

ID theft service provider acquires Scottsdale firm

BY CHRIS CASACCHIA

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One of the Valley's largest identity theft management and recovery firms purchased Scottsdale-based ID Advocates.

The deal, finalized Jan. 18, provides Merchants Information Solutions an entryway into the automotive industry and access to hundreds of agents who work with dealerships across the country.

The company's product, which provides ID theft recovery services up to five years after purchase, will be marketed at point-of-sale for \$250 to \$300.

Joseph Annoreno, managing partner of the ID Advocate's strategic team, said the sale will help Merchants fill a void for these services in the local and national business community.

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Russ Johnson

Merchants Information Solutions

The deal marks the third acquisition for MIS since November, as the company continues to expand its ID theft and pre-

employment and background services portfolio.

"The two areas were focused on what we think will take us well into the future," said President and Chief Executive Russ Johnson. "We're focused on growing internally and through acquisitions."

In September, MIS acquired Mesa-based Personnel Profile Employment Screening Inc. and in October, purchased Oregon-based American Tesco LLC. The acquisitions boosted employment from about 55 to 80 people.

Rampant methamphetamine use and illegal immigration exacerbate the ID theft problem in Arizona. The state has led the nation the past three years in ID theft complaints per capita.

Established in 1912, Merchants Informa-

AT A GLANCE

Who: Merchants Information Solutions

Established: 1912

Headquarters: Phoenix

President and CEO: Russ Johnson

2006 revenue: WND

Employees: 80

Web: www.merchantsinfo.com

tion Services provides services for more than 2,600 business clients and also provides consumer and mortgage credit information, resident background screening and collections services.