

# “DISCLOSURES”

Volume VII, Issue I

January - March 2011

### Special Points of Interest:

- Custom vs. COTS
- HIPAA
- VR Twitter and Facebook

### Inside This Issue:

Which is Better...Custom Software or COTS products?	1
The Importance of HIPAA	2
Are You Following Us Yet?	2
Quote of the Day	3
Upcoming Events	3
Industry Buzz	3
Product-Related Links	3

## WHICH IS BETTER...CUSTOM SOFTWARE OR COMMERCIAL OFF-THE-SHELF SOFTWARE PRODUCTS?

In any business, we are faced with numerous important decisions. One such decision is deciding on whether to purchase COTS (Commercial Off-The-Shelf) products or custom software. COTS generally are unmodified software products that are purchased from a retailer/vendor and mass-marketed to many businesses (such as Microsoft Office). For this article, we define custom software as being developed from scratch by an outside software developer (such as Visual Records). Let's look at the pros for each.

### Pros of COTS:

- Acquisition and deployment of COTS software is usually cheaper than development and deployment of equivalent custom software because costs are shared over many users.
- COTS software will be maintained by the vendor (patches, updates, etc.) and usually have a money back guarantee in case the software does not work.
- COTS are immediately available and have decreased training requirements.
- Commercial software products are programmed to a high level of quality and tested thoroughly through many stages of the development process. The processes and skill levels utilized in most commercial software product companies are better than those available in most internal IT groups.

### Pros of Custom Software:

- You will be able to create exactly what

you want and need, tailoring it to your specific business practices and policies.

- You can “own the source code,” which means that licensing and renewal support costs are not necessary. Also if something needs to be changed in the code, you can have it done quickly instead of waiting for patches or updates from the COTS manufacturer.
- The software will be more effective and usable because users and developers work together to understand the needs of the organization and then create software requirements that meet those needs. Since business needs may change, software can be easily upgraded.
- It may be less expensive to purchase COTS but in the long run, a custom software product will be a better investment as money is not wasted on unnecessary features.
- It can give you an advantage over your competitors, because they do not have the same system. You can develop useful reports that analyzes your business trends/productivity.
- You receive overall better support and expertise.

If your business is in the habit of customizing COTS such as Microsoft Excel spreadsheets or Microsoft Access databases, then you may want to consider progressing to a custom software solution. This will give you more flexibility and in the long run, save you time and money. Contact our office for help!

# THE IMPORTANCE OF HIPAA

There has been a steady increase in recent news about medical facilities (large and small) being fined for HIPAA violations. Furthermore, the HHS Office of Civil Rights is requesting an increase in funding for its fiscal year 2010 budget, 76% of which will go towards HIPAA enforcement. As developers of MedCorr (medical Release of Information tracking software system and HIPAA disclosure accounting), we are quite familiar with HIPAA and its guidelines. The information below is a partial list and description of different areas needed to protect data and information involving HIPAA.



**Roles:** Organizations should assign a security analyst or security officer to help identify who is responsible for enforcing the HIPAA standards within the organization.

**Workforce:** Organizations should ensure that training is implemented and carried out to all employees. Decisions should be made on employee access and rights to individual and key records. This includes information on and how employees have access to records and which supervisors can grant, modify or remove access to records.

**Security Awareness and Training of Workforce:** Organizations should provide a training program to raise awareness of HIPAA rights. Every individual in the or-

ganization must be trained on a regular basis (including all management personnel).

**Records and Information Access:** Policies should define roles on who should have access to programs and information as well as who has the rights to modify the security access.

**Incident Response:** Policies and procedures should be implemented to include incident response. This information should be used to identify security incidents and how to respond to such incidents.

**Contingency and Emergency Operations Plan:** Policies and Procedures should include the Disaster Backup and Recovery plan to ensure the business can continue operations in the event of a disaster.

**Hardware, Software and Transmission Security:** Organizations should have a hardware firewall in place along with professional versions of operating systems. Transmission of personal information should be encrypted.

**Audit Control:** Procedure audit mechanisms should be in place for all hardware, software and data control. This information should be reviewed by the security supervisor on a regular basis.

