

LabOne acquisition, we now have a sales force that focuses on selling risk assessment testing services to life insurance companies.

Customer service representatives perform a number of services for patients and customers. They monitor services, answer questions and help resolve problems. Our couriers pick up specimens from most clients daily.

Our corporate marketing function is organized by customer type and is responsible for developing and executing marketing strategies, new product launches, and promotional and advertising support.

Information Systems

Information systems are used extensively in virtually all aspects of our business, including laboratory testing, billing, customer service, logistics and management of medical data. The successful delivery of our services depends, in part, on the continued and uninterrupted performance of our information technology, or IT, systems. IT systems are vulnerable to damage from a variety of root causes, including telecommunications or network failures, malicious human acts and natural disasters. Moreover, despite network security measures, some of our servers are potentially exposed to physical or electronic break-in attempts, computer viruses and similar disruptive problems. Despite the precautionary measures that we have taken to prevent unanticipated problems that could affect our IT systems, sustained or repeated system failures that would interrupt our ability to process test orders, deliver test results or perform tests in a timely manner could adversely affect our reputation and result in a loss of customers and net revenues.

Historically, acquired companies were often operated as local decentralized units, and we did not standardize their billing, laboratory or their other core information systems. This resulted in many different information systems for billing, test results reporting and other transactions.

During 2002, we began implementation of a standard laboratory information system and a standard billing system across all of our operations, including those from our most recent acquisitions. The deployment of standardized systems is continuing and we expect that it will take several years to complete. It will result in significantly more centralized systems than we have even today and better control over the operational environment. We expect the integration of these systems will improve operating efficiency and provide management with more timely and comprehensive information with which to make management decisions. However, failure or delays in properly implementing this standardization process could materially adversely affect our business. During system conversions of this magnitude, workflow is re-engineered to take advantage of best practices and enhanced system capabilities and may temporarily affect the delivery of our services. In addition, the implementation process, including the transfer of databases and master files to new data centers, presents significant conversion risks that need to be managed very carefully.

Billing

Billing for laboratory services is complicated. Depending on the billing arrangement and applicable law, we must bill various payers, such as patients, insurance companies, Medicare, Medicaid, physicians and employer groups, all of which have different billing requirements. Additionally, auditing for compliance with applicable laws and regulations as well as internal compliance policies and procedures adds further complexity to the billing process. Other factors that complicate billing include:

- differences between our fee schedules and the reimbursement rates of the payers;
- disparity in coverage and information requirements among various payers;
- missing, incomplete or inaccurate billing information provided by ordering physicians; and
- disputes with payers as to which party is responsible for payment.

We incur additional costs as a result of our participation in Medicare and Medicaid programs, as billing and reimbursement for clinical laboratory testing is subject to considerable and complex federal and state regulations. These additional costs include those related to: (1) complexity added to our billing processes; (2) training and education of our employees and customers; (3) compliance and legal costs; and (4) costs related to, among other factors, medical necessity denials and advance beneficiary notices. Compliance with applicable laws and regulations, as well as internal compliance policies and procedures, adds further complexity and costs to our operations. Changes in laws and regulations could negatively impact our ability to bill our