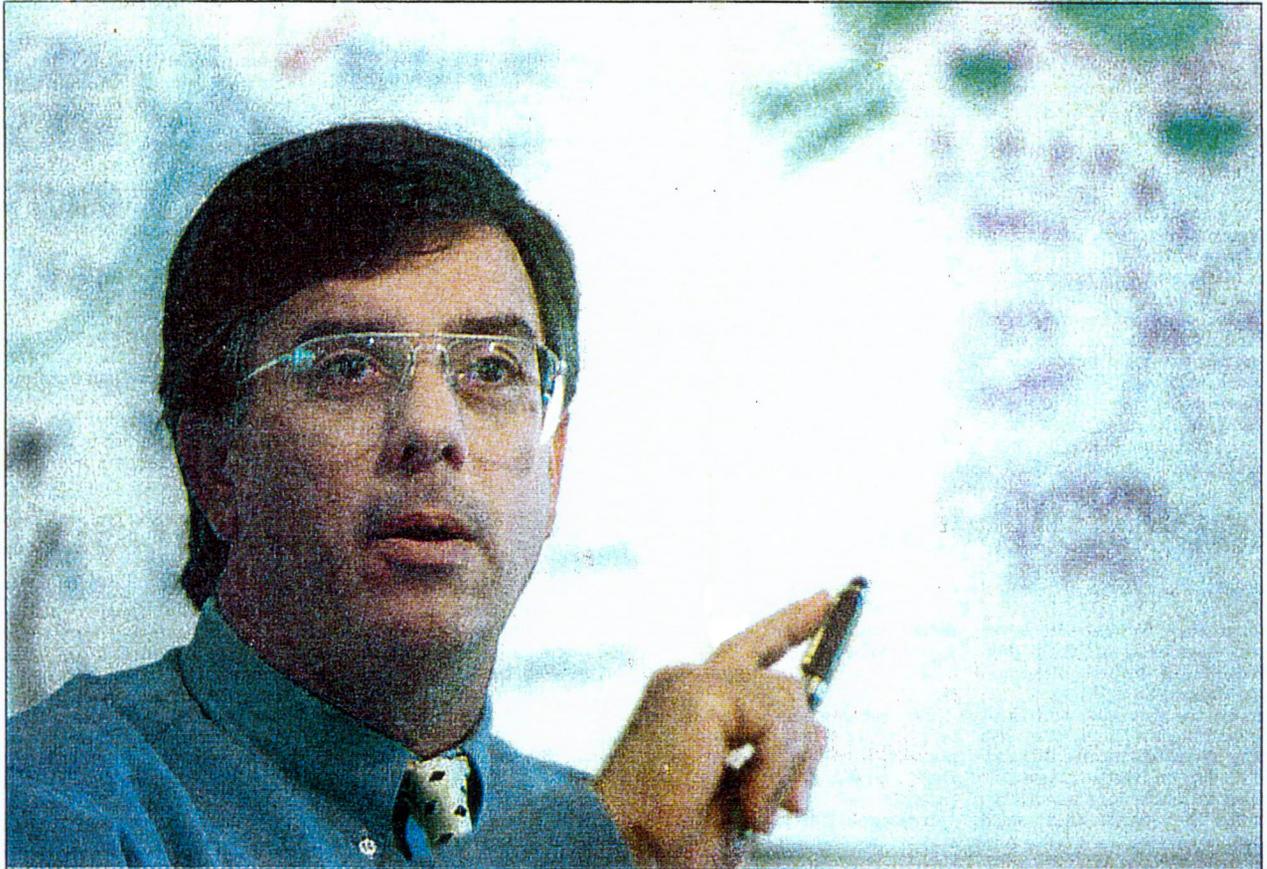


BUSINESS

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B6

Novato man creates high-tech hospitals



IJ photos/Marian Little Utley

WIRED: Jeff Hardy, in his Novato home office, designs high-tech hospitals with his teleconferencing center.

By Janet Kornblum

Independent Journal reporter

Jeff Hardy points to a hammock swung between thick limbs of a live oak tree nestled in the corner of his two-acre lot, next to a flowing creek.

"That is my conference center," he says.

"A lot of what I do is creative," says Hardy, a consultant who, from the comfort of his own bucolic home in Novato, designs state-of-the-art, high-tech hospitals across the globe.

"I had a client this summer — we spent half the time brainstorming in the swimming pool."

The hammock, the swimming pool, the creek, the deer and the blue skies on a sunny day — they're the low-tech part of his office.

What enables Hardy to conduct business from the comfort of his own home lies inside the horse stable that he has transformed into what must be one of the highest-tech home offices around.

"hospitals save millions of dollars annually."

— Jeff Hardy

Inside, Hardy's office redefines the term "wired."

Among his equipment is a six-channel televideo conferencing system with a television, computer, video cassette recorder and camera; three separate computers; a fax, three phone lines, two portable phones; a cellular phone; a laser printer; a portable video camera; a stamp machine and electric scale; an adding machine; and, oh yes, an old-fashioned, electric typewriter.

All of them add up to two things: savings for Hardy's clients and savings in Hardy's time. "I save hospitals millions of dollars annually," he said.

Instead of traveling across the country, incurring airplane, hotel and other travel expenses, each time he needs to meet with a cli-

ent to discuss ongoing plans, he can arrange a conference call.

"What normally would cost \$200,000 costs \$80,000," he says.

He also gets the added benefit of being able to spend more time with his wife and two sons.

"My wife and I get to have lunch together more often," he says. "I get to see my kids more often. I get to feel I'm working smarter rather than wasting my time at airports."

"I'm tired of traveling. I've traveled all over the world."

The teleconferencing system has not completely eliminated travel, but it has cut it down dramatically.

Sometimes, hospitals balk at the price tag for the teleconferencing system, which runs around \$20,000. But it's not a

hard sell, Hardy said.

He's designing a hospital in Hawaii. "I told them how much money they were going to spend on my expenses," he says. "They were going to pay \$8,000 or more a month."

They bought the system.

Now, when they want to ask Hardy a question or look at the latest in his plans, they simply arrange a teleconference.

They also get to keep the conferencing system, which adds value to their hospital, enabling rural hospitals, for example, to attract better doctors who don't feel as isolated with the instant ability to communicate with experts around the country.

"It's uncanny what can happen when you can talk whenever you want."

Hardy, 48, said he hasn't seen all the benefits of his office — which he began revamping two years ago — yet. But he expects to do so soon.

"Within the next 12 months, I will be able to increase my productivity by 200 percent," he said.