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Energy conservation firm in right place, right time

It survived the '90s; now Franklin Energy is growing fast

The Business Journal of Milwaukee - by [Rich Kirchen](#)

The burgeoning energy conservation business has buoyed **Franklin Energy Services**, as the consulting firm has added 40 employees this year and is seeking to hire 30 more.

Franklin Energy has tapped into the growing field of advising businesses on reducing their utility costs and connecting those businesses with financial incentives to undertake energy-saving projects and practices. The firm is hired by utility companies and state public service commissions that view energy conservation as an important strategy for both cutting energy costs and delaying the need for new power plants.



Franklin Energy's largest clients include We Energies, Milwaukee, and the Focus On Energy program mandated by the state Legislature and backed by investor-owned utilities in Wisconsin.

The company may seem like an overnight success, but it was founded in 1994 and survived the late 1990s when energy conservation fell out of favor. State and utility company funding for such programs has climbed the past few years as natural gas and electric prices have skyrocketed.

"I've only been waiting 14 years to be in the right place at the right time," joked Franklin Energy chief executive officer Dan Tarrence.

Tarrence, 45, became CEO in November 2007, when Franklin Energy was sold for an undisclosed amount to Milwaukee private equity firm Brass Ring Capital and a Tarrence-led management group. He previously was general manager. Founder and former CEO Paul Schueller still consults with the company and owns stock.

The capital infusion helped pay the costs of Franklin Energy's growth. Tarrence declined to disclose sales figures but said revenue grew 50 percent in 2007 and will increase another 70 percent this year.

Plans for Mequon

The company has boosted employment from 40 in 2006 to 117 today. It bought and remodeled a former Lutheran church in Port Washington for its headquarters, opened an office in New Berlin and is preparing for an office in Mequon. The firm has three additional Wisconsin offices, one in Minnesota and two in Nevada.

Franklin Energy is seeking engineers and people with experience in the energy and electrical fields. The company has also hired and trained college graduates.

The pay range for Franklin's openings is \$35,000 to \$70,000 per year. New hires do everything from canvassing business parks for prospects to visiting businesses and making recommendations on energy-saving measures.

Franklin Energy acts as a nonbiased third party in suggesting that businesses take small steps like installing more efficient lights or capital-intensive measures like installing new boilers.

We Energies has relied on Franklin Energy's expertise as the utility reduced its power output by 55 megawatts under a 2004 mandate by the state Public Service Commission, said Judy Mathewson, manager of energy efficiency strategies. We Energies has provided more than \$12 million in incentives to customers from programs involving Franklin Energy since 2004.

"They are a leader in the conservation and renewable (energy) business," Mathewson said.

Franklin Energy will likely continue working for the Focus on Energy program beyond 2008, said Jolene Sheil of the **Wisconsin Public Service Commission**.

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