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**HAPPY TEAM:** Doug Carr, CBOSS general manager, sits with his management team at the company offices in Boardman. CBOSS has been renewed to handle OPLATES.com, the state's online license-plate renewal system. With him are Jennifer Samuel, marketing director, left, Aaron Lego, business development director, and Jenny Hammond, director of operations.

## Valley's CBOSS makes changes, holds on to OPLATES

*The local company handled 1 million license-plate transactions last year.*

By DON SHILLING  
VINDICATOR BUSINESS EDITOR

BOARDMAN — CBOSS has shortened its name, changed its slogan and narrowed its focus, but the evolving technology company will remain the sole provider of online license-plate renewals in Ohio.

The Boardman company recently renewed its contract with the Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles to operate OPLATES.com, which handled 1 million renewals and other license plate transactions last year.

CBOSS, which designed OPLATES and has been running it since 2000, would oversee the system for six more years if renewals included in the contract are approved. Also included is a toll-free telephone service for renewals.

The number of license renewals handled by CBOSS has doubled since the last time the contract was renewed in 2004.

Aaron Lego, director of business development for CBOSS, said he expects OPLATES orders to continue to increase as people become more comfortable with conducting business online. Also helping is the rapidly increasing number of logo plates offered by universities, combat groups and other organizations, many of whom are promoting the OPLATES service, he said.

*"We're still here, and we're serving the local community."*

Jennifer Samuel  
CBOSS director of marketing



**NEW FOCUS:** Doug Carr, CBOSS general manager, has led a restructuring of the company's focus in recent months. An online payment system used by the Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles and other state agencies is a key part of the company's future.

As CBOSS has worked to keep its contract with the BMV, its been doing some soul searching to create a new focus.

The company, originally known as CBOSS Community Network, was created in 1994 when Ralph Zerbonia assembled some investors and bought out NEO Net, an Internet service provider. Zerbonia is no longer with the company.

CBOSS initially was providing dial-up Internet access and then provided business solutions with the tag line "Everything Internet."

Trying to provide "Everything Internet" led to the company in too many different directions, said Jenny Hammond, director of operations.

Company officials decided to narrow CBOSS' focus to four key areas, she said.



The new areas of focus are its online payment system used by OPLATES and others, a Web site hosting service, a content management system that helps customers update their own Web sites, and custom applications that are related to one of the other areas.

CBOSS eliminated its Internet access product a year ago and has just introduced a new slogan, "Think IT Forward," with IT standing for information technology.

The company employs 17 at its Southern Boulevard office, compared with a staff of 30 employees and contractors that it used to have.

It also has a sales representative in Atlanta and is looking to add three or four others outside of this area, as well as one locally.

Hammond said CBOSS is hiring a national sales force because of its recent push into health care. CBOSS officials see an opportunity to promote its online payment system to physicians and other health-care providers. Among its clients is a hospital system in New Mexico, which will begin using the system later this month.

Lego said some industries, such as utilities, long ago adopted online payment systems because they handle regular, monthly payments from customers.

But health-care providers, especially physicians, have not invested in such systems because of the cost and because they don't have regular bills to the same customers, he said. CBOSS officials say their system can entice health-care providers because it is cost-effective. Also, they are being aided by a national push for all medical records to go on electronic files.

Lego said CBOSS is using its experience with OPLATES to demonstrate that it can handle online payments securely. CBOSS handled more than \$40 million worth of license-plate transactions last year.

CBOSS' system is integrated into the systems of two banks that are used by state agencies, so the local company doesn't handle any of the money. Electronic files are transferred directly from the customer to the bank for processing.

CBOSS has received the highest possible certification for its security procedures from the credit-card companies, said Doug Carr, company general manager.

In addition to the BMV, CBOSS' online payment system is used by the state attorney general, state department of public safety, state department of health, Mahoning County auditor, the city and county of San Francisco and a county in Wisconsin.

Despite pushing its online payment system, CBOSS also is promoting its Web site design and hosting services. The company has 700 clients in those areas, and many of them are local, said Jennifer Samuel, CBOSS director of marketing.

Among the local clients are Home Savings and Loan Co., Forum Health and the Catholic Diocese of Youngstown. "We're still here, and we're serving the local community," Samuel said.

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