

D8 8 THE PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER Monday, February 5, 2001

Some districts use online system to fill substitute teacher slots

SUBSTITUTES from DI
 Some automated services have done for years in some school districts. Slots can open on the Web site the day and times they would prefer to be called.

Now that some of the initial kinks have been smoothed, "our substitute slot" family members will watch the Web site for openings while they are in a classroom teaching, she said.

Joseph is more efficient, while still giving Sprague control over the employees it hires, something district leaders give up when they go through temp agencies, Phillips said.

Still, the Internet cannot erase the nationwide shortage of substitute teachers in a competitive job market.

According to a survey done by the National Teaching Institute at the State University, 86 percent of districts nationwide reported some problem with a substitute shortage. Sixty percent said it was a definite problem, and 42 percent said it was a serious problem for them, the survey showed.

At the Edison School District in New Jersey, which started using the Joseph system in the fall, there is a pool of 70 substitutes for the 90 to 100 vacancies that occur as a typical day, personnel director John DiMazio said.

"I'm not saying it got me any more slots," DiMazio said. "The problem is the number of substitute teachers report positive reactions to the flexibility of scheduling online, he said."

DiMazio added that he believes automated phone systems will eventually become obsolete because of Internet services.

school Solutions, of Orlando, Fla., which provides districts nationwide with automated phone systems, is switching to an Internet system and is working with its first online client in California, company president Scott Lindemann said.

The Substitute Teaching Institute's director, Geoffrey C. Smith, said more companies have popped up in the last two years to address the substitute shortage. But "it's

not an easy problem to solve," he said.

Any machine — whether automated or computer — is easier to say "no" to, Smith said.

"It won't be recruiting, won't be begging," he continued. "It won't say, 'This is the last class I have to fill today, will you take it?'"

Kathryn Masterson's e-mail address is karnast@sprague.net.

Asplundh keeps growing, just like the trees it trims

ASPLUNDH from DI
 playment with other companies. They must be recommended by three family members, at least one being a member of the board of directors. And, once hired, they must undergo seven or eight years of rigorous training before they can take executive positions.

During the training period, they are given different jobs in different parts of the country. They might find themselves climbing trees in Connecticut, clearing power lines in Arizona, driving heavy equipment in California, or supervising workers in Illinois before being chosen for executive positions at the 19,000-acre firm based on 14 acres in Willow Grove.

Not all Asplundh employees are in the field. Some family members have been chosen to drop out of the program completely. Chris Asplundh said that several family members have been chosen to drop out of the program to go to college.

"There are fewer family members in the company today than there were seven or eight years ago."

In an extended family of bright, hard-driving men — at this time there are no Asplundh women executives — a certain amount of intra-family competition for top positions is probably inevitable.

"It's a funny situation," said Chris Asplundh, a University of Pennsylvania graduate who spent two years at the Marine Corps before joining the company in 1964. "There are competitive lines, and we don't discourage competition so long as it's constructive."

"But the reason we have done as well as we have over the years is because we work as a team."

Not infrequently, family members move aggressively in other directions, he said. That has happened with the Asplundhs, who share common values and a common religious faith, most of them having been raised in the Swedish Reformed Church, whose cathedral is in Bryn Athyn.

"We do have arguments over issues, but we always come together," Chris Asplundh said. He said there are no arguments at the company and if one should show up, he would be encouraged to leave, the reason being that superstars are

not perceived as team players. In times of crisis, when devastating hurricanes or ice storms deprive huge populations of electric power, Asplundh's network is especially important.

"We are the storm guys," Chris Asplundh said. In the latter end of January 1999, a tremendous ice storm downed utility lines across thousands of miles in northeastern Canada, upstate New York and northern New England, leaving an estimated four million households without power.

Asplundh responded with a force of about 700 crews from 20 states and three Canadian provinces. It placed a dramatic 20-foot Asplundh crew (lift trucks and all) from Pine Hill, Pa., to the north Carolina to Maine. Crews that were mobilized over a 10-day period helped more than a dozen utilities restore power.

