

# Business



Jonathan Bush (left) will remain CEO but give up his roles as chairman and president; activist investor Paul Singer has called for changes at the company.

## Facing shareholder pressure, athenahealth plans big cutbacks

Details scant but \$100m in savings eyed; stock rises 5.5%

By Andy Rosen  
GLOBE STAFF

Athenahealth Inc., one of the state's leading health care technology companies, will reduce expenses by \$100 million and restructure its leadership in the face of pressure from an activist shareholder pushing to lift the firm's stock price, it said Tuesday.

The Watertown company released few details of the cost-saving plan and did not say whether it would affect job levels. Athenahealth currently has more than 5,500 employees.

Nor would the company discuss how the cuts might affect plans to rebuild its headquarters as part of a massive project at the Arsenal on the Charles office complex, but a spokeswoman said the project continues to move forward.

"We are today announcing changes intended to achieve greater levels of profitable growth and unlock value," chief executive Jonathan Bush said in a statement. "I am fully supportive of these initiatives and believe they are critical to driving value creation at

athenahealth."

Bush will remain CEO but give up his roles as chairman and president of the electronic medical records company. Athenahealth said it was seeking an independent board chairman and would recruit someone to fill the new office of corporate president.

The company had previously been looking for a chief financial officer, and it said it would continue that search.

In May, Elliott Management Corp., ATHENAHEALTH, Page B14

## Brigham may seek more cuts

Has already offered buyouts to 1,600

By Kathleen Conti  
GLOBE STAFF

Hoping to minimize layoffs, Brigham and Women's Hospital is considering asking more employees to volunteer to give up their jobs.

The hospital already has a buyout offer on the table to some 1,600 employees, with the deadline to accept looming on Friday. With about 45 percent of eligible employees signing up so far, Brigham and Women's may now ask other staff members to consider taking what it calls a "voluntary" layoff.

"We are considering a respectful way to minimize any potential involuntary reduction in force by inviting some employees who may wish to leave the Brigham to voluntarily separate from the organization," the hospital said in a statement Tuesday. "When we announced the voluntary retirement opportunity in April, we indicated that additional reductions in force would likely be necessary."

Details on what the Brigham called a "voluntary separation opportunity" including how many and which employees would be eligible, have not yet been determined, according to the statement.

Facing rising labor costs and price pressures from insurers, the Brigham in April took the unusual step of offering buyouts to the 1,600 workers. The hospital, owned by Partners HealthCare, has about 18,000 employees.

In an e-mail recently sent to employees, Brigham chief executive, Dr. Betsy Nabel, said, "We are in a period of transition at the Brigham, with workflow redesign and colleagues leaving as part of the [buyout offer]."

Nabel said in the e-mail sent late last week that more than 430 employees, or about 35 percent of those eligible, had applied for the buyout. Since then that number has increased to about 45 percent, which the hospital said "has exceeded our expectations."

Although Brigham is profitable, Brigham officials said payments from insurers and the government are flat while labor and other costs are growing. Brigham is also dealing with debt from spending around \$845 million on a new building that opened last year and on a new patient health record system rolled out in 2015.

Meanwhile, hospitals in Massachusetts are supposed to abide by a cap on medical spending that keeps annual increases to a set amount, 3.1 percent next year.

"These decisions are not made  
BRIGHAM AND WOMEN'S, Page B13



JESSICA RINALDI/GLOBE STAFF

'The [Boston Medical Center] chefs have been energized in terms of grabbing the food that grows across the street and cooking it.'

DAVID MAFFEO  
BMC's senior director of support services

By Sara Salinas  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

On a recent sweltering summer day, two dozen employees of Netscout Systems, a tech company in Westford, spent the morning working not at their air-conditioned desks but in the company's new garden. Wearing khakis and button-down shirts, the Netscout employees got their hands in the dirt, harvesting carrots and planting kale.

