



# STI Sets Up 'Knowledge Center'

Americus looks for other high-tech firms to follow

Help-desk technology firm STI Knowledge broke ground on a 26,000-sq.-ft. facility in Americus, bringing 200 jobs to rural Georgia.

The facility is slated for completion in late 2003. But thanks to a partnership between STI Knowledge, Quick Start and South Georgia Technical College, the company was able to hire a small workforce and start operations from Americus long before construction began.

STI Knowledge offers an innovative blend of best practices, certification and technology, with a strict focus on customer service. It provides help-desk outsourcing, education and "knowledge centers" — a concept that provides a single entry point for customers, employees, vendors and shareholders to gain specific knowledge on demand.

Last year, the firm wanted to start an outsourcing center in Americus for a healthcare client. So Quick Start provided customer-service training for six employees and a supervisor, and South Georgia Tech provided office space in the school's technology center. By December, company employees were taking calls from inside South Georgia Tech.

STI executives, local officials and invited guests break ground on STI's new facility.

Quick Start was "a great jump-start with training on real-world applications," said Cliff Oxford, company founder and CEO.

"I have been very impressed with the responsiveness of Quick Start," said Arelean Hurlimann, chief administrative officer of STI Knowledge. "They will bring value to us, and as a company, that's what we look for — value."



Cliff Oxford, founder and CEO of STI Knowledge

Founded in 1995, Atlanta-based STI Knowledge is a fast-growing company with branches across the U.S. and international operations in Hong Kong, India, South Africa and Europe. It boasts an impressive list of

Fortune 500 clients, and the Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce named Oxford "Entrepreneur of the Year" in 2000. Adding further to its success, the company recently secured \$14 million in equity capital.

Strong core values are a key part of this success. "Our whole mission is to exceed expectations," Oxford said. "We want to be a part of Americus and exceed the expectations of this community."

Americus faced stiff competition for the new facility from suitors as far away as Ireland. But Americus won out, in part due to the strong partnership with Quick Start and



Jon E. Johnson, South Georgia Tech president, and Arelean Hurlimann, STI chief administrative officer

South Georgia Tech. OneGeorgia Authority also provided a technology switch for the rural area.

"We are very pleased to have a role in the success of STI Knowledge by supplying them with a world-class workforce," said Sparky Reeves, VP of economic development at South Georgia Tech.

The value of Quick Start's partnership is "immeasurable," said Jon E. Johnson, president of the college. "It's so important that they have a trained workforce on Day One — particularly in the technology field."

Quick Start will offer a comprehensive training plan for the 200 new STI Knowledge employees, including interview training for the management team, technical training on computer networks and remote service tools, and a full array of customer contact skills.

The new facility will be in close proximity to South Georgia Tech, which will supply a continuous pool of employees from its information technology programs.

"They will bring in higher-than-average wages," Johnson said, noting that the presence of STI Knowledge might lure more technology-oriented firms to rural Georgia. 

