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Former pilots become entrepreneurs

By George Gill

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Loudoun resident and former United Airlines pilot Pramod Raheja is helping several former Independence Air employees succeed in business ventures, in his role as owner and managing partner for Intelligent Office of Reston.

Intelligent Office – an executive suites and business support services franchise – is a national leader in providing virtual office space and executive phone service with a remote receptionist.

Raheja said he spent more than six months researching Intelligent Office before deciding to open the office in May 2005.

“It felt like something up my alley as I was very passionate about small business,” he said. “I really saw potential in what it was doing to help other small businesses.”

He said Intelligent Office's goal is to help small businesses grow by helping them upgrade their image and professionalism.

Several former Independence Air pilots have called upon Intelligent Office's services.

He said that for most pilots with major air carriers, if the airline goes out of business or has serious financial difficulties, the question becomes whether to wait and see what happens to the airline, or to try to do something on one's own.

“Myself and some of my clients said we're taking control of the situation,” Raheja said. “We're going to try to make something of it, take time to give it a go and make it our own thing. It's a little bit of leap of faith. There's both excitement and fear.”

Raheja is on a leave of absence from United. He said he enjoys what he's doing now and likes having more time to spend with his children, and hasn't yet decided if he will return.

Flying has been and remains a passion for him. “I'll probably always fly airplanes, and I would like to do charitable things like flying for Angel Flight to keep my skills up,” he said.

Dave Cox worked for for Atlantic Coast Airlines since its inception and its later incarnation as Independence Air. His roles there included assistant chief pilot, director of training for the Bombardier CRJ 200 regional jet and ultimately director of operations. Cox left the airline effective Jan. 1, and opened an owner/builder real estate project management company, D.C. Realty. He was owner and partner in the business.

He used the services of Intelligent Office, and his company did much of its work in parts of Loudoun County, including Leesburg, Ashburn and South Riding.