

# Sinex flies high despite airline industry slump

By Pamela Rust

**B**arry Sinex was determined to bring his airline maintenance software into the marketplace.

He'd worked first-hand in the industry, and knew his program could save airlines millions of dollars.

Software in hand and in search of financial backing, he approached Duluth-based Northeast Ventures Corp. in 1999. Noting some potential, it supplied a consultant, John Miller, to review Sinex's business plan and assess the product's viability.

Miller was so impressed, he quit his job to become chief executive at Sinex Aviation Technologies.

"I had no desire to run the company," Sinex says. "He was our first employee."

Sinex says his role is head of the ideas department. "I write a prototype, send it to the engineering department, and they build it into world-class software," he says.

And the world is watching. Sinex Aviation has seven major customers, including U.S. Airways, Air Canada, and Alaskan Airways. Other clients include Atlas Cargo Lines, and Polar Air Cargo. An agent promotes the software in Israel. And the company is talking to airlines in Turkey and The Netherlands.

"We anticipate being profitable very soon. We have two major airline contracts close to closing," says Sinex. "And we're not going out and asking. We don't do any advertising — people are calling us. Our success is our advertisement."

## Sinex Aviation Technologies

[www.sinex.com](http://www.sinex.com)

### at a glance

**Senior Management:** Barry Sinex, founder; John Miller, CEO

**Ownership:** Employees own 50 percent; remainder owned by Northeast Ventures Corp., White Cliff Capital partners, MinCorp. and other investors.

**Location:** 11 E. Superior St., Duluth Technology Village

**2002 Revenues:** about \$10 million

**Employees:** 54 full-time equivalents (FTEs)

**Services/Strategy:** Creating and installing cost-saving airline maintenance software systems using the latest information technology.

CEO). "And it pays for itself within six to 10 months."

U.S. Rep. James Oberstar, D-MN, ranking minority member on the House Transportation Committee, and former chairman of its aviation subcommittee, is a strong supporter of the firm.

"Their future is very bright," he says. "The software program gives an overview so management can track trends, in a centralized location. It helps line mechanics in doing their work. For example, if a mechanic enters a part code number into



photo by Pamela Rust

Barry Sinex, founder and board director at Sinex Aviation Technologies, heads the company's "Ideas" department. He says the company is held back only by the limits of technology.

the system and it's the wrong part, the system won't let him mount that part."

Oberstar says airline executives have told him Sinex Aviation software speeds up maintenance as much as 50 percent.

"I've also talked to the FAA about Sinex software," he says. "They're high on the system. It would help them with tracking and oversight of airlines. It puts it all in one place and reduces paperwork, while providing an electronic trail of evidence," Oberstar says.

The software offers numerous visual

aids, is logical and intuitive, helps to identify problem areas and improve maintenance processes.

"It's a management tool that takes the industry a quantum leap forward," Oberstar says.

Sinex learned what he knows about aviation maintenance after years in the industry. He worked for Stan Melling at Northwest Airlines, coordinating Airbus production schedules at the carrier's maintenance base in Duluth.

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