

Bailout contest features \$50,000 technology makeover

February 20, 2009 4:20 PM

By Tom Timberlake

Bulletin correspondent



Pamela and Nathan Viveiros, founders and owners of ThinkTech Computers, review the numbers in their New Bedford office.

While small businesses across the country worry about whether the government's latest stimulus plan will ever benefit their companies, ThinkTech Computers in New Bedford is offering a bailout package that's only an application away.

"It's about time someone gave a bailout to the little guy," said Nathan Viveiros, who with his wife, Pamela Viveiros, are the co-founders and owners of ThinkTech, a local technology firm.

"There's always bailouts for big companies, and I think people are really frustrated with the whole thing," Ms. Viveiros said, referring to how government stimulus efforts, so far, have seemingly benefitted Wall Street, but not Main Street.

Pointing to the never-ending news of economic strife, Viveiros said ThinkTech's technology bailout is their way of saying "it's not all bad."

Using her company's success as an example, she said, "We grew our sales 127 percent over last year, in a down economy. There's hope out there.

"And we're driven to show other businesses that it's possible to be productive and profitable, even in this economy."

The \$65,000 bailout will be awarded via a contest that will determine four winners. Three winners will receive partial bailouts of \$5,000 each, while the grand prizewinner gets a technology bailout package worth \$50,000.

The funds can be used for network upgrades, hardware, software and a year of IT services. "It's like a total makeover, technology-wise, for the business," Viveiros said.

The contest is open to all businesses in ThinkTech's market area, which includes southeast Massachusetts, and all of Rhode Island. To enter, applicants can visit www.bailoutcontest.com, where they can complete or download a two-page application.

Calling ThinkTech's efforts to combat the economic downturn creative and unique, Roy Nascimento, president of the New Bedford Area Chamber of Commerce, said he applauds the Viveiroses for taking a leadership role and giving back to the business community that helped them grow their company. "Yes, we are in the midst of a very severe economic recession, there's no doubt about that, but despite the downturn, there are still opportunities out there," Nascimento said.

"ThinkTech has been able to seize on those opportunities," he said. "Their bailout is a way for them to do that, and, at the same time, give back, helping other businesses and our regional economy."

Viveiros said entrants should make a compelling case about how they might benefit from a technology bailout. "We're asking them to write a few paragraphs on why we should choose them.

"We're really looking for the winner to be somebody who will pay it forward, so to speak. Somebody who will take that gift and make something happen with it.

"How are they going to use the bailout to grow their business, hire more people or impact the community in some way," Viveiros said, explaining what an entrant's essay should contain.

Completed applications can be e-mailed to contest@thinktechonline.com, or faxed to 508-984-1512. Entrants can also mail applications to ThinkTech, 4 Welby Road, New Bedford, MA 02745. Deadline for application submission is April 17. Each entrant is also eligible for a free, no strings attached network audit.

A committee — made up of executives from the area's chambers of commerce —will make the final decision on the winners, who will be announced May 5.

ThinkTech's stimulus package includes technology from their business partners — such as Microsoft, Hewlett Packard, Cymphonix and Xerox— who are helping to sponsor the bailout.

Viveiros, 29, and her husband, 32, both lifelong SouthCoast residents, started ThinkTech just out of college in their third floor Fairhaven apartment. They expanded into their garage, then to several other locations within the New Bedford area, outgrowing their space each time.

Last year the firm had three employees. Now, ThinkTech's larger office space, new as of last fall, is home to nine employees.

