

# BUSINESS

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## Time never stands still

Ellington company makes sure time clocks keep packing a bigger punch

By Jessica Batchelor

For the Journal Inquirer

Punch in.  
Clock out.  
Scan your eye?

For almost as long as people have worked for each other, there have been methods of tracking time and attendance. It can be as simple as an employee's jotting down his or her time on paper, or as high-tech as using cheat-proof, computerized terminals that recognize retinal images.

For 15 years, Ellington-based Accu-Time Systems Inc. has provided tools such as these for work force management.

ATS offers a product line that ranges from simple entry-level time and attendance terminals to state-of-the-art programmable biometric systems.

Since 1991, it has steadily grown from a domestic supplier to a corporation with locations around the globe.

The corporation is a leading provider of advanced technology equipment that combines biology and technology, according to company officials.

It's called biometrics and it's an automated method of recognizing a person based on a physiological or behavioral characteristic, according to company background literature. Among the features measured are; face, fingerprints, hand geometry, handwriting, iris, retinal, vein, and voice.

"Biometric identification could help fight identity fraud, which is one of the fastest growing crimes in our country." President and Chief Executive Officer Peter DiMaria wrote in the February 2006 issue of the trade publication "Scan: The Data Capture Report."

The more advanced technologies help eliminate the unreliable methods of keeping time and attendance, as well as such practices as "buddy punching" to circumvent the honor system, and the risk of lost data, and uncontrolled overtime, according to DiMaria.

Despite the accuracy and higher security of Biometric ID, the idea of a machine that identifies body parts has not always been well received, company officials acknowledged.

"Ten years ago biometrics were used very sparingly. Half of the terminals we sell now are biometric, whereas just a few years ago, sales were 10 percent." Corporate Marketing Manager Michael Glynn said.

However as the public has become more accepting, biometric sales have grown, Glynn added.



Jessica Hill for the Journal Inquirer

At Accu-Time in Ellington, Michael Glynn shows off an old and new version of the time clock. It is an ever-evolving process, he says.

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The evolution of employee time keeping has advanced from the days of written logs to mechanical time stamps using heavy cards, to devices that remember time in and calculate total shift time when clocking out.

The birth of the punch clock goes back to the late 18th century. In 1888, Edward G. Watkins invented the first practical time recorder.

It was a clock equipped with individually numbered push buttons, which could represent each worker

in a plant. Upon arriving or leaving work, employees pushed their numbered button, which perforated a revolving circular time sheet, recording the hours worked.

Because the machine was so simple to operate, it was called "Simplex." Ever since its adoption, "punching the clock" has become a common phrase in American society.

One of Watkins' most important steps was to replace the spring-operated time recorders with electric

mechanisms. One of these was an electric time stamp.

The device was used by government agencies to record the exact time of mail arrival, and by airfields to record the arrival and departure of planes.

Basically, the evolution of the time card has come in three different waves; mechanical, electronic, and more recently, computer-automated.

"Self-service empowerment of employees is the latest wave," Glynn said.

On Jan. 3, ATS launched the next generation of their work force management terminal, The Optimus, a result of 15 years of expertise gained through close collaboration with business partners, he said.

The name is actually an acronym that stands for Online Personal Time and Information Management Utility Station.

The Optimus is "a state-of-the-art

terminal that manages and simplifies the complexities facing human resource and work force management professionals," Glynn said.

It is a full service and self-service unit that makes past terminals seem old-fashioned, according to DiMaria.

It has a large display and packs a powerful processor and open programming. It also offers a fingerprint-reading biometric option for increased security, he said, adding that feature protects employees' personal information and eliminates so-called buddy punching.

Advancement doesn't rest there.

There is still more to come from ATS, according to Glynn.

"Our Cyberseries line has been the industry standard for the last 10 to 15 years. A new version of that is coming out in the next half year. It will have Java capabilities, web services, and more," Glynn said.