

Friday, July 10, 2009

Scottsdale company bringing redaction into the digital age

By Patrick O'Grady

Informative Graphics Corp. is bringing the redaction of corporate and private information into the digital age.

The Scottsdale-based company released its Redact-It software last year and is expanding its market for companies looking to protect sensitive data, such as tax returns, intellectual property or personal information embedded in court records. Typically, black markers are used to obscure private information within printed documents.

Informative Graphics has been developing viewing software for corporations for 19 years. CEO Gary Heath said the company began work on its redaction software while trying to develop a visual digital-rights management system for companies, similar to the programs embedded in music or video files that prevent consumers from copying them.

"It became sort of obvious to us and other companies that they could apply that to corporate documents," he said.

In the past year, Informative Graphics has seen its redaction software business increase as more companies become concerned about protecting their customers' information from identity theft liability — especially given the new federal Red Flags Rule, which takes effect Aug. 1.

The most basic redaction software involves drawing black text boxes around items to be redacted in various word-processing programs. That method, however, does not remove the underlying text, and savvy computer users figured out that recovering the information was simple.

Redact-It, which costs between \$195 and \$244 per user depending on the version, eliminates the underlying text and saves the file in an uneditable form, comparable to a PDF. The software also erases metadata — information about the file or previous versions of it — that may be embedded.

Metadata is a concern for many groups, including the State Bar of Arizona, which came up with ethical guidelines for attorneys stating that metadata discovered in electronic files should not be used.

Accountants also have found challenges in redacting electronic documents. The programs that allow editing involve the most problems, said Ed Zollars, a certified public accountant in Phoenix.

"If the file does not have to be edited by the recipient, I simply refuse to send an editable file," he said. "It invites sending Word and Excel files, which are extraordinarily dangerous file types to send out without taking steps to ensure extraneous data doesn't tag along."

Informative Graphics developed several steps to protect data beyond simply redacting and removing metadata. Redact-It offers a pattern recognition program that targets commonly redacted items, such as Social Security numbers, Heath said.



Gary Heath, CEO of Informative Graphics Corp., shows a document that has been redacted using his company's software.

Informative Graphics Corp.

HQ: Scottsdale

CEO: Gary Heath

Founded: 1990

Employees: 77

Products: Redact-It; Myriad, an Adobe Acrobat-like program that can view multiple file types; Net-It, a server program that can detect new documents and allow for permissions to be established on them; and Brava, a combination of all three.

Web: www.infograph.com