

# Area business leaders still optimistic

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companies.”

Myriad reasons explain the decline in the number of public companies based in North Texas.

Recession sent some into bankruptcy or to a point where they couldn't meet requirements to stay listed, such as Blockbuster Inc.

Some, like Fort Worth's Burlington Northern Santa Fe Corp., were bought by other companies and taken private. Some, like Dallas-based insurer Gainsco Inc., decided that being publicly traded wasn't all that useful; it's in the process of delisting its shares.

A surge of mergers in the computer services industry also took big names such as EDS and Plano-based Perot Systems Corp. off the board in recent years. In this last year, some fast-growing local firms such as Fort Worth's AmeriCredit Corp. were bought.

Meanwhile, the constantly changing energy sector sees giants like Exxon Mobil Corp. swallow smaller companies such as XTO Energy Inc. Others, like Encore Energy Partners LP, continued a gradual trend of energy-focused companies moving from North Texas to Houston.

## Looking for more

Companies such as MoneyGram International Inc. have relocated to North Texas in recent years, but economic development officials hoped to attract far more, considering the state's tax advantages, the region's stable workforce and low cost of living.

Texas' Enterprise Fund, which focuses on economic development, has targeted its efforts to bring more companies to all areas of the state through letters sent to hundreds of companies in higher-tax states such



MoneyGram International moved its corporate headquarters from Minneapolis to Dallas last year. Now the 43rd-largest public company in North Texas, it's headed by chairman and CEO Pamela Patsley.

as Illinois and California, said Lucy Nashed, a spokeswoman for Gov. Rick Perry.

Perry's office points to job creation in North Texas through the Enterprise Fund — 490 jobs created at a TD Ameritrade facility in Fort Worth, for example — as recent wins.

“We've worked hard to create an environment here in Texas where individuals can risk their capital and receive a good return on their investment through our low taxes, reasonable and predictable regulatory climate, fair legal system and skilled workforce,” Nashed said.

Generally, the state's efforts don't specifically target publicly traded companies, but rather

all job opportunities that could help Texas.

“We have a great story to tell,” Nashed said, “and the state continues to actively recruit employers of all sizes, both domestically and from around the world, to grow or move their businesses to Texas and create quality jobs for Texans.”

The Dallas chamber has redoubled its efforts to lure companies here, and Oberwetter said recent trade missions to California and Illinois were promising.

One factor that hampers the region's efforts to woo companies is the lack of a unified approach among the area's cities.

Dallas, Fort Worth, Plano,

Arlington and Irving often work separately to recruit businesses and occasionally against each other in bidding for new jobs, Oberwetter said.

“We appreciate all of the activity that individual groups do for the region, and we work with them virtually every week, but the name cities will always be Dallas and Fort Worth. And because of that, we are often the portals that companies from around the U.S. or the globe use as the entry points,” he said.

While Dallas and Fort Worth have frequently taken separate approaches to economic development, the two are cooperating on a trade mission to Australia as part of the

Qantas Airways service launch this year, he said. The two will cooperate again on a follow-up trade mission later this year.

“There's a growing feeling that we need to work together,” he added.

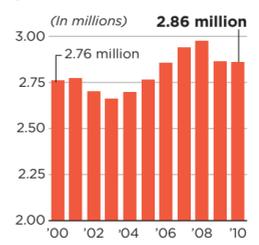
## D/FW part of the draw

The drop in publicly traded companies hasn't been a factor in how prospective companies size up the region, said King White, president of Site Selection Group in Dallas.

Dallas seems to be attracting more regional division offices and North American headquarters for foreign firms that take advantage of the direct air

## Tracking D-FW jobs

The total number of jobs in the Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington metropolitan statistical area has yet to make it back to pre-recession levels:



SOURCE: Texas Workforce Commission  
Betsy Bock/Staff Artist

service from Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport, White said.

“Those are the kind of assets that bring the most jobs,” he said. Indeed, the region's job market has proved sound in the face of the weak economy, though it has yet to approach the peak of 2008.

The North Texas metropolitan statistical area tracked by the Texas Workforce Commission showed a slight drop of 1,000 total nonfarm jobs in 2010 from 2009, according to its statistics. The area remains 111,100 jobs behind the 2008 peak employment before the recession took hold, the commission data shows.

White said he expected more companies to relocate to North Texas. But he believes the region will be especially attractive to technology-based firms looking for a new home for operations, and not just for lower-paying developments such as call centers.

Still, White said, the factor that civic boosters should focus on isn't the quantity of companies but the quality of their job creation. “North Texas is always going to have among the lowest costs of the first-tier cities,” he said. “You have to look at the job creation factors.”

CHERYL HALL

# Strategist draws from art and science to help firms improve

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name a handful — hire Harvill to create stronger sales teams, reinvent cultures and make meetings more productive and engaging.

