

GRAHAM SAMPSON

It took Graham Sampson a decade to build up his business.

So when it wound up in bankruptcy court, a victim of the worst slump in the history of the telecommunications industry, he came to the rescue.

"I wasn't going to sit idly by and watch this New Jersey-based company destroyed," recalls Sampson, the cofounder and former chief executive officer of ECI Conference Call Services, LLC.

The Wayne-based audio conferencing business had been purchased for \$128 million by Teligent, Inc. seven months earlier, in October 2000, only to see the Vienna, VA-based company get caught in the same bind that slammed other telecom companies when business dried up.

"The funding just shut off faster than you could run across the hall and turn off the faucet," the 46-year-old Wayne resident said. Sampson was let go by Teligent when it filed for bankruptcy, but he vowed to try and rescue ECI.

This past January, he succeeded. He persuaded Investcorp, a global investment group with offices in New York, London and Bahrain, to invest in ECI and return him to the CEO post. They bought the business for \$60 million in cash.

"To have them write a check when no one else is writing any checks in the telecom sector is just phenomenally gratifying," he said. Now it is his job to relaunch the company—a job that begins in earnest today.

There are some pluses working in his favor.

Despite the failure of Teligent, ECI remained open and managed to hold onto 98 percent of its customer base, which includes clients such as Walt Disney, Credit Suisse First Boston, the American Bar Association and E*Trade. And the company has no debt.

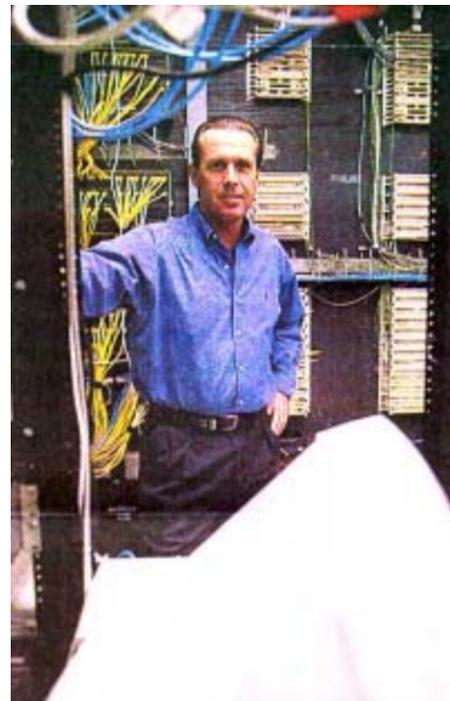
ECI offers a portfolio of telephone conferencing services, including operator-assisted calls, automated calls, question-and-answer sessions and Web conferencing.

The timing for the relaunch is good, too, Sampson said. With the recession and the events of Sept. 11, there has been a huge upswing in the audio conferencing business, which has a market worth \$2.5 billion, he said.

ECI, which employs 300 people and has about \$40 million in sales, expects the future to be brighter. In the next few weeks, the company plans to roll out a new line of products that will make audio conferencing even more efficient and lucrative, Sampson said.

"The funny thing about the teleconferencing industry is it is relatively young," he said. Before 1999, virtually all of it was done manually. Today, 80 percent of his business is automated.

"A conference call is no longer the big event it used to be," he said.



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