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Data backup on fast track

Thousand Oaks firm signs deal with Baja Fresh

BY STEPHEN NELLIS

Staff Writer

Thousand Oaks-based Casdex didn't take long to jump off the blocks.

The company launched its first product in February. It provides an online document archiving service that gives small and mid-sized firms the same kind of backups that large enterprises use to protect against lawsuits and audits.

And after just a few months, Casdex inked a deal with Baja Fresh, the Thousand Oaks-based Mexican quick-food chain with more than 300 locations. Under the deal, announced in early November, Casdex will digitize and archive financial and human resources records for all the chain's locations.

David Barley, Casdex's chief technology officer and co-founder, said the company is just setting the table for bigger deals. Though he's not releasing revenue figures, Barley said Casdex has about 50 customers and "three other large customers, very similar to Baja Fresh, that we'll be announcing soon."

Barley comes from a background in the financial services industry, where data backup and storage is a multibillion-dollar business. When he worked with clients such as Ford Motor Co., Merrill Lynch and Ameritrade, it was common to design a hardware-software archiving system that cost millions.

So when Barley decided he'd start his own business, "The thought process was pretty straightforward: If you're working for a Fortune 500, you can afford a \$5 million archive solution. But just because I'm not a Ford Motor Co. or a Morgan Stanley doesn't mean I don't have the same requirements. What tools are available to me?"

About two years ago, Barley founded Casdex and began building a software platform that would let small businesses and companies as large as Baja Fresh archive and manage data on secure server

farms. The trick, Barley said, was to make it foolproof and usable with only a Web browser and Internet connection.

After nearly two years of "stress-testing the back end," Barley said, Casdex targeted the legal business, which was absorbing a set of rules rolled out in 2006 for handling electronic documents in federal courts. But the company's early customers kept asking Casdex whether it could serve the same small businesses the attorneys were serving.

"We kind of quickly got pushed to their clients," Barley said. "Over the last couple months, we've taken a step back and redesigned our front end to make it more industry agnostic."

Now, Casdex digitizes documents and provides a full range of tools for small businesses to manage archived documents. Certain records, for example, must be held for several years but then deleted because of privacy concerns. Other records may need to be protected from a scheduled deletion because of ongoing litigation.

And of course, there's searching. For the small-business owner, paying an attorney hundreds of dollars an hour to go through boxes of personnel records during an employment dispute could be crippling. "Over a period of time, you can have lot of stuff stored," Barley said. "But how do you find it?"

At present, Casdex has 13 employees and is managing between 25 and 30 terabytes of data in two locations — one in Los Angeles and one in Las Vegas. The second center is outside Los Angeles' "blast zone," a concept large financial institutions use to ensure data stays secure in the event of a catastrophe. "If you want your data truly protected, you need it outside that zone," Barley said.

Though Casdex designed its platform with small businesses in mind, it also

sees a market in targeting mid-sized business — such as Baja Fresh — that aren't in the data management business and find it cheaper to tap a partner rather than build out a system of their own. "If you think about them as a business, what's their core competency?" Barley said. "It's food."

"With so many locations nationwide, it has become a Herculean task to keep track of all of our paper documents," David Kim, chief executive of Baja Fresh, said in a release. "Implementing Casdex has helped us streamline our document management process without needing to worry about the security of our files so that we can focus on our most important priority: satisfying our customers."

But when it comes down to it, serving small and emerging businesses is why Barley helped found Casdex.

"If you think about markets, that's a great market," Barley said. "They're a pleasure to work with because they love what they're doing."



Casdex co-founder and Chief Technology Officer David Barley launched an online backup system that allows companies to digitize and archive their records.

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CASDEX AT A GLANCE



David Barley
Co-Founder,
Chief Tech. Officer

- **Location:** Thousand Oaks
- **Employees:** 13
- **Founded:** 2006
- **First product launch:** Feb. 2008
- **What they do:** Provide an online archiving service for small and mid-sized businesses