kansas, became a separate company in 2006 and now does business in 18 states including Ohio, where it has with 1,200 employees, 1,778 retirees and a \$75 million payroll.

Insisting she was not there to make a sales pitch, Stipanovich said IT managers will want to look at communications needs on a more frequent basis. She used a host of acronyms and technical terms, from MPLS to data bundles, while discussing issues that are important to Embarq and other businesses, including availability, security and productivity.

"You want the ability to control your bandwidth," Stipanovich said. "It comes down to being able to manage it end to end."

Bill Davison, business development center manager for Graham Auto Mall, said he has gone through the types of experiences Stipanovich talked about while setting up remote sites. The center that takes all of the auto dealer's incoming calls is actually a block up the street from Graham's main complex.

"We are in a situation where we can never be down," Davison said.

At an event like the CIO luncheon, he said, "It's good to meet ... people who are struggling with the same things you are."

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