

Once sold software, now sells advice

Entrepreneur finds niche helping firms roll out applications

By Richard Lee
Staff Writer

After being a trailblazer in business development software for two decades, a Greenwich resident is helping companies define their performance management needs and find the software that will meet those needs.

Greenwich resident Craig Schiff, co-founder of the precursors to Hyperion Solutions and OutlookSoft, has launched Stamford-based BPM Partners – for “business performance management” – an independent consulting firm that advises companies without trying to sell them anything.

“Navigating through the complexities of business performance management has become increasingly challenging,” Schiff said. “A growing population of companies that purchased customer relationship management and enterprise resource planning solutions in recent years now seeks to leverage those investments and avoid common implementation and rollout mistakes.”

Stressing that his business is not connected with any vendor, Schiff said he and his seven-person staff act independently in advising corporate clients, with no goal of convincing them to buy a certain brand of software.

“We’re selling our independence and objectivity,” Schiff said. “As a vendor, I saw that our clients needed help. You’re talking about a solution that can cost you \$500,000 and up in software and services.”

Schiff, who co-founded International Management Reporting Services, the precursor to Hyperion, in 1983 and OutlookSoft in 1999, said he wanted another challenge.

“I set goals at OutlookSoft, and I pretty much accomplished them,” he said.

Unlike OutlookSoft, funded through venture capital investment, Schiff said he financed BPM Partners in January with his own money, allowing him more independence in running the operation.

Schiff said BPM Partners is much less capital intensive than OutlookSoft. He targets the financial services, biotech, pharmaceuticals, food service and distribution industries to

help them choose among software from companies such as Computer Associates and PeopleSoft, as well as his former firms.

Scott May, assistant controller at The Schwan Food Co., whose home delivery trucks can be seen in Connecticut, said BPM “clearly put us on the right track” in choosing software.

A consultant such as BPM Partners plays a key role because vendors will try to sell a company more software technology than it requires, said Mark Pruner, board member of Silicon Sound, a nonprofit association for Internet professionals, and president of Web Counsel, a Stamford-based Internet consulting firm.

Employees also must see the importance of implementing a software product or its value will be lost, Pruner said.