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Tuesday, September 11, 2007

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Wayne E. Smith / The Detroit News

Solid Signal founder Jerry Chapman, right, and business partner Matt Faul check customer orders. Says Chapman: "We don't sell people something they don't need."

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**Local spotlight**

## Signal strength, service key to online tech firm

Neal Haldane / Special to The Detroit News

**WEST BLOOMFIELD** -- Jerry Chapman's desire to expand his satellite TV service to other parts of his home and his difficulty finding the equipment to do so led the self-described tech geek to form his own company.

Five years later, Solid Signal plans a move to a new and larger facility in Novi this fall to accommodate growing demand for its consumer electronics products.

Solid Signal sells its 6,000 to 8,000 parts online and focuses on serving its clients, said Chapman, whose mother works as the customer satisfaction supervisor.

"Our whole thought process is 'What is the best and cheapest solution?' " he said. "We're not gouging. We don't sell people something they don't need."

That reputation for customer service and holding people's hands as they try different products has earned Solid Signal an excellent rating from BizRate for on-time delivery and products that meet expectations and an overall rating of good.

That level of customer service keeps Matt Lewry of San Diego, a regular user of Solid

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### Solid Signal

Products: outdoor antennas, satellite TV equipment, cellular gear, consumer electronics  
Founded: 2002  
Employees: 12



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Signal. He has bought a variety of products from the site, including plasma TVs and DirectTV units.

His previous experiences ordering online often resulted with charges on his account and no product delivered or the wrong item in his mail box.

Lewry also uses Solid Signal to keep current on technology.

"I'm a closet technology addict and whenever I got the bug, I started using the company to identify what products I should buy, asking questions, sending e-mails," Lewry said.

Antennas that pull in over-the-air TV signals and cell phone repeaters that boost signal strength in homes and buildings represent the two best-selling items on the site, Chapman said.

Demand for those antennas should pick up in the next year when broadcast television switches from analog to digital transmission and viewers seek the devices to pull in the new higher-quality signals. And the continued growth in cell phone usage also means steady sales for repeaters and other related equipment.

In addition, the site offers products for global positioning devices, satellite radio, video security, automotive audio and video, and home theater.

Customers range from technology nerds who need the latest equipment to homeowners looking for a surge protector. More than a third of the company's business comes from installers who use the site to find parts for satellite TV installation projects and other tasks, Chapman said.

When the move to the new Novi location is complete, Solid Signal will have quadrupled its space to 20,000 square feet and plans to add five new employees.

*Neal Haldane is a Metro Detroit freelance writer.*

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Information: [www.solidsignal.com](http://www.solidsignal.com)

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