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## Businesses say they're benefiting from county's economic developer

[FLEMINGTON](#) -- Hunterdon County's economic developer spent his first months on the job visiting with business owners to let them know they have an ally.

[Marc Saluk](#) said he has talked with about 80 local business owners to hear their concerns, struggles and ideas. From those meetings, he has helped businesses connect with new clients, helped solve bureaucratic issues and just let them know he is glad they're here.

"I have definitely found that we have some outstanding companies here ... that no one else knows about," Saluk said.

Whether it's the geography of the county or a lack of communication, Saluk said many companies feel invisible.

"We don't know enough about the gems in our backyard," Saluk said. "We need to do a better job of finding out who's here."

One of the gems Saluk found in Hunterdon county was Integrated Clinical Systems.

Located off Route 12 in Frenchtown, not much of the international software company is easily visible to passing drivers. The company develops JReview, a software used by pharmaceutical companies to track data during clinical trials.

Eric Herbel, the president of the company, said 50 percent of their customers are based in the U.S. and the rest are in Europe and Asia.

"You don't often see or talk with your neighbors ... I think that sort of extends in a lot of other ways. It's not so easy to get people together to be aware of who does what," Herbel said. "We really believe there's a lot of hidden talent in the area."

Events like [HackHunterdon](#) have helped uncover local tech talent and provided companies with an opportunity to network.

### Connecting companies and local government

Just down the road from Integrated Clinical Systems off Route 12 is another tech company Saluk visited during his first months in Hunterdon.

ZeroSurge manufactures surge protection products used by individuals and larger companies like Wendy's.

Jim Minadeo, the president of ZeroSurge, said he had been trying to make some additions to their facility but was having trouble contacting the township to discuss local regulations.

That's where Saluk was able to help.

"He brought the official to us, so we were able to get our questions asked, and he taught us how to do different things, and then he followed through, which is important," Minadeo said.

Saluk said part of his job is connecting businesses with local officials and facilitating conversations between them.

"My role is simply to go ahead and communicate effectively to the town, put the two together," Saluk said.

In Raritan Township, Radon Supplies, a company that produces equipment for radon mitigation, was struggling to find the right connections to solve a signage problem with the township.

Jan Fisher, national sales manager of Radon Supplies, said the company is located near a confusing intersection that wasn't clearly marked with signs. Customers told Fisher they had a hard time finding the company.

"We had actually called around a few times trying to figure out why the signage wasn't more clear," Fisher said.

Saluk initiated a meeting with Radon Supplies and learned of their predicament. Within a week, Saluk connected them with the mayor and township officials. The meeting led to new signs being installed.

### **Connecting businesses**

Even among similar companies, Saluk said many of them aren't aware of each other.

Monthly meetings and the hackathon are some of the ways tech companies are starting to network and use each other to grow their businesses.

With all the knowledge Saluk has garnered from his months of visiting companies, he is able to serve as a link between companies.

Amy Masters owns Dante Consulting, a tech marketing and branding company in Pittstown. Masters said most of her clients are in New York City, but she wanted to find clients closer to home.

"I wanted to see if I could find a niche in my area," Masters said.

CarpoolWorld, a company in High Bridge that connects people wanting to commute together, was looking to do some new marketing. Saluk knew just where to send them.

Through Saluk's recommendation, CarpoolWorld hired Masters to help with marketing, keeping at least one job in the county.

### **Creating a business-friendly county**

A major part of Saluk's visits has been to break down the county's reputation of not being business-friendly. With an [aging and declining population](#), Saluk said the county needs to change its reputation in order to draw younger families, new businesses and businesses looking to expand in the county.

"We are slowly, company by company, beginning to turn around this reputation that we are not a business-friendly community," Saluk said.

Through his one-on-one business meetings, Saluk is letting businesses know that he's there to help in any way he can.

"If you've got a company here, we want you to grow that company and understand you've got a partner in doing that," Saluk said.

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