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Protecting records is big business at Blue Chip

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CRESCENT SPRINGS -

Somewhere near Buttermilk Pike there's a three-story nondescript office building with a business that has been growing at a 25 percent rate each year.

They don't advertise, there's no sign, they're not in the yellow pages. Their mail is sent to a Cincinnati post office box. If a potential customer calls them, they'll refuse to give them directions to their office. They won't allow photographers to take pictures inside the building.

They will tell you their name however: Blue Chip Records Storage.

Their business is security. Telling anyone the answers to any of the above questions may jeopardize their security. Blue Chip Records Storage maintains the priceless computer tapes - data of client lists, inventory records, tax documents - of several Greater Cincinnati businesses. But they won't say which businesses.

Blue Chip was founded in 1998, but Sept. 11, 2001, marked the beginning of their most robust growth.

"After that, businesses realized that it just was not smart to keep every bit of information in one place," said Jack Sullender, the company's president.

Blue Chip was founded almost by accident. Sullender bought the building for an existing courier service. The building's original tenant was a jeweler who stored inventory in underground vaults. The Mosler vaults are designed to withstand 1,800-degree Fahrenheit temperatures for up to eight hours.

Sullender thought the vaults were a nuisance until a client of his courier business asked him to deliver computer tapes to a bank's safe deposit box. Sullender agreed, but the bank wouldn't allow the courier to make the deposit. Sullender lost the business, but the incident did give him an idea of how to use all those vaults underneath his building.

"It was right underneath me the whole time," said Sullender. "The only problem is that I didn't know the first thing about data storage.

"I didn't know enough about what I didn't know. So I talked to about 20 people in IT departments across the city. I asked what their needs were and what their requirements were. I read a lot. I talked to each industry's auditors. It was an education."

Sullender would not divulge prices, but did say, "I get more per square foot than the Empire State Building. And the best thing is, those tapes never call me in the middle of the night."

Another security precaution is that many of Blue Chip's clients don't know where they are located. Blue Chip picks up and delivers all items to be stored in their facility. The drivers - in unmarked vehicles - are given specific routes to take. Those routes are changed often. The drivers are periodically followed to make sure they are sticking to the prescribed course.

After nine years in business, Sullender isn't worried about running out of space.

"The vaults are already 60 percent full, but the building's design has the option to double their size," he said.

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