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The Internet is not simply a place to sell products. Many businesspeople are finding the Web an excellent environment to sell their services, too.

**Michael Kline's** business, eCollect of Ohio, ([ecollectohio.com](http://ecollectohio.com))

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**Mike Kline**  
eCollect of Ohio

offers a service still in its infancy. Using the tagline "Where Good Things Happen to Bad Checks," eCollect offers its clients electronic redepositing of bounced checks. Once they are able to verify that there is money in the bad check writer's account, eCollect pulls

the funds and transfers them to the accounts of Kline's clients almost immediately.

A change to the nation's banking laws in 1998 created the opportunity. "The law permits us to take out a state-regulated amount from the bad check writer's account," explains Kline. In Ohio, it's \$30. "That's where our income comes from. We don't charge clients for the service or keep

any portion of the check," unlike a collection agency. So the company or organization recovers its money in full.

There are two caveats, notes Klein. When it comes to retrieving funds, the law requires "all or nothing" – if the bad check writer's account is even a \$1 short, the money cannot be touched. Money must also be retrieved by law within six months of the date the check was written.

"We call the bank every day" to see if sufficient funds are available, says Kline. That persistence pays off: He says the business has a 95% success rate for retrieving funds on accounts that have not been closed.

Kline, 60, a certified public accountant, started the business in 2001 after he received a mailing about the program. Knowing he had clients who frequently received bad checks, he recognized a need for the service and invested about \$2500 to get it set up. He now employs two people who work with banks, transmit information, and prepare materials about the business for trade

shows.

"The first two years were questionable whether this was a viable venture," says Kline. "I wasn't able to build a sales force, and we were generating very few customers, which meant fewer bad checks. So I concentrated on making myself the selling point of the business, and since then, revenues have gone up 30% to 50% each year."

Kline's customer base of about 350 companies and organizations around the country increases by about five to ten clients each month. The business is not self-sustaining yet, however. His goal, he says, is to "finish up my career doing electronic depositing and *not* working every January through April 15, seven days a week until midnight every night as a tax preparer."