



Carolyn Simon (left), senior manager, direct marketing, with Craig Schiff, president and chief executive officer of BPM Partners Inc., in the firm's offices in Landmark Square, Stamford.

## **Making the right choice**

**BPM Partners helps companies select the best vendors for the job**

By GAIL KALINOSKI

A veteran of the business performance management (BPM) industry, Craig Schiff saw the market becoming crowded with vendors just as the need for their products was increasing.

A co-founder of two BPM software companies - IMRS/Hyperion Software (now Hyperion Solutions Corp.) and OutlookSoft Inc. - Schiff decided to start a consulting business to help companies find their way through the BPM maze. In early 2002, he left Stamford-based OutlookSoft Inc. and started BPM Partners Inc., also in Stamford.

"The space was becoming hot and exciting with so many vendors joining in," said Schiff, a 48-year-old Greenwich resident. "But they were beginning to sound and look alike. You couldn't tell which Web site you were on unless you looked at the name on top."

Schiff said many companies were becoming overwhelmed with the choices. BPM is a combination of business processes, measures and systems that companies use to analyze and enhance their performances.

"The term, BPM, is probably about 2 years old," Schiff said. "There were versions of BPM for 20 years. It started as financial management software and budgeting and planning software. Those are all components of what is known as BPM today. BPM essentially pulls it all together."

Schiff said most of the companies embarking on BPM initiatives have never done it before. That's where BPM Partners Inc. comes in. Schiff and his team of consultants help a company sort through the vendors and pick the right one for its needs. About half of its clients also hire BPM Partners to help them through implementation and rollout, Schiff said.

Many companies began looking into BPM software after Congress passed the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 in response to the accounting scandals at corporations like Enron and WorldCom.

"It was a big shot in the arm starting about a year ago to help people get a better handle on their financial information," Schiff said. "The systems they had in place didn't give them that comfort level."

That initial wave of business from companies seeking Sarbanes-Oxley compliance solutions has subsided, but Schiff still sees areas of growth for his company. He plans to soon open an office in the United Kingdom to respond to

interest generated by his company's frequent webcasts.

"The interest level was as high, if not higher in Europe," said Schiff of the webcasts, which have been successful in driving business to his firm.

Schiff also attracts new business by offering free phone consultations.

"That works very well for us," said Schiff of the half-hour free trials that can often run up to an hour. "Everyone has pretty much become a customer. If they're investing their time, they clearly have a need. They see the value and the things we get them to think about. Then they call us in."

One company that recently went through the vendor selection process with BPM Partners was Novamex of El Paso, Texas. The company distributes imported Mexican foods on both sides of the border. Novamex's initial objective was to improve on its Excel-centric budgeting and reporting process. After completing the vendor evaluation with a BPM Partners consultant, Novamex team leader Karla Legaspy said they realized the system they chose will have many more uses within the company.

"We now see this initiative as distribution of information and putting information to work through analysis," she said. "And while this is maintained and used by finance, there will certainly be reports for other areas."

'Growing quickly'

Schiff declined to discuss revenues other than to say, "we're exceeding our goal."

Roberta Carlton, a BPM Partners spokeswoman, said the company is "growing quickly and adding people and adding resources."

Neither would release the number of employees of BPM Partners, noting that it's still in startup mode. The people BPM Partners lists on its Web site ([www.bpmpartners.com](http://www.bpmpartners.com)) as its management team are: Barbara Brahmstedt, vice president of client services; John Colbert, vice president of marketing; Charlie Hill, national sales manager; and Carolyn

Simon, direct marketing manager.

Schiff said he also uses partnerships and consultants on various projects.

"We have a small group of experts and we extend our reach with various consulting partners," he said.

Despite his history with Hyperion and OutlookSoft, Schiff stresses his company's objectivity when recommending vendors and notes that it does not accept finder's fees.

"The primary reasons they're selecting us are the objective nature of us and the experience. The people in our company have been in some version of this space for 10 or more years," Schiff said. "They're basically buying the experience and it's important that the objectivity is coupled with that."

As for Hyperion, where he was a senior vice president until 1999, and OutlookSoft, which he ran as president and chief executive officer until 2002, he said, "The management has changed. It's not even the people I was with. To me, they're like any other company at this point."