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## Franklin Energy continuing to add employees

The Business Journal of Milwaukee - by [Rich Kirchen](#)

**Franklin Energy Services** LLC, which has tapped into recession-proof growth by advising businesses on reducing utility costs and winning financial incentives, has expanded into Michigan to capitalize on the state's new energy-efficiency program.

The Port Washington-based firm this year has won five contracts with private and municipal utilities and has hired 30 employees in Michigan with plans to hire 10 more by early 2010. The company will end 2009 with 210 employees, an increase of 70 from a year earlier.

Franklin Energy also continues hiring in southeast Wisconsin for its Port Washington, Mequon and New Berlin offices.

The company, which takes its name from electricity pioneer Benjamin Franklin, will finish the year with revenue of about \$20 million. That figure is up substantially from 2008, which also was a growth year, said CEO Paul Schueller, but he wouldn't specify the percentage increase.

Schueller founded the company in 1989 and in 2007 sold the majority stake for an unspecified amount to Milwaukee private equity firm **Brass Ring Capital**. He left day-to-day involvement, but remained on the board at Franklin Energy for much of 2008 when the company was led by Dan Tarrence.

Schueller returned in December 2008 at the urging of Brass Ring principal Steve Peterson and invested some of his own equity upon rejoining the firm. Tarrence remains at the company as president. Schueller's charge has been to focus on new business development.

"We were concentrating so much time on growth of existing clients," Schueller said. "We needed to do something strategically different to expand our market."

One mainstay customer of Franklin Energy has been We Energies, Milwaukee. The utility provided more than \$12 million in incentives to customers from programs involving Franklin Energy since 2004.

### Michigan work

Schueller sensed opportunity in Michigan where in October 2008 Gov. Jennifer Granholm signed the Clean, Renewable, and Efficient Energy Act, which, among other things, pushed energy optimization schemes for utilities.

Franklin Energy partnered with other firms to win contracts with the state's two largest utility companies, Detroit Edison and Consumers Energy, and won three smaller contracts, including two with municipal-owned utilities.

One of those municipal utilities, the **Lansing Board of Water & Light**, selected Franklin Energy through a request-for-proposals process. The company is "doing a great job" and customers have eagerly responded to rebates for implementing energy-saving equipment and strategies, said spokeswoman Sue Warren.

"There's a lot of pent-up demand," Warren said. "A lot of customers would like to become more energy-efficient but can't afford it, so the rebate helps them over that hurdle."

Franklin Energy also has added contracts in Minnesota, Colorado and New Mexico.

The company has invested \$1 million in the latest expansion, which includes a new information technology system. Franklin Energy also received an increase in its credit line with **Associated Bank**, Schueller said.

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