Harvill calls himself a strategist. He's big on simple. His presentations are light on words and strong on sensory, creating a visual journey of mind expansion. And he's a one-man tour guide.

“If you can see it, then it becomes real,” says Harvill, who has a network of specialists to help him pull off his rich-media productions.

Harvill got the idea for dazzling blue after hearing Paul Simon's new song with that title released in April. “It's just a single modifier with such powerful impact.”

Last year, Harvill worked on 58 projects for 33 clients in 17 industries and brought in about \$500,000. Forty-seven of his 52 weeks were spent away from his office in North Dallas. He charges \$10,000 to \$25,000 per project.

“I'm really good at discovering systemic patterns — repeated elements that are impact points,” he says. “And I'm unbelievably good at simplifying complex issues.”

## The marine scientist

But Harvill never envisioned this sort of gig while getting his degree in marine sciences at California State University, Los Angeles in the late 1970s. Then again, he hadn't zeroed in on any career. He was good at science and loved the ocean, so studying it and its creatures was an easy way to keep college from cutting into his surfing and tennis time.

After graduation, he and Laura, now his wife of 33 years, set off for Sun Valley, Idaho, looking for adventure. The city's job placement counselor reminded Harvill that there hadn't been a whale in Sun Valley for more than 2 million years.

He sent Harvill to a construction site for a ditch-digging job. The supervisor tossed Harvill a shovel. He



Steve Harvill

Steve Harvill helps employees at companies such as AT&T and Apple think outside their comfort zones through his Dallas company, Creative Ventures Inc.

caught it and was hired. “I quickly became familiar with Jimmy Buffett's line: Any manual labor I've done was purely by mistake.”

Less than a month later, Harvill was working at a property management and resort-design company. Oddly, his scientific training suited his new endeavor.

“Planned communities were the

perfect petri dish for human behavior for me. I saw life happening right in front of me. I use scientific method in almost everything I do. I view things as a series of ideas to solve a problem. I think like a scientist.”

He realized his company was working things backward. “People were designing real estate products that they hoped would become com-

## AT A GLANCE Habits of top producers

Steve Harvill spent two years interviewing nearly 30 million-dollar sales producers in five industries to find common behavior patterns of success. He found 21 traits that he calls “repeatable successful acts.” Among his favorite habits of top producers:

**They don't micromanage or waste time** on things that don't relate to their primary tasks. “These people are in complete charge of their days, never victims.”

**They are phenomenal self-promoters.** “They do it in a manner that's neither braggadocios or egotistical. They push their sphere of influence out through a constant banging of their own drums. It might be a newsletter or handwritten notes.”

**They manage their networks as part of a business plan.** “They use their networks like you would use a Phillips head screwdriver to put something together from Ikea. It's a must-have tool.”

**They give clients slightly more than they expect.**  
**They aggressively build relationships with the client's administrative assistants.**

**If they have support staffs, they train them extremely well.**

**They understand the power of no.** “They understand that the other person would rather hear no than have you screw around with them.”

munities. *Community* is Greek and means to share. They weren't designing anything that was being shared by anyone.”

He developed a process for putting communal first. And at 25, he was invited to enlighten others with a presentation at the Urban Land Institute. Afterward, he was approached by a guy who wanted to hire him for a project. The guy was an executive with the Walt Disney Co., and the project was Celebration, the giant master-planned development near Disney World in Orlando.

Not a bad alpha test for going out on his own 27 years ago.

“That's how under God's good graces I am,” says Harvill, who moved here in 1987 because of Dallas' central location and airport.

He found that his adaptive thinking applies to other industries.

“The problem with a systemic approach is that the system grows; it expands, it encroaches,” Harvill says. “It's like the blob from the old Steve McQueen movie. You lose track of what the original system was set up for.”

## ‘Cool to watch it take hold’

Allianz Life Insurance Co. of North America in Minneapolis wants to strengthen its registered investments sales force.

Tom Langseth, senior vice president, hired Harvill to give presentations at six Allianz-sponsored events for independent financial advisers.

“We want to give them a left- and right-brain experience,” Langseth says. “Steve fits that so well. He's innovative in his thinking, creative in his visual imagery. It isn't classic training: Just do this and your life will be different. He's able to make a compelling proposition that if you think about your life and your practice in a different way, you can have better results, and here's how.”

Rich Honiball, vice president of product development and design for men's and kids at J.C. Penney, says Harvill has a knack for getting to the essence. “Steve has that art and science combination. I've watched him captivate audiences that ranged from 15-year-old high school sophomores through veterans of a department who've been there 30 years.”

Honiball's product development group was the first to experience Harvill's “dazzling blue” presentation. “Now you hear people say, ‘I've got to get that into dazzling blue,’” Honiball says. “It's really cool to watch it take hold.”

This viral spread is great satisfaction for Harvill. “That's when you know you've got a good idea — when they speak your language.”