More recently, Asplundh's crews spring into action when ice covered each of Arkansas' 47 counties as line clearance.

As the power companies get bigger through consolidation, they would bigger line-clearance firms. And the biggest of all is Asplundh.

Asplundh works with all of the major utilities in the U.S. and they account for about 66 percent of total revenues. For that reason, the power crisis there could affect Asplundh.

"If they file for bankruptcy, it certainly would impact us," Chris Asplundh said.

The company's line clearance work — also known as "vegetation management" — practices about 70 percent of its revenues.

The other 30 percent comes from a variety of auxiliary services: Asplundh reads electric, gas and water meters, maintains pipelines and utility poles, and provides "marginal tree services." It repairs streetlights and services billboards. It identifies underground utility lines to avoid breaks in the line during construction.

Asplundh even operates its own truck dealership in Manhattan, N.J. As one of the nation's largest purchasers of vehicles, it uses the agency to "buy internally and sell externally," Chris Asplundh said.

But its core business continues to be trimming trees. Year after year, the equipment was relatively primitive, the work was dangerous. It is less so today. But, even though Asplundh's great-grandfather, John Asplundh, died in a logging accident, he said.

Asplundh even operates its own truck dealership in Manhattan, N.J. As one of the nation's largest purchasers of vehicles, it uses the agency to "buy internally and sell externally," Chris Asplundh said.

But its core business continues to be trimming trees. Year after year, the equipment was relatively primitive, the work was dangerous. It is less so today. But, even though Asplundh's great-grandfather, John Asplundh, died in a logging accident, he said.



Asplundh uses new crews to trim trees from utility poles in Bucks County. The company handles "vegetation management" for utilities.

When ice storms hit Arkansas, the company mustered

When ice storms hit Arkansas, the company mustered from DI
 crew members to clear power lines in the state. The company has a long history of providing emergency services during natural disasters.

The company has a long history of providing emergency services during natural disasters. In 1999, a major ice storm hit the Northeast, leaving millions of households without power. Asplundh's crews were mobilized to clear power lines across the region.

Asplundh's crews were mobilized to clear power lines across the region. The company has a long history of providing emergency services during natural disasters.

Asplundh's crews were mobilized to clear power lines across the region. The company has a long history of providing emergency services during natural disasters.

A Malvern company's synthetic bone is ready for market

ORTHOTIX from DI
 Now, orthopedic surgeons use metal cages, coral, or bone from donors to fix the patient's hip to shore up damaged bones. Vinos, a porous material similar to the soft vascular part of bone, allows blood to flow through it and encourages bone growth. As new bone grows into the void that Vinos was used to fill, Vinos recedes, Orthotix executives say.

They Orthotix has managed to straddle two continents in order to take advantage of Europe's earlier route to market for medical devices and invest in the U.S. market.

Orthotix was the first U.S. company to go public on the European Association of Securities Dealers' Automated Quotation System. With medical device stocks down for a year, Europe's first technology-oriented stock market looked more promising than Nasdaq. "The spirit of the institution's investors was diminished," Joseph said. "This was an opportunity."

The process of going public on NASDAQ was all but finished from that in the United States. In fact, the company had to follow many Securities and Exchange Commission guidelines, Joseph said.

In August, Orthotix began trading on the Nasdaq. The company's shares started at \$6.50, and closed Friday at \$5.30. Later this year, the company plans to issue more shares, Joseph said.

The company was founded in 1992, and has yet to turn a profit. Last week the company announced a net loss of \$4.6 million on \$207,693 in sales of Vinos for the fourth quarter.

for. For the year, Orthotix lost \$14 million on sales of \$78.6 million. Orthotix also announced last week that it had raised \$2.5 million in a private financing from a European foundation called the Remond Foundation.

