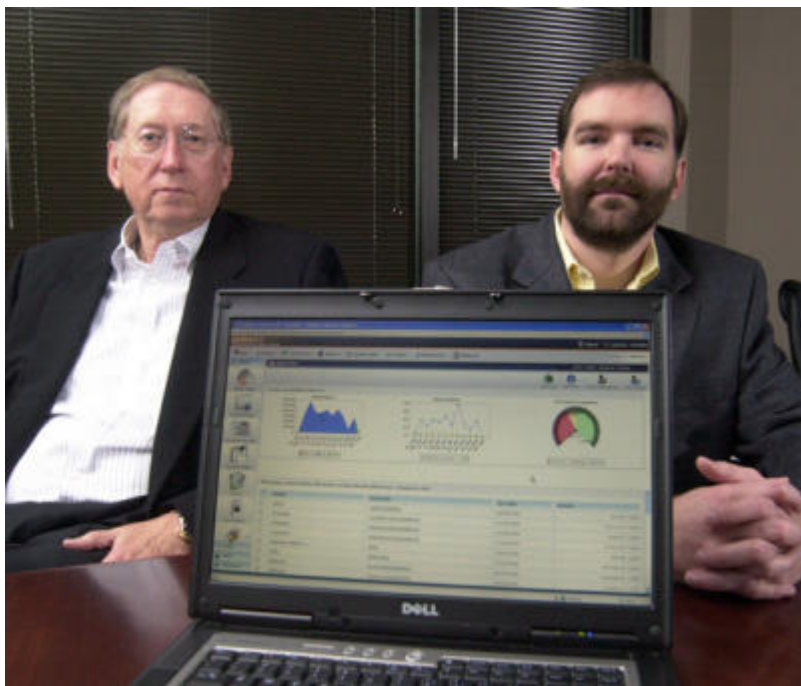


Friday, March 21, 2008

Asentinel secures patent for telecom expense management software

Memphis Business Journal - by [Einat Paz-Frankel](#) Staff writer

ALAN HOWELL / MBJ



David Perdue and Jason Fisher demonstrate Asentinel's telecom expense software.

Asentinel LLC has patented its telecom expense management software, a milestone that company leaders say positions it better in a growing, highly competitive industry.

Asentinel originally filed for the patent in 2003. Five years and \$1 million later, the patent was granted by the **U.S. Patent and Trademark Office** last week. The software, called Asentinel 5.0, automates the handling and processing of telecommunication bills, audits them and generates reports on the company's telecom expenditures, says Asentinel CEO David Perdue.

"The patent is a stamp of credibility," he says.

Most of Asentinel's clients, some of which are Fortune 100 companies, spend \$25 million-\$30 million per year on wireless and land line bills, Perdue says. Asentinel's telecom expense management program can save some businesses hundreds of thousands of dollars, and in some cases millions of dollars, annually by identifying incorrect charges and contract violations on their bills. Asentinel's 60 clients include Ticketmaster, Regions Bank, Family Dollar and two of the top 10 U.S. banks. Some of its clients have thousands of phone lines and cell phone users, and Asentinel processes about \$1 billion in telecom bills annually.

According to research firm Aberdeen Group, companies can save 8%-32% on their telecom bills, including land lines and wireless lines, if they implement invoice processing software.

Perdue and Asentinel's chief software architect, Jason Fisher, believe the patent is an important differentiator in Asentinel's race to compete against such companies as Tangoe and Symphony SMS. The patent protects both Asentinel and its clients.

"Clients don't have to worry about someone going after them," Perdue says.

Fisher says the patent gives the company "freedom to operate" in the multibillion-dollar telecom expense management market. This competitive edge will come in handy if and when TEM companies merge.

"I expect consolidation in the industry," Perdue says. "There are about 100 companies in this sphere."

Software giants also are looking to enter the market. Computer Associates is already reselling Asentinel 5.0 as part of its comprehensive IT solution.

"We felt that the industry is going to be huge and that we need to protect our intellectual property," Fisher says.

Since it takes a long time from filing to granting -- Asentinel first filed for its comprehensive TEM software patent in 2003 -- the company can potentially sue competitors for software developed since then and that's in use now, says attorney Mark Vorder-Bruegge Jr., chair of **Wyatt Tarrant & Combs LLP's** intellectual property group. Asentinel's patent would potentially give it power to intimidate its competition if the company chooses to go that path.

"If they're really aggressive, they can use the patent as a competitive weapon," he says. "They can threaten others by saying they're infringing upon Asentinel's patent."

Vorder-Bruegge is not involved in Asentinel's patent filing.

He warns that if a patent is too broad or not unique enough, it may be declared invalid by the courts. In recent years, the **Supreme Court** has at times judged the Patent Office's decisions as too permissive, granting patents to inventions that aren't truly novel.

Regardless of Asentinel's newly granted patent, Perdue has been receiving calls from both venture capital firms and large software companies expressing interest in buying Asentinel.

"We want to grow our business," he says. "The big guys are going into this market. It looks more attractive to them to buy the small companies. I'm open to that."

Asentinel LLC

Telecom expense management

CEO: David Perdue

Address: 1715 Aaron Brenner Drive, Suite 417

Phone: (901) 752-6200

Web site: **www.asentinel.com**

ep@bizjournals.com | 259-1764