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New Online Business Options in Discussion

Tough times hit health care, too

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MALTA – As technology merges with the business world, entrepreneurs can sometimes use a hand navigating their online options.

In an effort to help local business, the DeKalb County Economic Development Corporation on Wednesday hosted a business roundtable at the Kishwaukee College Conference Center focused on Web-based opportunities in cloud computing, e-commerce and open source software.

Cohen Barnes, president of DeKalb Fiber Optic, LLC and president/CEO of TBC Net, Inc. in DeKalb., presented the basics of cloud computing, a Web-based alternative to server-stored resources.

“All you need is a functioning Internet device with a popular Web browser,” Barnes said to do cloud computing.

Barnes also outlined some potential issues that could users may encounter and issues new users may want to consider before switching to cloud computing.

“The volume of choices complicates things,” Barnes said. “Security can be a concern, [and] reliability.”

Internet connection problems may also be roadblocks to conducting business because “if your Internet goes out, so does your cloud-based office.”

Ralph De Stefano, president of Direct Response Web Solutions, Inc., shifted gears by introducing the audience to mobile

commerce. He compared it to e-commerce business transactions that take place via the web.

“The difference is that your transaction is completed on a mobile device,” De Stefano said.

Devices like the Amazon Kindle, Nintendo DS and Play-Station Portable can be used to perform these transactions.

De Stefano gave several examples of this technology already being utilized, like coupons that can be transmitted to mobile phones when a potential customer approaches a retail store, or parking fees being paid via a mobile device rather than by credit card.

A third Web-based possibility was presented by Michael Verhulst, chief innovation officer at Elegant Research, Inc., in Sycamore.

He introduced open source software as an alternative to traditional commercial software.

“Open source is often less expensive to use, usually free,” Verhulst said. He said that millions of dollars are saved by using open source technology, which is “similar to social networking.”

“It’s free software where you can do what you want with it.” Verhulst said.

Craig Mathey, business development officer at The National Bank and Trust Co., was at the roundtable and said he attends events hosted by the DCEDC to “take away what I can.”

“I am non-tech. That’s why these roundtables are here,” Mathey said.

Doug Stice, president of Momark Office Source in Sycamore, said the events are beneficial because of the shift to Web-based business.

“Today you can sit in your office and order whatever you need,” Stice said.