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Area firms score high marks for Web info

A number of companies in northwest Ohio apparently are getting high marks for having lots of favorable data about them floating around on the Internet.

A Chicago industry-research firm, eMvoy, a unit of SearchEngines.com, gave its highest rating to 14 northwest Ohio manufacturing firms as part of its first national ratings for manufacturing competitiveness, to be released today.

The firm says Ohio manufacturers lead the nation in corporate industrial competitiveness, followed two spots down by Michigan.

The rankings of about 100,000 businesses are based on computerized screenings of company stability, market penetration, technology, and Web presence.

Craig Landy, chief executive officer of eMvoy, said 14 states scored exceptionally high for competitiveness. In recent years, he said, many businesses did not learn how to innovate or become efficient.

"But in cities like Akron, Cleveland, Columbus, and Toledo, a lot of companies found ways to survive ... [and even] a lot of old-line companies found ways to stay relevant and competitive."

Richard DeKaser, chief economist for National City Corp. in Cleveland, said he was not aware of the new study but said manufacturers left standing after the early 1990s difficulties of recession, slow economic growth nationally, and growing Chinese imports are innovative.

However, he said, the impact is limited locally, "outweighed by billion-dollar losses and layoffs of [tens of thousands] in the automotive industry alone."

Among area firms making the initial list are Bil-Jax Inc., an Archbold maker of scaffolding. "We're a market leader in our industry," said David Brinegar, director of engineering. "In order to reach that point, you have to be on the cutting edge."

Others on the list include Therma-Tru Corp., a Maumee maker of fiberglass doors; NAMSA Inc., a Northwood maker of chemical and biological indicators; AK Tube LLC, Walbridge; Brush Wellman Inc., Elmore; Clapp DI CO Corp., Whitehouse; Great Lakes Window Inc., Walbridge; and NSS Enterprises Inc., Toledo.

Others were Owens-Illinois Inc., Perrysburg; Pilkington North America Inc., Toledo and Rossford; Lewco Inc., Sandusky; Mid Bus Inc., Bluffton, Wall Technology Inc., Toledo; and La-Z-Boy Inc., Monroe.

The rankings were based in part on such things as ISO9000 ratings, how long companies have manufactured their best-known brands, stability of their work forces, and whether their Web sites appear to be useful for specifying engineers.

"If they're doing innovative things, that will come to our radar screen," Mr. Landy said.