The garden for Netscout employees is part of a growing trend in employee wellness. In many instances, community garden groups provide the knowledge, infrastructure, and oversight, and companies provide enthusiastic workers. The produce that is grown is often donated to local food banks, sent home with employees, or prepared and served in corporate cafeterias.

"There's something really, really special about it — when people come together and do something as tangible and real as growing food," said Christine Berthold, president of Fresh Start Food Gardens, a company that installs and manages corporate gardens, including at Netscout.

"You want employees who are happy, who are fulfilled, who are connected, who feel a part of something, and you want to keep them healthy," Berthold said. "The garden does all of those things."

The Netscout garden has been met with over-  
FARM, Page B13

## A GROWING TREND for employee wellness

Corporate gardens offer workers a chance for a break and an opportunity to help others



JONATHAN WIGBER/GLOBE STAFF



# Gardens a growing trend in employee wellness

## ► FARM

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whelming enthusiasm from employees. Karen McCloskey, a project manager at Netscout, said she often attends official volunteer hours, but employees are also encouraged to visit the garden on their own.

"You just kind of walk away from what you're doing," McCloskey said. "You go out, you pick something."

The added charitable and sustainable aspects of donating the produce or incorporating it into the company's salad bar, McCloskey said, makes it feel "worthwhile stepping away from what you do."

Produce harvested from Boston Medical Center's 7,000-square-foot rooftop farm helps stock the center's food pantry and supplements food served to the hospital's patients, according to David Maffeo, BMC's senior director of support services. The garden is expected to produce 15,000 pounds of food this growing season.

"We really wanted to be able to touch the entire BMC community," Maffeo said. "The chefs have been energized in terms of grabbing the food that grows across the street and cooking it."

BMC's rooftop farm has seen engaged employee participation as well, according to Maffeo, in part due to its explicit charitable mission.

Research has shown that employees value companies that give back to the community, according to Debbie Phillips, a Waltham-based work-



JESSICA RINALDI/GLOBE STAFF

Arlydia Walker, 11, and her sister, Dayana, 6, of Dorchester picked carrots at Boston Medical Center's rooftop farm.

life consultant. Corporate gardens, she said, can serve as an opportunity to volunteer without leaving work.

Though there's the potential for employees to take too much time at the garden and away from their desks, Phillips said, that's not often the case.

"If anything, what happens is that they don't utilize them as much as they could because they're working," she said.

"Sometimes it's just hard to break away in the middle of your routine."

Companies are increasingly encouraging employees to take time during the day, Phillips said, with the incorporation of game rooms, quiet spaces, fitness centers — and now gardens.

"A garden in a workplace reduces stress, and stress is a huge part of lack of wellness,"

said Barbara Kreski, director of Horticultural Therapy Services at the Chicago Botanic Garden. "It also provides sort of a mental break and the ability to restore your energy for difficult cognitive tasks."

Green spaces and gardens have been found to reduce cortisol rates and lower heart rates, clear indicators of lowering stress levels, Kreski said.

"They speak to a more

primitive part of our nervous system, the part of our nervous system that allowed us to survive in the great outdoors," she said. "Returning to those nervous system ruts feels comfortable."

Blue Cross Blue Shield is in the process of assigning concrete metrics to the success of its corporate garden programs in Hingham and Quincy, according to director of sustain-

ability Kyle Cahill.

Each of the 3,500-square-foot gardens is divided into plots, assigned to a team of six to eight employees. Close to 200 employees across the company participate in the project, Cahill said, and there's a long waiting list to join.

Blue Cross Blue Shield surveys employees involved in the project on their stress levels, creativity, and productivity, Cahill said.

Roughly 85 percent of the employees surveyed reported improved mood after spending time in the garden, and dozens have been inspired to start gardens at home.

"We think it's overwhelmingly positive. You know we hear firsthand from gardeners, but we also hear second-hand from teammates," Cahill said. "It's a great opportunity for an office space organization to experience something in the office setting that they normally wouldn't."

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