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BUSINESS

Investors buy majority stake in Web Elite Inc.

Online services firm could move from its downtown location

BY SCOTT ANDERSON
News Business Reporter

Web Elite Inc. has been sold to new management and may move out of its sleek, signature building in downtown Ann Arbor.

A pair of Detroit-area private investors two months ago purchased a majority stake in the firm. Founded in 1994, the business has designed Web sites and other online services for companies like Visteon and Sun Microsystems from the distinctive, silver building at 210 S. Fifth Ave. for the last two years.

Web Elite founder Jacques Habra is staying on as CEO and retains a minority stake in the firm, he said. He declined to identify the investors by name, but described them as high-tech backers and previous clients.

"I looked at the marketplace and we figured this would be a good opportunity to develop

new services and product concepts," Habra said. "In order to do that, we needed more capital and more experience at the helm."

Habra, 28, owns the building and has hired Swisher Commercial Inc. to find tenants for some or all of the 12,000-square-foot space. The bottom floor has been vacant for several months, while Web Elite workers operate from the second level.

"If we find the right person we might stay (at the Fifth Avenue building)," Habra said. "We're definitely going to stay in downtown Ann Arbor."

Habra said the firm has added 12 employees this year to a staff of between 35 and 40 people. But that's no where near the company's hopes of 100 percent growth a year.

"Reality in general has set in, I guess," Habra said. "We're going to steadily grow, but not at the rate we anticipated."

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