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Business First of Buffalo - by [David Bertola](#) Business First

BRIDGING GAPS: Providing services to legal, health care and education pros

Talking *the* talk

How a love of
languages
became a
business venture



Founder David Nojaim, right, said his companies offer three-way telephonic services in up to 150 different languages.

Soon after graduating from East Aurora Central High School, David Nojaim decided he wanted to see the world. First, he visited Mexico, where he volunteered at an orphanage, working on a roofing project for a not for profit organization.

"It got me interested in learning languages," said Nojaim, who today is fluent in four, including English.

After Mexico, it was off to Spain, where he perfected his Spanish. Nojaim saw more of the world while working as a teacher for seven years in Iceland and Germany at **U.S. Department of Defense Schools**. His students were primarily children of those who had military or U.S. government jobs there.

In 1997, Nojaim would transform his love of languages into a business, **Languatek Inc.** Working in a room over his garage, the company specialized in translation and interpreting needs.

Nojaim's first project was translating a brochure for a friend who worked in the automotive industry.

"The little jobs led to more," he said. And in 2005, he left his job as a Spanish teacher at his alma mater, East Aurora Central, to focus 100 percent on his business.



Clark Crook of Synergy, left, listens in while Languatek's Alex Fernandez serves as an intermediary, translating over the phone with a vendor from Spanish to English and vice versa.

History: The first year Languatek was in business, Nojaim billed \$40,000 in translation services.

Nojaim's goal was, and continues to be, bridging gaps between people and businesses of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Languatek provides its services to a variety of industries, including legal, health care and education.

Once, while providing service to a customer in the manufacturing industry, he helped search for a part-time interpreter with technical knowledge who equally understood the language translation needs, as well as the workaday worlds of the disparate cultures.

Eventually, in lieu of a part-time employee, two full-time consultants were hired.

Nojaim did the math. Two people working 40-50 hours a week was a more profitable rate than what the original part-time interpretation needs called for.

And just like that, Labortek was born.

While Languatek focuses on solutions for call centers, school districts, medical facilities and the language industry, Labortek is an employment agency whose specialty is peopling companies with those from administrative, technical and engineering fields.

Customers: Labortek and Languatek serve a variety of industries, as diverse as the languages and people they hire to help out. Locally, Languatek customers have included **HSBC Bank USA NA**, **Fisher-Price** and **Gibraltar Steel**.

Biggest Challenge: Cash flow and managing growth.

"When you grow, you need to have cash to finance that growth," Nojaim said, whose company pays the first month of a consultant's salary.

"To pay people \$50 to \$60 an hour becomes a cash flow issue," he said.

Who's Who: Nojaim is company president; Valerie Tate, chief financial officer; Kate Martucci, human resources specialist; Susan McBurney assists with education industry initiatives; Alex Fernandez runs recruiting and Lisa Countryman, whom Nojaim refers to as the "goddess of translation." In addition to the five full-time employees, Nojaim employs four part timers.

What's next: Nojaim sees more growth in the areas of telephonic interpreting and government contracts. In five years, he said, he'd like the company to have branch offices opened in other cities.

He's also looking to leverage a new three-way telephonic interpreting service that allows his company to facilitate conversations with translators 24/7. The solution has become increasingly popular among Languatek customers.

Biggest investment in 2007: Liability coverage for consultants, the newly-refurbished office on Main Street, and the technology infrastructure to support it totaled nearly \$50,000.

Revenues: Last year, between Languatek and Labortek, the companies topped \$800,000. He projects 2008 numbers to exceed \$1 million.

Languatek Inc./[Labortek LLC](#)

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Timely lesson

It's about the people: "Surround yourself with people who are better than you," David Nojaim said, citing the example that he knows his own skill set, but found someone who is proficient in finance and writing contracts. He also spoke to the importance of planning your work, and working your plan.

