



Ernest Broadwater, second from left, says his printing and promotional-product company scored a lucrative client in the Tennessee Lottery, handling 80 percent of its print products. With him are Robert Stockard, far left, Bill Walker, Al Jenkins and Thomas Mann.

## Backing up confidence

**With its steady stream of clients, Broadwater has designs on being the next big thing**

BY J. HOLLY DOLLOFF  
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Confidence, says Ernest Broadwater, is key to entrepreneurial success.

Broadwater, formerly a sales management executive with corporate giants Carnation and Frito-Lay, launched his eponymous printing and promotional product company from his house in 2001.

"I knew it would be highly competitive," he says. "I knew the margins would be slim, but I thought I could do anything."

In the past four years, he's achieved out most of his early goals – building a solid infrastructure, for example – and now Broadwater and Associates Group Inc. is poised to be the next big thing, having recently been named one of Nashville's Future 50 companies by the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce.

But confidence, while important, isn't the only fundamental for a successful

business, Broadwater says.

The right staff and a commitment to customer service and quick turnaround are also essential, and judging from developments in just the past year, Broadwater is succeeding in both areas.

He's added another senior staff member to his three-man base, and plans to double his staff – when he finds the right people for the team.

"I treat this place like a ministry," says Broadwater. "I look for people who have been downsized by corporate America or those who have retired and now don't want to be: They have enormous skill."

As a result, Broadwater's staff members are all management veterans. Partner Al Jenkins served a stint with Service Merchandise, while Robert Stockard came from Ford Glass. Broadwater and Associates' newest addition, Thomas Mann, joined the firm in May. His background includes a 13-year career with General Motors before moving to Saturn in a human resources capacity.

And the company has a healthy book of clients.

Broadwater's new digs in the Nashville Business Incubation Center – down the hall from his last office, but twice as big – feature glass display cases stuffed with products the company has produced for the Tennessee Lottery, Fleetguard, Gay-

lord Entertainment Co., Mt. Zion Baptist Church, Vanderbilt University and Corrections Corp. of America, among others.

But Broadwater says that, from a sales and production angle, he's just getting started.

"Our biggest challenge is making people aware we exist," he says, estimating 98 percent of business to date has come via personal referral. No marketing from a guy who built his career in sales?

"Infrastructure has taken precedence," Broadwater says.

He's ready to ramp up his market presence, but there's a reason the company has thrived sans pricey advertising campaigns: old fashioned service.

In Broadwater's industry, timely turnaround of product is essential – perhaps more so than price, since suppliers are paying much the same for product – and all the company's strategic partners must hew to the same principle.

"Anyone we work with can print," Broadwater says of his corporate alliances. "But what good is price if you get the product the day after you need it?"

The young company got its first big chance to prove itself in early 2004, when it scored a job for lottery gaming companies GTech and Scientific Games.

GTech sent a digital file for four-color

postcards at 6:30 p.m. one day. The finished product was due by 9 a.m. the next morning.

Broadwater's successful completion of the project paved the way for more lottery business. The small firm now handles about 80 percent of all the Tennessee Lottery's print materials, a statistic that makes Broadwater proud.

"I'm a little bit sentimental about some things," he says of the lottery's business.

He may be sentimental about clients, but about straight business principals, he's nothing but pragmatic.

At the beginning of 2005, Broadwater set out 10 key objectives to accomplish during the year. Halfway through, his team is knocking them off the list at a rapid rate.

They've upgraded computers, added online services to the product mix, extended the company's line of credit in preparation to go after more large corporate clients, and they're actively seeking personnel.

And plans for 50 percent revenue growth in the coming year are on track. It's a big figure, but a tangible one, says Broadwater, noting that revenues tripled in 2004.

"It's not pie in the sky – it's doable," he says.