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**How Sensitive Information
Becomes an Unacceptable
Liability**



How Sensitive Information Becomes an Unacceptable Liability

By Heather Navarra, The Write Type

Identity theft ... it's enough to strike fear into anyone who realizes how easily an individual's financial well-being can be destroyed. Growing at a phenomenal rate, this 'white-collar crime' involves criminals who steal personal information and then use it to obtain credit, often leaving the individual with a heavy, unrecoverable financial burden.

Most individuals and businesses recognize the need to shred documents before paper goes into the recycling bin. Many are also reducing paper usage by accepting e-bills and paying online. Unfortunately, this also means that their personal information is available on their computer: name, address and telephone number, as well as

credit card and bank account numbers – sometimes even their social insurance number. A thief with access to that hard drive can easily assume their identity and apply for credit cards and mortgages, racking up huge debt in their name.

It's surprising how sluggish businesses have been in accepting their responsibility to secure their clients' confidential information. Even though the Canadian government has passed legislation that clearly spells out an organization's responsibility and accountability (the 'Privacy Act', and the 'Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act'), many have been slow to react, leaving their customers at risk.

Criminals have been focusing on electronic data, which can provide access to hundreds of thousands of 'identities'. Almost every company collects and stores confidential information about their customers. That data must be protected when in use and securely disposed of when the computer equipment is replaced. Too often, computers are recycled, returned to the leasing company or donated with much of the data still intact. Even if the data files have been deleted and the hard drive reformatted, the data is still accessible with specialized software. These software applications are constantly being improved. The only secure way to eliminate the data is to physically destroy

the tape or hard drive that contains it. And that's where Absolute Data Destruction comes in.

Absolute Data Destruction Inc. (also known as ADD) provides one basic service: the destruction of redundant data storage devices. The company's founding shareholders identified a clear need within the marketplace for a secure service to destroy electronic media at the end of their useful life, and the company has cornered this market as the only business offering exclusively this service. The security level offered in its service is second to none.

"Computer storage devices contain more confidential information than any other source; they are compact and can contain volumes of information," says Rob Pilozzi, Director of Operations. "That

public security breach and the company's reputation and financial well-being can be in serious trouble. When the security of client information is compromised, the marketplace tends to remember for a long time." The cost of data storage devices, such as hard drives, has declined tremendously over the last few years; a cost/benefit analysis that considers the potential risk makes the decision for the absolute destruction of redundant devices a 'no-brainer'.

ADD shreds every device they receive, without exception. Other options no longer offer protection because new advancements provide the ability to reconstitute the data. "Other companies offer data destruction as a secondary

a drive that slips through looks identical – there's no physical evidence – therefore there is potential for human error, whereas the data from a shredded drive is clearly inaccessible."

ADD's approach is secure from beginning to end. Organizations receive a StrongBox™ at their facility, where it is placed in a secure area. Employees then deposit redundant data storage devices (such as CDs, USBs, floppies, back-up tapes and hard drives) into the StrongBox™. A specialized tool is provided to incapacitate hard drives before being deposited into the StrongBox™. Once inserted, media cannot be removed.

Essentially, the StrongBox™ is a safe,



data is extremely valuable both to the company and to potential thieves. There is no other piece of equipment that holds that amount of potential risk for a company, or even for an individual."

The main focus of the company's marketing campaign is to educate both individuals and organizations on the potential impact that the loss of confidential information can have. "Legislation holds companies responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of data they collect," says Bruno Pilozzi, Director of Administration. "Most companies upgrade computer equipment on a regular basis, incurring tremendous risk of data theft each time. How they deal with their sensitive data is extremely important. One

business," says Rob. "If you walk through their plant, you'll see drives and computers everywhere, unsecured. They often reserve the right (buried in the fine print) to resell the drives after guaranteeing that the information is erased. Clients need to be clear about what such a guarantee from our competitors really means. How and to what level will clients be indemnified if sensitive data falls into the wrong hands? Also with any other destruction technique,

constructed of 100 percent solid steel, designed and fabricated to meet the highest security standards and with multiple locking mechanisms to which only ADD holds the keys at their secure location. StrongBoxes™ can weigh in excess of 2,000 pounds when filled, and must be moved by a pallet jack or fork lift. After a pre-scheduled pickup, the StrongBox™ is securely transported to ADD's plant where it is opened by bonded

employees. The contents are recorded, serial numbers of hard drives are logged, and then all media is physically destroyed by shredding it into tiny pieces. "We are proud to say that no other company offers a service that is remotely comparable," notes Bruno. "ADD is highly specialized in providing total protection and security to our clients."

For individuals and companies with smaller demand, computer retailers offer the StrongBox™ collection service. Drop locations can be found through the company's website at www.absolutedatadestruction.ca. A receipt is provided and, once the media is deposited, it is covered by an 'error and omissions' insurance that protects the client up to \$5 million.

Greater Toronto Area, the company is active across Canada.

The organization sets goals, with targets monitored daily for progress. With a strong commitment to the well-being of their clients, the company consistently stays abreast of industry news and changing government privacy policies, in order to stay ahead of the competition.



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The process is completed professionally, efficiently and at low cost. In fact, the company will not be undersold. ADD is also environmentally responsible: all shredded materials from hard drives are sent to a Canadian smelter. "We are serious about environmental protection: 25 percent of the proceeds from recyclable materials are donated to environmental protection agencies such as the David Suzuki Foundation," shares Bruno.

Plant tours have become the company's most successful selling feature. Security specialists from large firms say they are confident ADD has the most secure process. "Access to our plant is controlled, providing a secure facility," says Rob. "It's like a medical room: it's clean, there is nothing on the floor except StrongBoxes™ and bins of shredded hard drives. During plant tours, the value of the process becomes very clear."

Rob and Bruno, two of the visionaries behind this dynamic company, bring valuable skills to their roles. The company currently has seven employees. While the core business currently comes from the

With their stringent controls at every step of the process, it's clear that ADD is at the leading edge in this niche industry. "We are the 'go-to company' in data destruction when our client's requirements are security and privacy," says Rob. "We recognize that their data is priceless to them and we treat it that way. We make sure that every step in our destruction process meets the highest of security standards. Every data storage device we receive is treated as if it is worth a million dollars because, in the wrong hands, an organization's sensitive data can be worth exactly that."