

## IT Tools and Resources for Small and Medium Sized Businesses



**Brent Yax**  
CEO

**CEOCFO: Mr. Yax, what is Awecomm Technologies?**

**Mr. Yax:** Our mission is to help small and medium-sized companies better serve their customers and be more profitable. We create exceptional tools for companies to do exceptional things. A niche with us happens to be in technology, so at the core of what we deliver are tools, which can be either content, processes, or technology.

**CEOCFO: How does exceptional translate into day-to-day activity for you?**

**Mr. Yax:** We define exceptional as always learning, always being aware of new things that are happening, and always pushing to be better at what we do. Our customers are doing that in terms of the products they are delivering, the customers they are satisfying and the needs they are fulfilling in the marketplace. We continuously provide new ways for them to accomplish their goals by simplifying, by automating or by amplifying their efforts.

**CEOCFO: Are your customers coming to you because they are aware of your philosophy and your skills or are they surprised to see the level of commitment you have for your customers?**

**Mr. Yax:** We've been in business for about 15 years but reinvented the company about three years ago. We started our own product line and rebranded. We're building awareness of the services we're providing now. Customers who are on our new platform using our new tools have had a seamless transition. New customers who did not have prior exposure to us are seeing Awecomm in the reinvented context. It's a creative and exciting time for us. We're having a lot of fun getting out to the market, letting people know what we do and releasing some of the tools we've created. And the dialogue about our new services is growing.

**CEOCFO: Tell us about the range of services you offer.**

**Mr. Yax:** Two large items form the core. One of them is our Sprout initiative, which is a business innovation IT platform built for small- and medium-sized companies. It's a tool that allows them to shift focus away from the IT items that do not provide any return to the company. Commonly that's maintaining systems, buying new equipment, installing and running software, running upgrades, disaster recovery and backup and other low-level technical items. These are all necessary but do not provide any competitive advantage for businesses. We remove that from their plate and their vision so they can focus on strategic initiatives.

The other side of the business is consulting. We show businesses where a return can be found or increased. This is done by optimizing processes, evaluating different types of technology and testing different tools to see if there is a fit – and benefit - for the organization. Ultimately, we're teaching them how to take core processes and translate that into technology that actually helps them deliver their products and services more effectively.

About half of our customers are running on the full platform and the other half are using the consulting side, using technology to achieve better results with our help.

**CEOCFO: Are most companies today aware that tools are available or is it still a murky territory?**

**Mr. Yax:** Some of the larger, Fortune 500 organizations we are working with have a firm grasp on the capabilities that are out there. Unfortunately, in the small and medium space, awareness does lack. The smaller companies tend not to have enough resources internally to discover and explore new technologies. So they rely heavily on partners to bring new opportunities into view. Awecomm is playing that role, too. We use technology every day and we are helping hundreds of customers do the same. We have experience with systems and methodologies that most small businesses do not have a chance to see or test. Our customers leverage that capability to catapult their efforts off of our work.

**CEOCFO: *Would you tell us about Sprout?***

**Mr. Yax:** Sprout is the next level of IT. When most companies think of IT, they think of deciding to implement technology, installing it, maintaining it, making sure users can access it, and if it's delivering. Sprout takes those items – that do not provide any strategic benefit to an organization - and wraps them into a monthly platform. Software licensing, hardware, and any of the infrastructure services like backups, security, antivirus and connectivity to the internet are covered for a monthly fee. Customers can then focus all of their attention on the parts of technology that formerly dropped to the end of the priority list – the strategic benefits of technology use. When the conversations start to circulate around THAT, companies then start getting money back out of IT, instead of it being “merely” a cost of doing business. They can potentially even make it a revenue center. Sprout is a vehicle to allow companies to get to that level of dialogue instead of talking about low-level IT tasks.

**CEOCFO: *How do you get people to believe it can be a revenue center?***

**Mr. Yax:** I realize that discretion is often the better part of valor. But skepticism aside, we have a lot going for us. We rolled this out three years ago and we have been working with real-world companies, not test companies. We've gained experience and achieved insight. We've formed processes for our customers. And our customers have been very vocal about the levels of service. Their testimonials are on our website. We have video testimonials as well that should encourage others to take the first step - contact us.

