

Shredding service offered by new company

By JOHN WILEN

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To shred or not to shred? That may no longer be a question that confronts businesses who sign up for shredding services offered by a new Buckingham company, Titan Mobile Shredding.

Customers like Gabe Dragos, vice president of information technology at Bucks County Bank, are finding they no longer give much thought to which documents they should shred, and which they should just trash.

"I literally throw every piece of paper in a locked shredder bin," Dragos said.

That's easier than discriminating, he said. And while Titan and other companies in the fast-growing mobile shredding industry are trying to make security their biggest selling point, it's the convenience that appears to be making companies like Titan successful.

"We were paying way more in people's time shredding things than the (Titan) service charges to shred it every month," Dragos said.

Titan's business is simple: For a flat monthly fee, the company provides businesses locked bins in which employees can place pretty much any kind of sensitive document, CD or floppy disk. Once a month — or more often, if a company needs it — Titan will show up with a garbage truck outfitted with an industrial shredder, destroy everything in the bin while parked in the company's lot, and issue the company a "certificate of destruction" on the spot.

Titan charges \$75 to destroy the contents of one bin, and \$30 to \$45 for each subsequent bin. Prices are lower when the company serves multiple businesses in a single location, such as an office park. Bins range in size from 24-inch "executive consoles" to 95-gallon garbage cans. All are secured with locks.

Titan also offers companies one-time "purges," in which multiple boxes of files or documents are shredded. The company charges by the box for this service, which starts at \$100.

The biggest benefit, Dragos said, is time: His employees don't have to spend part of each day at a shredder, or even remove staples, paper clips or binders. Titan's industrial shredder can handle it all.

Titan was founded last summer by Don Adriaansen, who was then in the process of winding down a sales and marketing company he had run for 16 years, and neighbor Bob Leventhal, a member of the family that owned the old Warrington Motor

Lodge. Leventhal at that point was running his own business consulting and accounting company.

Both were looking for something else to do. Inspiration came one night via CNN, where Leventhal saw a report on a couple who had left their corporate jobs and started a mobile shredding firm. He told Adriaansen about the story, and Adriaansen spend half the night investigating the proposition online.

The duo visited Shred-Tech, a Canadian company that makes most of the mobile shredder trucks in service. Less than two months later, Adriaansen and Leventhal had incorporated their company and bought a truck. "In those six to seven weeks, we couldn't find anyone to tell us anything bad about this industry," Leventhal said.

The company started operating in October, and now has more than 70 customers — mostly accountants and law firms, but also banks and car dealerships. It owns one truck and has one employee, but plans to buy another truck and hire another employee soon. Adriaansen and Leventhal declined to disclose revenue figures or targets. They said the company will be profitable by May.

The business of shredding is growing by leaps and bounds for several reasons, said Bob Johnson, executive director of the National Association for Information Destruction, a trade group. These include the attention given to the problem of identity theft, numerous cases in which sensitive customer data has been stolen from companies, and laws like the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, or HIPAA, and the Financial Services Modernization Act, both of which regulate the maintenance of private customer information.

Don't overlook the effect of high-profile corporate scandals, which have highlighted the problems companies and executives can face when they selectively shred documents.

"The lesson learned from Enron-Andersen is, shred everything all the time the same way," Johnson said.

Johnson's association has grown from 180 members four years ago to more than 700 today. He says most shredding companies start out as mobile shredders.

"You're really buying a truck, not a building," Johnson said. "It is the most economical way to start the business."