memphis CROSSROADS

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to Watch in 2011

FOCUS ON 2011

LOOKING AHEAD

These Memphis companies are poised to shine even brighter in the year ahead.







With 2011
poised to begin,
these Memphis
companies look to
be among those
setting the pace.

Using 2010 as a benchmark, Crossroads thinks these 10 Memphis firms are solid bets to have a great year again.

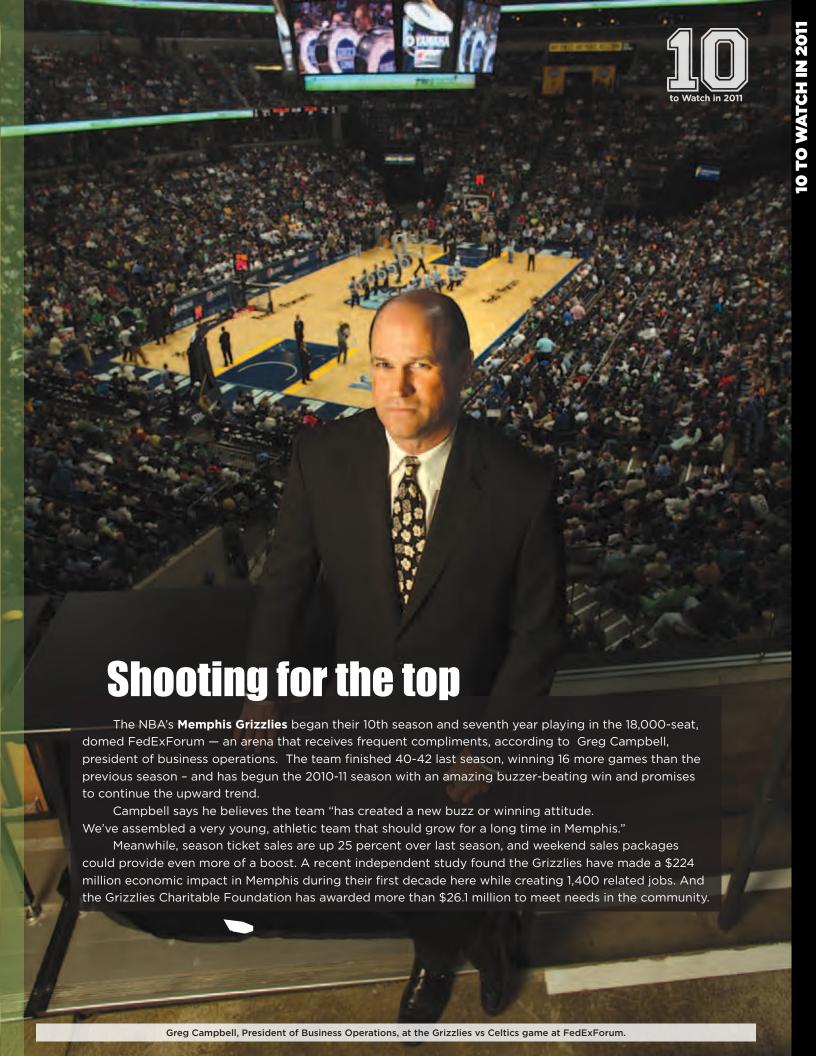
Several of our highlighted companies have been recognized by observers in their industries for reaching dizzying heights. They are hiring, opening additional offices and selling more of their product and services. Their leaders have can-do, winning attitudes.

It hasn't been about luck, though timing has been important for each of them this year. A family-owned investment banking concern that had just kicked off an anniversary growth initiative found customers flocking to it after the public began to shy away from larger firms. Several companies with corporate clients newly committed to thrift made money by helping their clients save their own. And in adapting to an uneven economic year, one of our 10 to Watch found that challenges in one sector signaled a good time to expand into another.

All of our featured companies have been in business for at least a decade - and one since the Civil War. Experience seems key to their success.

Their leaders say that keeping up with technology is vital. As more mobile devices, video streaming and other electronic communication and advertising avenues are used, these businesses aren't playing catch-up. Instead, they are taking advantage of trends and teaching their clients how to make their own businesses more profitable.

Don't forget about the people who use all that technology, they say: Investing in people - their employees and their clients - is part of their success.





Running Pony Productions began in 1994 only to quickly grow into the largest full-service video/film/digital production company in the region. Its services include production of corporate video presentations, television programs, documentaries, commercials, website content, interactive CDs and DVDs.

The two principals of the Emmy Award-winning company, named to the 2009 BusinessTN Hot 100 list, expect it to continue its ascent as the number of video platforms increase beyond traditional TV commercials and DVDs.

"From smart phones to digital billboards, a huge variety of screens now exist where we can place a client's message," says partner Rod Starns. Partner Jonathan Epstein expects business to grow as Running Pony continues to educate clients about ways video can be used online in cost-effective ways. "We see ourselves as a resource and a partner for clients," he says, letting them "know the possibilities that exist and help them keep up with the technology."



Resting assured

Service Assurance started out 21 years ago strictly as a computer maintenance and service business. Now it provides backup data space that principal Mark Giannini said has the added benefit of being a built-in disaster recovery plan.

On an as-needed basis, Service Assurance helps businesses understand how technology can drive revenue, Giannini said, eliminating the need for a sometimes costly information technology department on site.

The company has been "on a hiring spree lately," says Giannini, who owns the business along with Kelli Mitchell. Service Assurance's growth in 2010 was aided by a thrifty business model taking hold at many firms – one Giannini expects will likely prevail for some time. "Outsourcing helps businesses conserve their capital," he said. "They still need computers, but not the huge upfront capital outlay."