But more importantly, we're building trust. We're showing our customers that there are ways to get to that “strategic” level. Tangible results build more confidence. Although the process starts with small things, continually higher-level strategic conversations take place. Technology is driving rapid change through all industries and small- and medium-sized businesses need to play from a position of advantage, too.

**“We wanted to provide a set of tangible services to help small businesses accomplish more through a stronger relationship with technology.” - Brent Yax**

**CEOCFO: *What is your geographic range today?***

**Mr. Yax:** By design, most of our customers are in Southeast Michigan, although we have international clients on our Sprout platform. We are targeting Southeast Michigan for growth, and that is going to continue over the next few years. Eventually, we'll expand.

**CEOCFO: *Do people like the local presence?***

**Mr. Yax:** We have found that it does make a difference. Being able to offer services to companies in our backyard is a very good way for us to build trust. They know we are right here, that we are a private data housing cloud. Customers like to know where data is. With us, they know where the data is and they know how to get to our facilities. I believe that as more and more companies get used to using internet services, software as a service and cloud-based technologies, the local presence will not be as necessary. But for now, at least in the small business community, it is important and it is something that creates differentiation for us.

**CEOCFO: *Do you need to keep on top of some of the regulatory issues when you may be working with healthcare companies or HR departments or is that not necessary from your end?***

**Mr. Yax:** It is definitely necessary. We spend a lot of time and energy focusing on compliance and regulatory issues. In some extreme cases, these changes can cause landslides of change to customers' technology. We keep up on these discussions and changes to make sure we can help our customers make the necessary transitions. Many of our customers must also maintain a very high level of security processes and procedures. With every change, we assess the risks, and make sure the proper tools and technologies are embedded into the services we provide.

**CEOCFO: *What has surprised you as the company has grown and evolved?***

**Mr. Yax:** I'm not surprised by the direction our service offerings have gone, but I am extremely happy with how well they are resonating with our customers. We wanted to provide a set of tangible services to help small businesses accomplish more through a stronger relationship with technology. We knew we wanted to find companies that were striving to make a difference while helping their industry to overcome barriers. When we put these products together and launched them, we were surprised by how readily they were received. A number of our customers, and even companies we did not have relationships with, showed eagerness to get in and to help build the tools with us. We thought it would take a few years to get our products out there but have found, with the help of some great customer relationships, we have been able to

accelerate our schedule. For us that was a great surprise. We had anticipated a slower demand that would build over time, but we are actually moving much more quickly, and we are excited about it.

**CEOCFO: *What do you look for in your employees over and above technical skills?***

**Mr. Yax:** Whether or not a candidate is a good cultural fit. For us we assess current and potential employees on some very specific and tangible qualities. We look at these as requirements for being part of the Awecomm family: First, be transparent. We believe in open, honest communication with each other and our customers. We share all pertinent information we have. Second, want to help. This means being interested in and getting pleasure out of helping people achieve their goals. Third, be exceptional. We have products that we feel are exceptional. We find exceptional companies with which to work. So, we require employees to be exceptional as well. That is operationalized by a passion for learning and constant efforts to apply the knowledge. Fourth, be empathetic. In solving business challenges, we must understand why the problem exists in the first place. We need to put ourselves in our customers' shoes – some call this emotional intelligence. If we don't, the odds are we won't deliver the solution that is right for right now, but also right for the long-term goals of that organization and of that user. Fifth, enthusiasm. If you like what you do, it shows. If you enjoy what we do as a company and you think it is making a difference, the customer will reflect that attitude. Team members will too. Finally, we will look at technical qualifications and some of the other skill sets that are required for the position, but it is culture first in every single hire.

**CEOCFO: *Put it all together. Why choose Awecomm?***

**Mr. Yax:** We want to “wire your company for success.” Choose Awecomm because we exist to create tools for your company to succeed in its mission. Beyond that, we care about who you are, about what you're doing, and about unique ways to help you. We love technology and we love what we do. Join us.

Interview conducted by: Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor, CEOCFO Magazine

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## **Awecomm Technologies**

**For more information visit:**

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