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Addressing the 2007 Ann Arbor News Outlook Luncheon on Tuesday, Grady Burnett, head of online sales and operations for Google in Ann Arbor, confirmed that the Internet search company still plans to hire 1,000 people over the next five years for its operations in downtown Ann Arbor.

Google official says he's still upbeat about Ann Arbor

Local director stresses entrepreneurial spirit

BY JENNY RODE *3-21-07*
News Business Reporter *AAJ*

Grady Burnett is right at home with the entrepreneurial spirit of his company, Google.

As a youngster, he would sit in on business meetings with his father, himself an entrepreneur. Burnett took on kid-friendly business jobs like stapling papers and sweeping the floors. Those odd jobs eventually turned into creating marketing presentations and other worthy experiences.

What he learned in the early days stuck with him, said Burnett, head of online sales and operations for Google's Ann Arbor office.

"That can-do attitude really formed who I am in a lot of ways," he told a crowd of more than 300 people at the Ann Arbor News' annual economic outlook luncheon Tuesday at the Four Points Sheraton. "Google gave the opportunity for me to participate in an entrepreneurial culture that fosters innovation and really allows people to create."

Burnett confirmed that the 8-year-old Internet search company, based in Mountain View,

'I think there are tremendous entrepreneurial ideas here that can blossom and give people opportunities to challenge themselves.'

Grady Burnett, head of online sales and operations for Google's Ann Arbor office

Calif., still plans to hire 1,000 people over the next five years for its operations in downtown Ann Arbor.

Right now the local office has about 50 employees who are focused on AdWords, the small ads that appear next to Google searches and the company's biggest revenue driver.

Despite tough times for Washtenaw County, which is losing thousands of jobs with the auto industry downsizing and

the closing of the Pfizer labs in Ann Arbor, Burnett was upbeat about the area's prospects.

He cited the presence of the University of Michigan and a well-educated work force as great reasons for Google to be here.

"I think there are tremendous entrepreneurial ideas here that can blossom and give people opportunities to challenge themselves," Burnett said.

Also speaking at the event was George Fulton, an economist and researcher at the University of Michigan's Institute of Labor and Industrial Relations.

Fulton, along with researcher Don Grimes, studied the local economy for the Ann Arbor News. The results predict that the area will lose hundreds of jobs in 2007 and 2008, then add jobs in 2009.

"We're currently in an economy that's bumping along a sideways path," Fulton noted. "We're doing better than the state, but we're not inoculated from the economic malaise surrounding us."

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