



OWEN RILEY JR. / Staff

Brad Cunningham at his Network Controls company on Friday.

Network Controls enjoys rewards of its new focus

Change brought shift to structure cabling, government jobs

By **Angelia Davis**
STAFF WRITER
adavis@greenvilleneews.com

Network Controls & Electric's change in ownership three years ago came with a change of focus. Brad Cunningham, who bought the Greenville-based business in 2008, set goals to focus the company more on structured cabling and expanding into government projects. Those accomplished goals are now among the many milestones that are part of the com-

pany's celebration of its 20th anniversary. Supplying structured cabling is now about 75 to 80 percent of the company's business, Cunningham said. In June, the company was awarded a more than \$65,000 contract for power and communication line and related structures construction at the McEntire Joint Air National Guard station in Eastover, according to Gregory Andrews, a spokesman for the Southeast region of the U.S. General Services Ad-

ministration office. Network Control's employees and leaders will celebrate the company's successes with customers and vendors during a golf tournament in the fall. In the meantime, new milestones are in the works. In the third quarter of this year, Network Controls is expected to move its headquarters from Progress Road in Greenville to a larger space at State 14 and I-85, Cunningham said. The company is also working

toward creating a Telecom Division to offer converged telephony for enterprise customers. "Right now, in the cabling market, specifically in the Upstate, we're the majority of the market share," Cunningham said. "The problem with that is once you get the majority, you can't get it all. It's not even good for business." So, he said, the only way the company can expand and continue to grow in the Upstate is to add some product line to its mix. The company is also adding

See **NETWORK** on page 4E

NETWORK

FROM PAGE 1E

to its service area. It already provides services in areas of Alabama, Tennessee, North Carolina, as well as throughout South Carolina.

Nearly two years ago, the company opened a Columbia office. It was moved into a bigger space in January.

Cunningham said 2010 may bring the opening of an office in the Florence, Myrtle Beach, or Wilmington area to help manage the work Network Controls does up the coast of North Carolina.

In 2009, it was ranked sixth among South Carolina's Top 25 Fastest Growing Companies.

The competition was co-sponsored by The Capital Corp. and the South Carolina Chamber of Commerce and recognized companies for "exceptional performance in both revenue and employment growth."

"This business had never been recognized in that kind of fashion," Cunningham said. "It's a big deal because the failure rate for small business is pretty high in a way.

"To have this business be sustainable, profitable, and to grow like it has for this long is a real testament to the business itself, the original founder to the structure, and to a lot of things," he said. "That's been a real win for us."

A personal win for Cunningham may have been the purchase of Network Controls from its previous owner David Clyborne, who is currently the company's vice president of electrical operations.

Cunningham, a "serial entrepreneur" who received his bachelor's degree from Furman University and a master's from Clemson, said the last two companies he'd started were from scratch.

This time, "I just wanted to come into an existing business and kind of take it from there, and this fit the bill perfectly. It was just good luck for once," he said.

He decided to shift the company's priority toward technology partly because his background centered in that area. The movement was also a response to the state of commercial construction, which has been close to non-existent because of the economy.

"Electrical contracting is very new construction dependent. New commercial construction continues to be really down," he said.

Network Controls hired a manager this year to head government solutions. The company has received certification as a veteran-owned business, positioning the company for expanded government work.

"This company has always done some amount of work on military bases, in government offices, in school systems and stuff," Cunningham said. "But there had been nobody dedicated to going after true government projects and making it a core part of our business. That's what we're doing now."