

term potential for the work force, all of whom would be shareholders in the new entity.

Now, teams from Spanlink are starting to integrate components of Cisco's customer contact and unified communications software platforms with Spanlink's **Fast-Call Enterprise** family of **Computer Telephone Integration/Interactive Voice Response** products.

Spanlink has "moved aggressively to develop leading capabilities with our entire suite of products in a short period of time," said **Eugene Lee**, vice president of marketing for Cisco's **Internet Communications Software Group**.

Spanlink will start hiring dozens of employees next week. About 80 percent will be in Minnesota and the rest in California. Each will get stock options.

"If we're successful at what we're doing now, there's potential to go public or be acquired by Cisco," Shockley said.

Shockley knows something about balancing acts.

He paid his way through engineering school doing unicycle acts. He was the founder of the now-250-member state association back in the 1970s.

Imaginet adding workers

Imaginet of downtown Minneapolis also is adding employees and capacity to its growing business of Internet-based services for client companies such as **Dain Rauscher**, **DirectAg.com**, **Goodyear**, **The St. Paul Companies** and **Select Comfort**.

A year ago, Imaginet was spun out of storage-media company **Imation** with 38 employees and annual revenues of about \$4 million.

The now-85-person firm, which puts together customized packages that range from Web-page design to transaction technology, expects to add 40 more people within several months. It's generating revenues of \$1 million per month.

The company just got a \$2.5 million credit line from **Century Bank of Eden Prairie**.

"We believe the future is not e-business; it's just business, and a component of any bricks-and-mortar business," said **Dan Mallin**, a founder and chief operating officer. "The sales process has changed from educating people about the Internet to helping them find best approaches. We take inputs of their strategic plans and incorporate an e-business component" to it.

Imaginet says it's losing less than 10 percent of its people to clients and other shops annually, well below the industry average for highly sought Web designers, project managers and the like.

The pay is competitive. Everybody gets stock options. There's no dress code or set hours. There are free refreshments, health club memberships and parties most Friday afternoons. Just expect to work long hours.

Oh yeah, there's a **Select Comfort** air-bed on site for a nap and breakfast in bed on your birthday. Really.

Imaginet was one of the first and largest local shops to jump into the "e-services" game.

USB eyes St. Paul site

U.S. Bancorp, wooed heavily by the city and downtown boosters, is considering another big operations center on the **West River Flats** area across the **Mississippi** from downtown **St. Paul**.

"We're still in the preliminary stages of looking for sites to house some backroom operations," confirmed a company spokeswoman. "We're going to make the decision about whether to go forward . . . this summer."

Hundreds of jobs probably would be pulled from other St. Paul facilities, where U.S. Bank employs a total of 5,500 in its downtown, Energy Park and RiverBank locations. The company also is bursting at the seams and adding employees weekly in operations that support its vast credit card, payment-systems and other units.

It's possible that more than 100 back shop workers of its investment business, **U.S. Bancorp Piper Jaffray**, could be moved to a new location. Previously, management gradually shifted hundreds of workers from more expensive real estate in downtown Minneapolis to lower-cost space in St. Paul.

The bank says it won't divert headquarters employees when it moves about 1,500 downtown workers to 20 floors of its new digs on the **Nicollet Mall** next year. Piper started moving into the new **U.S. Bancorp Center** this month.

— *Neal St. Anthony reports on companies, people and trends in the Twin Cities business community. His column appears Tuesdays and Fridays. He can be reached at 612-673-7144 or Nstanthony@startribune.com.*