Vinos is not Orthotix's first product. Last summer Orthotix sold its line of dental grafting products to Implant Innovations Inc. of Palm Beach Gardens, Fla., for \$13 million, in order to concentrate on the market for orthopedic products.

Vinos is the first of three orthopedic products that Orthotix plans to market. Cortec, a synthetic plastic substance acquired from a spin-off of a clinical studies Orthotix executives said they think Cortec will be approved for use in Europe sometime this year. Possible uses include cranial repair and anchoring bone screws.

A third product, Whalons, is a synthetic bone implant that can be easily shaped, will undergo testing in humans this year. If test results are positive and FDA approves the implant, the product could be on the market in 2004, Panchal said.

Vinos was approved to be sold in Europe last year. "I think it works well," said Mark Spangler, an associate professor of orthopedic surgery at the school of medicine at the Free University of Brussels in Belgium. Spangler, who has used Vinos seven times, said it works as well as human bone, yet it absorbed more thoroughly by the body. "My first trauma cases are completely recovered," he said.

Orthotix grew out of technology pioneered by Paul Ducheyne and ortho-

pedic surgery research at the University of Pennsylvania. Ducheyne and Joseph founded Orthotix.

The company's competitors in the bioresorbable market include Intereurope International Inc. of Irvine, Calif., and Osteotech Inc. of Easton, Pa.

Orthotix is the third medical device company that Joseph, 58, has either founded and joined at an early stage in the Philadelphia area. In 1988, he was a cofounder of Site-Micromedical Systems Inc., a Harsham company that markets orthodontic appliances. Johnstone & Johnson acquired Site-Micromedical Systems in 1983.

Two years later, Joseph joined Surgical Laser Technologies Inc. in Montgomeryville. A publicly traded company, Surgical Laser Technologies develops and sells lasers used in surgery. Joseph was chairman and CEO until 1991, and stayed on for two more years as a chairman.

The combination of a large potential market, promising products, and a strong management team put Orthotix in a good position for the future, said Ronald S. Spangler, an analyst with Emergent Growth Equities in a Kase of Praxis.

Spangler also said that making Orthotix, who said senior management jobs at West Chester's Cephalon Inc. and Malvern's Centocor Inc., the CEO was a wise move.

"He's taken companies that have had 50 employees and their first products on the market, and helped them grow into large companies," Spangler said. "Sometimes the leadership is just as important as the science."

Orthotix chairman David S. Joseph (left) and CEO Bruce Panchal aim their new synthetic bone material at a growing market for treating spine injuries.

Business Calendar

- Today**
- Training & Education for 88 Professionals by International Franchise Association, 900 N. 17th St., Suite 200, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.
 - 2001 Career Strategies for 14 Advertising & Public Relations Executives, 1700 Market St., 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.
 - 2001 Career Strategies for 14 Advertising & Public Relations Executives, 1700 Market St., 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.
- Tuesday**
- Full Labor Standards Act & Director Pay by International Franchise Association, 900 N. 17th St., Suite 200, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.
 - 2001 Career Strategies for 14 Advertising & Public Relations Executives, 1700 Market St., 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.
 - 2001 Career Strategies for 14 Advertising & Public Relations Executives, 1700 Market St., 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.
- Wednesday**
- 2001 Career Strategies for 14 Advertising & Public Relations Executives, 1700 Market St., 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.
 - 2001 Career Strategies for 14 Advertising & Public Relations Executives, 1700 Market St., 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.
- Thursday**
- 2001 Career Strategies for 14 Advertising & Public Relations Executives, 1700 Market St., 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.
 - 2001 Career Strategies for 14 Advertising & Public Relations Executives, 1700 Market St., 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.
- Friday**
- 2001 Career Strategies for 14 Advertising & Public Relations Executives, 1700 Market St., 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.
 - 2001 Career Strategies for 14 Advertising & Public Relations Executives, 1700 Market St., 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.