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INSIDE TECHNOLOGY JON VAN

Area firm helps FBI computers share data

After the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, it became apparent to management at the Federal Bureau of Investigation that their information systems needed help.

Information gathered by agents wasn't readily available to analysts charged with "connecting the dots" to assess security threats. **Jeff Scudder**, a Homewood native, was put in charge of reforming the agency's computer networks to make information widely available as needed.

Scudder, who had worked on a similar project earlier for the **Central Intelligence Agency**, knew he faced a huge task. The FBI has many legacy computer systems that don't communicate with each other, but it needed to access information residing in those systems and make it available to people regardless of the system they used.

"I told management we needed to get top people to take advantage of the best talent there is," Scudder said.

That posed a problem, he said, because typically the FBI has selected computer consultants from a pool of vendors that have done projects before and who have security clearance to do the work.

"If we went to that same well, I knew we weren't going to get the

skilled people we needed," Scudder said.

Going outside the usual vendors, he settled upon **Enterprise Warehousing Solutions Inc.**, a firm in Hinsdale that specializes in projects similar to the FBI's. **David Marco**, its president, has written books and scholarly articles on data warehousing. He has taught at the **University of Chicago** and is recognized as an expert in the field.

Marco and his tiny firm, with 35 employees, had never worked for the FBI before and didn't have security clearances, but Scudder told the FBI management it made sense to take time to help the experts get the security clearance.

After a year of working on the project, Marco said his firm has met project mileposts on time and on budget.

Marco's challenge is not only to make data widely available to FBI analysts, but also to provide information about the source and timeliness of the data to aid in an analyst's evaluation. And the system must have the highest levels of unhackable security.

Because of early successes demonstrated by Marco's firm, the project has become more complex, said Scudder.

"This started as a project to demonstrate the capabilities of

data warehousing to the bureau," he said, "but the director wants to use it now. Our goal is to keep the system in production while building a true enterprise solution."

Convergence in wireless: The convergence of computers and consumer electronics gear such as TV sets and stereo systems is just around the corner, predicts **Ralph Bond**, who manages consumer education for **Intel Corp.**

Intel promotes wireless networking by installing Wi-Fi compatibility into laptop computer chips and will soon do that for desktop computers as well. But Bond said that TV sets and stereo systems will soon also be factory-equipped for wireless networking.

"You want links from your computer to other appliances," said Bond. "If I download music, video or photos to my computer, I may want to take that content out of folders in my computer and play the music on my stereo or show the video on my television."

While Wi-Fi may be the most immediate medium for such home connectivity, Intel is looking at others, said Bond.

The firm envisions a wireless universal serial bus to replace traditional wired connections for home networks, Bond said.

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