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Chat with: As more companies make the transition to electronic records, Starpoint is there to help. PAGE 6F



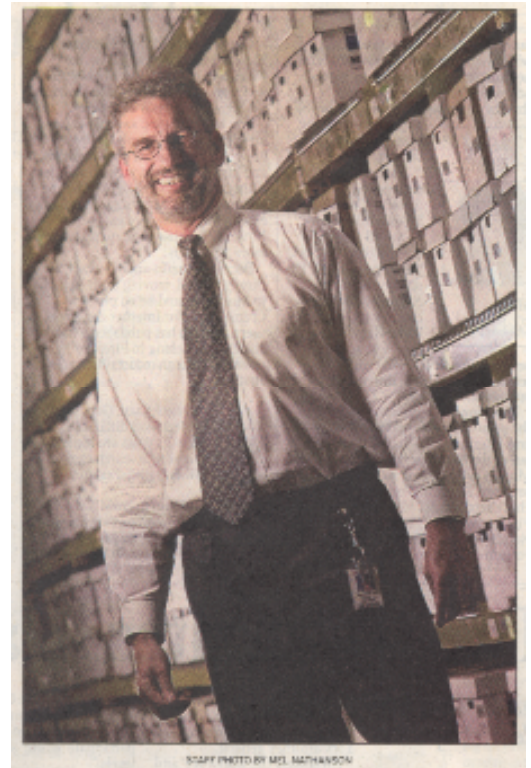
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Starpoint takes paper out of office A chat with Mats Bruin

By JEAN P. FISHER, Staff Writer

Starpoint Global Services wants to be your file room. Since 1989, the now Dallas-headquartered company has kept track of its clients' paper records, including personnel files, technical drawings, medical records and legal case files. Originally, that meant boxing up clients' paper records and storing them in secure warehouses. But about two years ago, Starpoint made the transition from box storage to high-tech file management. Clients can request hard copy files, which are bar-coded and tracked with a computer database, as needed and receive them in as little as 30 minutes. But Starpoint is seeing many industries embrace the more elegant solution of digital file storage. Digitization turns reams of paper pages into images stored on a secure Web server or CD. The health-care industry, where providers are under pressure to convert to electronic medical records, is a particularly active area. Connect's Jean P. Fisher recently spoke with Starpoint president and chief executive Mats Bruin, 46, about managing companies' paper trails.



Q. To start, could you tell me how many employees Starpoint has and where the company has offices?

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A. We have five different locations: Raleigh, Chapel Hill, Dallas TX, Nashville TN, Greenville SC. They are basically identical businesses. And we have about 80 employees.

Q. Who are some of your clients?

A. Nortel is our biggest overall -- we've got a lot of human resources records and technical drawings and just all types of business records. We have about 50 law firms. And a lot of health-care companies. We manage all of the X-rays for UNC Health Care, Harris Methodist in Dallas, VA Hospital in Murfreesboro TN, Oconee Healthcare in Greenville. They are not all digitized at this point, so they are hybrid file management accounts. We do paper file management for Raleigh Orthopaedics. We store financial records and claim records for Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina. We do digitization for Rex Healthcare, HCA and many others.

Q. Tell me about the transition from box storage to file management.

A. Originally, our company stored paper in a warehouse. And the idea was that hopefully you didn't have to get access to these files any more. But there are quite a few industries where the accessibility of those files is critical -- health care, for instance. So we moved from box storage to file management. Our operations people used to be very warehouse oriented and now they're basically an extension of a medical office.

Q. Could you give an example of how you manage paper patient records for a hospital or physician practice?

A. One of the simplest versions is for us to go into a medical facility and do an annual purge of inactive files. We bring those files to our warehouse and we have a team of data entry and indexing people who bar-code all these items. We key in the index information into the database. When a patient's file is requested, we go to our database and the item is automatically tracked to the location in the warehouse. For UNC, for example, we have a crew of 12 people who do customized delivery to UNC 24 hours, seven days a week. They call us and we deliver within half an hour. ... [Starpoint employees] process the request, they retrieve the record, they deliver, they pick up and they refile.

Q. And with a digitization client?

A. Well, with Rex Healthcare, for example, we go in annually and remove inactive files -- patients who haven't been seen in the last year. Then we scan them into a computer, deliver the information to them and destroy the paper records. Digitization is a very tedious process. We've got to make sure every single file and every single piece of paper is digitized. Once we've digitized their information and delivered it to them, then we are not involved any more. But the digitization takes some time, about half a year in the case of Rex. During that time those files are out of their control, so we have 24-7 communication during that period. If they need to look at the file, they fax us a request and we fax them the medical file within half an hour. Of course, digitization is just a step in the process. What we are is a partner in the transition to electronic medical records.

Q. Health care is definitely going in that direction. Do you see that driving your business?

A. It very much depends on the stage the provider is in. We can work with them in any stage. There are quite a few companies that are just not ready. There are some companies that just want to digitize and move to electronic medical records later. One of the basic choices we have made is that our digitization system is an open system. We can output in 200 different forms. That gives a lot of flexibility for the future for the customer.

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