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Rob & Ryan Weber

They've developed a company with \$30 million in revenue in just nine years

Minneapolis / St. Paul Business Journal - by [Devin Henry](#) Staff writer



Ryan Weber (left) and Rob Weber hired a veteran CEO to manage W3i's growth.

Rob Weber graduated from college in December, 10 years after he started, with an entrepreneurship degree and a multi-million dollar company already to his name.

Twin brothers Rob and Ryan Weber co-founded freeze.com, a distributor of consumer applications like screen savers, in 2000 in a dormitory at **St. Cloud State University**. Their brother and co-founder Aaron left the firm.

The company survived the dot-com bust and later rebranded as **W3i Holdings**, an interactive media firm based in Sartell, Minn., that supports application developers looking for a wider distribution of their product.

Combined, W3i and freeze.com have distributed more than 250 million applications since 2000. One of its recent products is a free media player computer program designed to help musicians and record labels generate revenue through advertisements that are displayed when the player is operating.

W3i has had 30 straight quarters of profitability, according to a company spokeswoman. This year's revenue should top \$30 million.

Rob Weber, 29, spent the last 10 years taking classes part-time at St. Cloud State University while helping running the company. He is now the vice president of business development.

Ryan Weber, who graduated from SCSU with a computer science degree in 2003, split the work with his brother in the years after they founded the company along with some California investors. Ryan now works as vice president of corporate strategy.

Through its first six years in business, W3i had an annual growth rate around 50 percent, making it possible to hire more employees — it has more than 60 on staff today.

The company's early years were marked with trial and error as it looked for a business model that would satisfy both the company and its users, Ryan Weber said. At one point or another, the company offered paid subscriptions to users or supported an e-mail client before settling on the current ad-supported model.

The entrepreneurs haven't done it all by themselves. In 2008, Andy Johnson joined the firm as CEO. Johnson is a former **Fingerhut** executive and former president of **CMS Direct Corp.**, based in Brooklyn Center.

Many Internet-based companies have seen challenges in the current economy. For example, analysts estimate **Yahoo, Inc.**, one of W3i's biggest clients, could see a 12 percent drop in revenue this year. But Rob Weber is bullish on the interactive media market, which he said is expected to grow by more than 15 percent over the next five to 10 years.

Murgesh Navar, founder of Sunnyvale, Calif.-based VoloMedia, Inc., has worked with W3i for a year and he called their partnership together a success.

"[They're] primarily interested in making sure we're not disappointed at the end of the day," he said. "I've been impressed with how scrappy they've had to be."

Rob Weber

Vice president of business development

Age: 29

Education: Entrepreneurship, St. Cloud State University

Ryan Weber

Vice president of corporate strategy

Age: 29

Education: Computer Science, St. Cloud State University

W3i Holdings

Founders: Rob, Ryan, and Aaron Weber

City: Sartell

Business: Interactive Media

Founded: 2000, as freeze.com

CEO: Andy Johnson

Employees: More than 60

Revenue: More than \$30 million

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