

# TRIBUNE BUSINESS WEEKLY



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# ‘There’s got to be a better way’

**J**ohn Miller and Mike McKay started SMART Temps LLC less than two years ago to serve school cafeterias in the Midwest with sophisticated temperature-measuring devices for food safety and quality.

The founders noticed the need while working with K-12 schools in their 18-year-old SMART Systems, which provides training, including mock health inspection, to cafeteria workers and supplies cleaning products for the kitchen.

Now the concept is taking off across the country, and the company has grown from five employees to 11.

Recently, SMART Temps announced collaborations with HMSHost, which runs airport food and beverage operations, and Winston Industries of Louisville, which will incorporate the temperature management system into the equipment it builds for the food service industry.

“Originally the concept was developed for K-12 food service operations,” said President Richard Florea. “After we got started down that path, we quickly realized there are broader applications in food service.”

“We’re in some universities now. We’re in some hospitals. We just announced the partnership with HMSHost in some airports. We have customers all over the United States, from coast to coast. We just installed at a senior living facility in Hawaii.”

Miller and McKay noticed in about 2005 that workers they trained in school cafeterias were keeping handwritten logs of temperatures in walk-in refrigerators and freezers and in prepared food.



Temperature management system serves customers coast to coast

Tribune Photo  
ROBERT  
FRANKLIN

**Richard Florea, president of SMART Temps, stands inside the company’s office in Mishawaka. He’s holding a thermometer that was originally designed by the company for K-12 schools, but which is now also in use in hospitals, universities and airports.**

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For more information, contact SMART Temps LLC, 3640 Edison Lakes Parkway, Suite 200, Mishawaka; call 877-272-3111; or visit [www.smart-temps.com](http://www.smart-temps.com).

“They thought, ‘There’s got to be a better way,’” Florea said, adding that focus groups and work with cafeteria directors led to the design of a device for the market.

“We designed the shape and the mold and the hardware and the software inside it,” he said. “It’s all designed specifically for this purpose. Right now a lot of schools use pencil and paper and record it by hand.”

The Web-based tool allows food service operators to accurately check and record food temperatures as well as monitor refrigerator and freezer temperatures, sending alerts when temperatures are out of range.

Cafeteria workers can download the day’s menu to the device, select an item from the menu that they are preparing — say, turkey breast — and get information from the probe that

alerts them when the food is cooked.

The information also goes to a website that keeps a permanent record for meeting Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point reporting requirements.

“At a school in particular, they’re required to keep these documents,” Florea said. “With our system, it provides them a permanent record that can’t be modified, and they can access it through the Web.”

“It improves the quality of the food service operation. They might find out they’re overcooking things. It improves food safety. There’s a green aspect to this — we’re reducing the amount of paper they use and the space to store it.”

SMART Temps buys probes

from an Indiana company and contracts for engineering and manufacturing support in the state.

“It’s very important that we kept it Indiana-based as much as possible,” Florea said.

The firm markets through independent representatives and two value-added partners: Winston, which makes such products as ovens and holding cabinets for schools, hospitals and top restaurant chains; and Horizon Software of Atlanta, which provides point-of-sale equipment software to schools, hospitals and senior living centers.

“Our strategy is to leverage these organizations and their sales forces and their relationships in these different areas,” Florea said.