

Get access to just-in-time expertise — wherever your company needs it most

Are you struggling to scale your company? Like many second-stage business owners, you may be noticing systems that once served you well are starting to show cracks — or that you need new skills and information to continue to grow profitably. The System for Integrated Growth[®] (SIG) addresses issues that impact your growth, whether they are internal problems or outside the walls of your company. For example, SIG can help you:

- Get a handle on financial management and understand what your books are telling you.
- Learn how to recruit, retain and develop talented employees.
- Explore new markets, create prospect lists for those markets or analyze competitors.
- Prepare to export — from documentation to identifying global markets and setting up distribution channels.
- Bring in best practices on supply chain and operations to complement your managers' working knowledge.



SIG is delivered virtually through a SWAT team of business experts, a series of phone calls and a secure, online portal so you never need to leave your office. The SWAT team doesn't dictate a particular course of action, but provides best practices and valuable data to help you better manage and grow your company. Experts in their respective fields, SIG specialists operate under the guidance of the Edward Lowe Foundation, a national expert on second-stage companies.

SIG is ideal for companies at pivotal points: For example, even though your company is growing, you may feel overwhelmed — you don't know what you don't know. You may need to build a senior management team, but lack employees with in-depth knowledge in certain areas. Or you may be running on all cylinders and ready to take that next step towards increased sales and new markets. Whatever your situation, SIG can provide expertise for continued success.

Who should apply?

Companies participating in the SIG program must:

- Be a for-profit, privately-held company.
- Generate annual revenue of between \$1 million and \$50 million.
- Employ between 10 and 99 full-time-equivalent employees.
- Demonstrate growth in employment and/or revenue during two of the past five years.
- Provide products or services beyond the local area to regional, national or global markets.

What to expect

Fees — Costs are covered by regional or state organizations who have pooled funds to support this program.

Time commitment — 8-12 hours spread over approximately two months.

Focus areas — HR (recruiting and retention as well as compliance), operations and supply chain, accounting and finance, global trade, sales and marketing, succession planning, secondary market research, online marketing and customer prospecting.

Logistics — The program kicks off with a call between the CEO and a SIG team leader to clarify your company's greatest needs. Next, you talk with SIG specialists to dive deeper into those pain points. Specialists then prepare their deliverables and schedule follow-up calls to walk you through those materials. Finally, the team leader conducts a debriefing call before wrapping up the engagement.

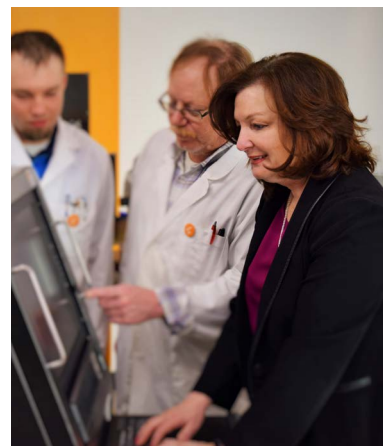
CEO feedback

Catherine Koch entered the System for Integrated GrowthSM (SIG) program to get help with overseas markets and human resources. “We need to expand our staff, plus we have some foreign employees. I wanted to learn how to best handle expansion,” says Koch, CEO of K-Tec Systems, a Ferndale, Michigan-based provider of process control instrumentation. “We don’t have that expertise on our team, and I didn’t know where to find it.”

Because I knew the Edward Lowe Foundation (I’ve attended two of their retreat programs), I was confident the SIG specialists had been selected for a reason, that they were good,” she continues. “And I wasn’t disappointed. I was really impressed with the talent put in front of me. These people knew what they were doing.”

In particular, an HR expert provided important insights about hiring staff, along with direction on documentation. Discussions with a global trade expert made Koch realize she needed to slow down a bit to strengthen internal operations before expanding. “Another big takeaway is not feeling alone,” Koch says. “I now have amazing, experienced contacts to help grow my business — instead of picking someone off the Internet who I didn’t know.”

“Not only is the SIG program a place to get answers from trusted sources, but it’s also a connection to continual expertise,” she adds. “I now feel as though I have an expert team in my back pocket.”



Getting started

Companies will be asked to submit an online application at <https://michigan.systemforintegratedgrowth.org> and provide revenue and employment amounts for the past three calendar years, the current year and projections for the next two years. You’ll also be asked to list where assistance is needed. Your program administrator can help you think through these initial issues.

If accepted into the program, we’ll schedule an interview between you and a SIG team leader to start the process.

For more info, contact:

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Ed Lowe’s legacy

Ed Lowe often talked about breaking down brick walls — challenges that stood in his way while growing his company.

As the inventor of Kitty Litter, the country’s first cat-box-filler, Ed created not merely a new product but an entirely new industry. By the time he sold Edward Lowe Industries in 1990, it had grown to about 600 employees and \$165 million in annual sales.

Although Ed overcame the odds despite a lack of structured assistance, he wanted to help future generations of entrepreneurs. Together with his wife, Darlene, Ed launched the Edward Lowe Foundation in 1985 to provide greater support and resources for entrepreneurs. In addition to the System for Integrated Growth, the foundation also offers a variety of educational retreats and peer learning programs for second-stage business owners, presidents and CEOs.

