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Erika Peterson (right), a corporate official at Record Center Innovations, helps Christina Galbo of John C. Lincoln Health Network sort through old records stored at RCI in Phoenix.

A 'bank' for corporate records

By Georgann Yara
SPECIAL FOR THE ABG

Being surrounded by paperwork is a nightmare scenario to most office administrators. But for Erika Peterson, vice president of operations for Record Center Innovations Inc., it is an environment in which she and her colleagues are comfortable.

Since opening its Phoenix office in 1998, RCI has been offering off-site records storage and management services to

health-care, legal, retail, financial and small-business companies that seek a more secure and accurate tracking system for their documents and information.

The company's efficiency has improved over the years because of technological advances, said Peterson, who started working as a customer-service representative for RCI a month after it opened. The staff was larger in the early years, but the Internet and e-mail meant reducing

personnel while increasing effectiveness.

"The industry used to be manual. You filled out a two- or three-part manifest form sheet. Now, everything is done on the Web. It's a lot faster," Peterson said.

In the beginning, RCI had 15 clients that required 24 deliveries each week, she said. Now, it does about two or three times that each day for more than 600 clients and

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RCI

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manages more than 7 million files.

Although Internet-based management is the primary method that clients use, Peterson said, every business has hard-copy files and paperwork in its possession that need to be physically kept intact or easily retrieved.

Some clients are never heard or seen and keep digital communication only. There are many who prefer to pick up the phone and speak with representatives or visit their documents at RCI's monitored 100,000-square-foot facility.

Clients are welcome to review their records in person, Peterson said, adding that there are staff members specifically charged with attending to their needs.

"Whether you want to hug us or strangle us, you can get ahold of us. We have a relationship with clients and maintain that," she said. "Anybody can build a really cool website and make it look like they're big, but they don't want you to come down and see it. When we meet with people, we say, 'Come over. Check it out. Do a facility tour.'"



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Gilbert Gomez moves a dolly loaded with files at Record Center Innovations in Phoenix. The center is a literal bank of corporate files.

Being able to retrieve records quickly and accurately is vital in the health-care industry. RCI's customer service and attention to detail are the reasons that the John C. Lincoln Health Network has worked with the company since 2002, said Christina Galbo, director of compliance for John C. Lincoln.

"When we call for a record, we need it as quickly as possible, and they are just as concerned about getting it quickly as we are," Galbo said.

She said the cleanliness of the facility and the document-shredding service are bonuses.

"We like the website to make (records) requests, which helped improve our efficiency," she said. "But the difference is knowing that, when you call, you are going to get the answer right away and someone will answer that telephone."

When RCI first launched, most of its clients were in the health-care industry. Because telling a client that a patient's

Record Center Innovations Inc.

Where: 3919 W. Washington St., Phoenix.

Employees: 11.

Interesting stat: Professionals spend between 5 percent and 15 percent of their time reading information but 50 percent of their time looking for it, according to PricewaterhouseCoopers.

Details: 602-258-4000, recordcenterinnovations.com.

records cannot be found before he goes into surgery is unacceptable, the protocol for accurate filing and fast retrieval was set. As its client base grew to include other industries, it was this model of 100 percent retrieval accuracy that the company used for all clientele, Peterson said.

"With that attention to detail, it's hard to go back. We believe we have to set the bar, so if (clients) go out and seek other companies they can see how it is out there," Peterson said.

Beaugureau, Hancock, Stoll & Schwartz P.C. was RCI's 10th client, said Dena Lacroix, office

administrator for the Phoenix law firm. Lacroix said the records center that had been in charge of the firm's documents before RCI "lost a bunch of our files ... which have never been found to this day."

Although the company was new, Lacroix said that utilizing RCI was easy and that everyone she has been in contact with has been efficient, orderly and pleasant.

"They are just the nicest people to deal with, even down to the drivers that pick up the files," said Lacroix, who prefers to personally call representatives with requests or questions. "I'm old-fashioned that way."

The recession has resulted in a decline in paperwork, but RCI has not experienced a reduction in clients, Peterson said. With identity theft and keeping documents confidential being top concerns, clients realize the importance of storing records in a safe and secure location, which minimizes the risk of information loss or corruption, she said.

"It's like the days when people put money under their mattress. Now, people put money in the bank," she said.

"We feel like we are a bank or vault storing documents instead of money."