

Co.'s Wellness Portals Offer Big Picture On Employee Health

SOFTWARE: They Can Be Customized for the Needs of Individual Users

■ By JOHN COX

More than 3 million people use internet wellness portals created by San Diego-based **MediKeeper Inc.**, and yet few have any idea the 20-person company exists. CEO **David Ashworth** wants to keep it that way.

Why the anonymity? Because MediKeeper knows its place in the world: It offers software and data storage to firms that provide services to companies whose employees may assume everything's kept in-house — even though it's not.

Sometimes that's the way it has to be



Photo courtesy of MediKeeper Inc.

CEO David Ashworth created MediKeeper Inc., which allows companies to customize internet portals that promote wellness services.

MEDIKEEPER INC.

CEO: David Ashworth

Revenue: Less than \$10 million per year

Number of local employees: About 20

Headquarters: San Diego

Year founded: 2004

Company description: Developer of internet portals facilitating customizable wellness services

if consumers are going to feel comfortable sharing sensitive information about their health.

"None of our clients know what MediKeeper is," said **Leslie Thompson**, product manager at one of the company's

customers, **Vivacity Inc.**, a Mountlake Terrace, Wash.-based firm that sells wellness services such as fitness tracking to about a dozen employers accounting for some 60,000 workers.

This sort of arrangement has done well

for MediKeeper as it labors away in the background, giving branded credit to its customers' customers. It makes money by licensing its software, charging less than \$5 per month for every person eligible to use its portal services.

Since being founded in 2004 as an electronic medical records company, it has built customer relationships with more than 1,000 companies, each of which may have 20 or more customers employing hundreds or thousands of people.

"It's a one to one to many" business model, he said. "We just give them the tools."

\$6 Billion Industry

Its work in the realm of corporate health promotion puts MediKeeper in a large and growing field. Market research firm **IBISWorld** has estimated the industry at \$6 billion and projected its growth at 6 percent annually.

Sara Rauch, director of strategy and planning at the **Wellness Council of America**, of which MediKeeper is one of 5,000 members, said there is broad value to offering wellness services to employers. These services can range from health coaching to mental health counseling to flexible work scheduling.

MediKeeper's internet portals start by surveying people about their health. Responses are carefully guarded; employers only see worker health information in aggregate form — how many smoke, for example, or are overweight. That helps employers understand the health care costs they may face over time.

Customizable Service

What the portals do next is largely up to MediKeeper's primary customers, which tend to be wellness providers such as insurance companies or health benefits brokers. If they want, MediKeeper will send out reminders to exercise, see a doctor or attend an upcoming wellness event. Employers can also offer incentives encouraging their workers to make wiser decisions about their health.

Every client portal is based on a single, standard product developed over years by MediKeeper. But how that product is customized to interact with the end user varies for every client, Ashworth said.

Small Feels Big

This often gives the impression MediKeeper is a bigger company than it really is. Small companies that sign up to use a portal designed by MediKeeper "would never even dream they could afford" such a product, he said.

The fact that MediKeeper is actually a small company keeps it responsive, Thompson said.

"It makes for a smoother experience," she said of MediKeeper's size. "Less issues, and if there are any hiccups, they handle it immediately." She added that the product is highly reliable and engages her clients' employees well.

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