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Detroit Web site connects global water operations

Putting water deals together is an inexact, rarely examined business in which few people show an interest. That excludes Glenn Oliver, of course.

Oliver, a criminal defense attorney and onetime senior aide to former Detroit Mayor Dennis Archer, is the founder of a new business-to-business Internet clearinghouse that connects water and wastewater operations with companies looking to win contracts.

[H2bid.com](#) is one of the few Web portals that bring together companies and utilities looking to do deals or sell equipment around the globe.

As a procurement portal with one of the most extensive databases of water and wastewater contract opportunities, Oliver considers his company the premier site selling information about the water industries in the world.

The Michigan-based [dot.com](#) venture also has gotten Oliver notice as one of 20 semifinalists -- and the only representative from Michigan -- for the Forbes Magazine annual Boost Your Business challenge. The contest involves 1,000 small business owners from across the country competing to determine the best business plan for a prize of \$100,000.

To win the contest, [H2bid.com](#) must be among the top five Internet vote getters on the Forbes Web site. If he wins the contest, Oliver said he plans to use some of the money to improve access to fresh water throughout the developing world.

Water utilities around the globe can go to [H2bid.com](#) and post contracting opportunities, requests for proposals and invitations to bid, as well as look for partnership opportunities. Oliver expects to coordinate online bidding on the site in early 2008.

One of the organizations that has posted contracting opportunities on the site is the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department.

There is no registration fee to access the site. But to get specific details about a procurement, it costs \$4.95 and \$7.95 per notice for [H2bid.com](#) subscribers.

"This is a self-funded project, and I want to take a long-term view of the business," said

Oliver, who is also a former member of the Board of Water Commissioners for Detroit. "We want to provide 24/7 access to any water or wastewater contract opportunity anywhere in the world. We were first to market with a procurement portal that is serving a niche."

Formed in January 2006, H2bid.com is headquartered in Detroit and employs 10 people. The company is one of the estimated 26 million small businesses formed in the United States last year.

H2bid.com is getting praise from some marketing experts, who see business to business as a natural fit for start-up companies looking to make a splash online.

"The continuing plea to redefine Detroit, metro Detroit and Michigan is a high note in this plan," said Mike Bernacchi, a marketing professor at the University of Detroit Mercy. "H2bid.com certainly connects well with the Michigan Economic Development Corp.'s philosophy of trying to market the intellectual assets of the area in terms of trying to redefine the role of e-marketing and e-business."

MEDC's 21st Century Jobs Fund was designed to diversify Michigan's economic foundation by promoting the growth of high-tech companies across the state.

"I'm excited about representing Michigan in general and Detroit specifically," Oliver said. "We think this is a plus when you can grow a high-tech company like this, because the world is moving to an information economy and Michigan must be a player in that economy."

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