## Are You Following Us Yet...???

If you have recently visited Visual Records' website, you may have noticed two new buttons on the left side of the page: one enables visitors to follow us on Twitter and the other clicks through to our Facebook page where you can "Friend" us.



tential clients and referral partners someone they can actually connect with on a personal level.

Social Media is an efficient method for businesses to connect and communicate both locally and on a nationwide basis. Visual Records is a firm believer in relationship building and referral networking. It is a dependable fundamental that people do business with those they like, trust, remember or receive value from. Putting an actual face to the business (Tricia Jackson, our Sales Manager) instead of just a logo provides po-

As Tricia is out and about in the community, networking, attending fundraising events for several nonprofits she volunteers at or just shopping, people now recognize and associate her with Visual Records. She is followed by thirteen different Twitter lists and recently started having her tweets featured in the daily Twitter newsletters of several local businesses (these are hosted on <http://paper.li/>).

So if you're wondering whether or not to upgrade to Internet Explorer 9 or what the latest Microsoft Word tip/trick is, remember to "Follow" Tricia!



26323 Jefferson Avenue  
Suite C  
Murrieta, CA 92562  
Phone: 951-693-1350  
Fax: 951-693-5154

sales@visualrecords.com  
www.visualrecords.com

*“Developing Innovative Software  
Products for Your Industry.”*

### QUOTE OF THE DAY

*“If you wish success in life, make  
perseverance your bosom friend,  
experience your wise counselor, caution  
your elder brother and hope your  
guardian genius.”*

*- Joseph Addison*

### THE VISUAL RECORDS STORY

Visual Records specializes in developing innovative and high-quality software products and systems for all industries. By partnering with entrepreneurs and visionaries, we launch new and successful software products.

Headquartered in Murrieta, California, Visual Records combines research, experience and value with integrity and respect. For over 20 years, we have kept the following commitments:

1. **Vision:** Designing beyond what is considered "standard."
2. **Flexibility:** Working closely to deliver solutions in a timely and cost-effective manner.
3. **Integrity:** Making long-term partners through honesty, tenacity and consideration.
4. **Support:** Ensuring that our customers remain completely satisfied.

If you have any comments or suggestions about the VR newsletter, please e-mail Rebecca Phan at rebecca@visualrecords.com.

If you would like to pass this newsletter along to a friend, it is easy. Just send an e-mail to rebecca@visualrecords.com. Please also visit our website.

### UPCOMING EVENTS

**May 8 to 12, 2011:** 12th Conference of International Society of Travel Medicine, John B. Hynes Veteran's Memorial Conv. Center, Boston, MA

For more information, please visit [www.istm.org](http://www.istm.org).

**May 15 to 20, 2011:** 25th Annual Governor's Hurricane Conference, Greater Fort Lauderdale / Broward County Convention Center, Ft. Lauderdale, FL

For more information, please visit [www.flghc.org](http://www.flghc.org).

**June 6 to 10, 2011:** HP Technology Forum & Expo, Venetian / Palazzo Resort, Las Vegas, NV

For more information, please visit [www.hptechnologyforum.com](http://www.hptechnologyforum.com).

### INDUSTRY “BUZZ”

**January 19, 2011:** Teaching Future Doctors The Basics Of Medication Errors

**February 23, 2011:** New Technology Pinpoints Genetic Differences Between Cancer, Non-cancer Patients



**March 10, 2011:** U.S. Army Nurse Wins ANA Immunity Award For Protecting Soldiers Against Diseases

**March 22, 2011:** Computerized Systems Reduce Psychiatric Drug Errors

### PRODUCT- RELATED LINKS

#### MedCorr

HHS Imposes A \$4.3 Million Civil Money Penalty For Violations Of The HIPAA Privacy Rule

<http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/217306.php>

#### Storm Tracker

Storm Simulation Technology Anticipates Superstorm That Could Be Costliest US Disaster Ever

<http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/218513.php>

#### Traveler

Dengue Vaccine Could Be Developed By As Early As 2015

<http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/217254.php>