

Cutting out the clutter

Westport software company helps firms prepare bids

By Harold Davis
Special Correspondent

John Laurino, chief executive officer of Westport-based Proposal Software Inc., enjoys solving the problems of the big boys.

His company produces electronic proposal management and production software, referred to as PMAPS, used by **AN EYE ON BUSINESS** major corporations in many industries to help them prepare and bid for business.

"It's really a document management program," Laurino said. "People need this for their decision-making, but how do you organize and not add people and be more efficient?"

The answer for clients such as Blue Cross Blue Shield and ING Investments is Proposal Software's application.

Laurino said many companies have "byzantine" methods of handling their bid proposal questions and answers. One of his clients, a large global company, had about 5,000 internal questions it needed answered to prepare a bid.

"What people were doing was one of two things: Either going back to last proposal, which is very inefficient. Even if you found the answer, was it still good? The other thing was that people were keeping one continuous Word document,"

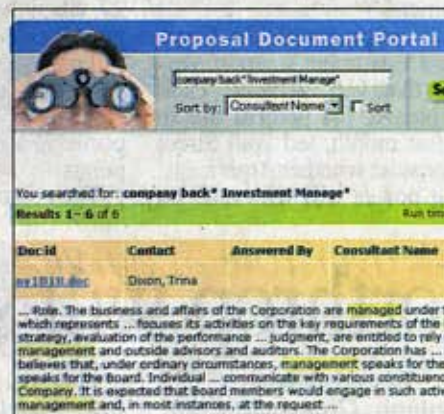


Laurino said.

Proposal Software allows companies to store pertinent information, including Word files, charts and graphics, in a large indexed database that functions similar to a Google or Yahoo search. Information can be retrieved in seconds, in addition to being updated at any time.

The company is on its 10th release of the software since 1994. A recent upgrade involved partnering with United Kingdom-based QND, a corporate media management firm, on a software integration that allows clients to generate electronic submissions and multimedia formats for their proposals.

After testing the integration of the software products all fall, the companies recently previewed their combined capa-



Contributed images

John Laurino is the chief executive officer of Westport-based Proposal Software Inc. The firm produces software, above, that helps firms to prepare their bids for business.

bilities in London.

"Instead of sending a box of paper, you can send a CD with everything. You can have video clips and pictures," Laurino said. "Instead of flipping through a big binder, you click on and print the portions you need when you get the CDs. You're also saving a lot trees."

Mark Pruner, president of Web Counsel LLC in Stamford, sees Proposal Software's services as timely for today's business climate.

"More professional firms are receiving request for proposals and with technol-

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ogy it makes it easier to bid on more proposals. So you have to be more efficient and have better organized materials," he said.

Pruner said the ability to access specific pieces of information in an electronic format is particularly helpful.

"When this information is circulated to people in different departments, they're not going to want to go through 150 pages of material, they want to get what pertains to them," he said.

Using this information helps companies differentiate them-

selves and resonate with decision makers better, Pruner said.

Before Proposal Software, Laurino had 18 years of experience in financial services with banks and insurance companies, including as head of global marketing for the investment management group with Citibank.

He has been an entrepreneur since 1988 when he started Westport Consulting Group, a business focused on consulting for business product development that still exists.

Westport Consulting spawned Proposal Software.

"Typically, consultants are hired to analyze a client's needs and find vendors. On three separate instances databases were part of our recommendation. We weren't in the software business, but found programmers and knew what it would look like," said the Westport resident.

Software Proposal's marketing efforts have resulted in the company getting inquiries globally, from Australia to the Middle East, Laurino said.

The company just announced

that its services will be available on the Web for clients without the software resident on their own computers.

It will host information on a Software Proposal server and client can access the data and software via the site.

There are more innovations coming, Laurino said.

"We're so busy keeping up with what's going on now. We have another product idea for municipal government because they're in need of becoming more efficient," he said.

 **pmaps proposal software**