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Robert Farina, CyberShift chief executive, sees a trend in the growth of mobile workers who don't report to an office.

For Parsippany firm, time is definitely money

CyberShift provides payroll-management systems

By Joan Verdon
THE RECORD

This is a good time to be in the business of helping companies track employee work time and costs.

CyberShift creates software that helps companies schedule employees and keep track of expense accounts at a time when more and more companies are looking to maximize efficiencies and cut costs. Robert Farina, 52, joined the Parsippany-based company in 2002 as chief executive and has overseen CyberShift's efforts to develop applications that can be used by an increasingly mobile work force. The privately held company has 200 employees and annual revenue of more than \$30 million, with clients such as Aéropostale, New York & Co., 3M, Texas Instruments and Fox Entertainment. Farina lives in Watchung with his wife and three sons.

Q. CyberShift provides software to businesses mostly on a subscription basis?

A. We provide back-office systems for mid-to-large companies. We're focused around work force and expense management. It's everything from scheduling employees to tracking time and attendance, absence management, employee expenses. It's the back-office systems that are critical to run a business, but not very sexy. Most of our new sales are on a subscription basis, what's called software as a service. We started out as a traditional licensing company. We'd sell you a license to our products and you'd install them on your computers. We've now migrated almost completely to software as a service — a subscription-based model.

Q. Customers pay a monthly fee, get a password and then can access your programs?

A. Right. You pay a certain amount per month, depending on the number of employees or number of expense reports. You don't own any hardware, you don't install any software, you just have access to our system, which is far easier for most companies. It's a cheaper financial model. You don't have a big upfront cost, and somebody else is managing it, so you don't need the

infrastructure.

Q. Are CyberShift programs mostly used for white-collar workers, as opposed to blue-collar, time-clock-punching systems?

A. It's actually a little bit of the reverse. Historically, when you think about time and attendance, you think of time clocks, manufacturing plants, but that concept has really evolved quite a bit. It's everything from tracking projects and work orders to mobile employees — employees who don't show up to an office every day. The concept of time and labor management has gone from a blue-collar factory floor to really covering all employees, and we're one of the few companies that provide solutions that have that full range.

Q. What's on the horizon in work force and expense management?

A. There are a few big trends. One is the whole subscription software as a service model is really taking off. The other big trend is untethered workers, or mobile workers. When we say untethered workers, it's anybody who doesn't report to an office on a regular basis. If I'm working from home, or if I'm a field service technician, I still need to be able to know what my schedule is. I still need to be able to log my time

against different tasks. I may need to get my expenses reimbursed. I may need to approve expenses or vacations for somebody who is working for me. The third trend is employee scheduling. Forecasting the demand for the number of employees and scheduling properly has gotten a lot of attention now.

Q. Are CEOs comfortable with mobile work forces, or do they still want tethered employees?

A. I think people have gotten over most of that resistance now. They recognize that they have to go where the talent is, to a great degree. There's been a huge movement to reduce corporate overhead, so who the heck wants to have, corporate office space for people who are only showing up once or twice a week? There's also a big dynamic of people who want part-time work — stay-at-home moms, career shifters, contractors. You can go online and say when you are available to work, or switch shifts. It's giving a lot more control to the individual employees.

Q. You have systems where employees can bid for added shifts?

A. Yes. That's much more common in manufacturing. And retail's overwhelmingly part-time labor. Someone may have children at home and only want to work during school hours. But then Johnny's sick, so they log on and see if they can swap their shift with somebody else. They don't get stressed out by having to find child care, they find somebody else who wants the hours. And all the manager has to do is approve it. It takes a lot of the labor cost out of it.

Q. When you reach the CEO level, do you still have to fill out a timecard?

A. A lot of companies do mandate it. Not necessarily a timecard, per se, but certainly what's called absence management — vacation, sick time, Family Medical Leave Act. Or if you're charging time to any particular project.

Q. You're not in the CyberShifters (the company band) by any chance?

A. No. Believe me, nobody would want me in the CyberShifters. I would be clearing the room if I were in the CyberShifters.

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