

Is your technology too complicated?



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CEOCFO: Mr. Dryfhout, what is Scout Technology Guides?

Mr. Dryfhout: We are in the business of simplifying lives, and the way we do that is through providing and supporting technology for small to medium businesses. It is a bit of a lofty purpose because people do not always associate technology with simplifying their lives, but as a group, we find it very gratifying to help in this way!

CEOCFO: How do you provide the technology and how do people reach you?

Mr. Dryfhout: Our model is for businesses generally between 15-150 employees that have little or no technical resources in house. We take care of everything for them. We are an outsource model, where we provide and manage for our customers all of the support, maintenance, design and implementation for almost everything technology related. It is everything from email to their phone systems, to the network switches on the wall the computers plug into, and their internet security. Our goal in providing this technology support is to provide the owners and executives with peace of mind around technology, so they can focus on their business. One of the greatest things about providing this sort of support is while we work through technology, it is people that we are supporting more than anything else.

CEOCFO: Are you deliberately not calling yourselves an MSP?

Mr. Dryfhout: I try to avoid leading with the term Managed Service Provider, because I feel like that only speaks to people in my industry. To my clients, such as a senior care home provider, do they know what a managed service provider is in regards to the IT space? Not necessarily. I would rather explain to them the relationship and the value that we bring. It speaks more to the “why.” For us, the “why” is a big part of what drives us instead of the “what” and I want that to be a differentiator for us. It was Simon Sinek that drove that point home to me a number of years ago when I saw him do a key note presentation at a conference I was at. He spoke about starting with “why” and his whole point is that people want to do business with you because of why you do it, rather than what you do, the “what” being a managed service provider. For us, the “why” is the relationship and the drive to simplify those lives through managing their technology.

CEOCFO: What is your geographic reach today?

Mr. Dryfhout: It is the lower mainland, primarily based in the Greater Vancouver Area. We also support North American branch office locations for those of our clients that have branches.

CEOCFO: Do you do much on premise with your local clients or do you find that it is important to them that you are local even if you may never visit?

Mr. Dryfhout: The face time is very important to us. Even if a technician is not visiting the site, because they have not required onsite support, I still try to ensure regular visits from an account management standpoint. As much as possible,

80% of the work is able to be done remotely, since it is the most efficient for our clients, but I still believe regular face time is important.

CEOCFO: Are there particular types of business that turn to you?

Mr. Dryfhout: The senior care of vertical is a big strategic push for us and we are having success in that one. One of the differentiators for us is that we have a full telecom division under the Scout brand, which we can incorporate into the IT managed service provider umbrella. That is the differentiator and it lends nicely with the senior care vertical because we can also handle the phones, the nurse call and a wide range of technology, sometimes eliminating the need for a handful of additional vendors that would otherwise need to work with and around each other. There are also some fun opportunities to find technological solutions in senior care and wellness space. Traditionally, engineering, manufacturing and construction have also been strong verticals for us, so we have connections and networks in those verticals, we are familiar with the different line of business applications they have and their technology requirements.

CEOCFO: Are companies looking to Scout because they are looking for the depth of service or are they surprised and welcome the fact that you really can help them in so many areas?

Mr. Dryfhout: A bit of both. I consider our depth of services a competitive advantage, but it is also important to be strategic about what those services are. For example, we are never going to do web design or web hosting. There are a number of pieces where I still firmly believe that is a whole different business, so I would rather let another company devote their time and energy to doing that and excelling at it. We need to focus on what we do and do well.

The way I explain our services this is we become the one phone number and contact for all technical related challenges. It does not matter what type of technology is in your business, come to us for everything. If it is not one of our areas of expertise, we have the relationship with the various vendors whose area it is, and we will liaise with them to ensure their solution works the client's company. No more executives wasting time liaising between various vendors and IT providers, and potentially still having things not go as smoothly as they could, because something got miscommunicated. More than that, we really own all that of that support, not just fixing the problem now, but looking to find ways to stop problems occurring in the first place. For example, to quote a client that joined us a week ago, "the biggest differentiator with [us] was he just felt we were forward focused." We were asking questions about where they want to go, and providing thoughtful suggestions for how we are going get there, actually pouring proper energy into it. I have never believed in scaling too fast so that the quality drops, so we are going to put maximum energy into our recommendations, otherwise we are not doing them justice.

CEOCFO: It is very clear that you like what you do helping people!

Mr. Dryfhout: I do, and so does the rest of the team. Our purpose and mission is to simplify lives and we stand by that. It comes from all of us. It was not something that a marketing company came up with. This is who we are and what we are all about. It just so happens that technology support is the way we are serving and interacting with our customers and community.

CEOCFO: How do you encourage your clients to turn to you as well as encourage things like not opening attachments and that passwords should not 1234, which is often a challenge?

Mr. Dryfhout: It is one thing to say do not do this, and to ask for them to come to us, but if you want to shift how they think about things like information security at a company level, you need their trust. I need them to be confident that it is worth their time to check with Scout first, before doing something that may have unexpected consequences, or just to consult for best practices. What this looks like will differ between clients, because there are different sizes and maturity levels of businesses and we need to respect that, but we are always working towards establishing best practices and a mentality of checking in first. The type of relationship that I aspire to with our clients is one that there is a strong personal relationship and trust. Part of that is doing my job as an account manager and meeting on a regular cycle, keeping in good communication, ensuring that there is always a venue for them ask for support without having to reach out themselves.

CEOCFO: How is business?

Mr. Dryfhout: Business is good. This has been a really strong growth year for us. History of the business is a bit unique. I started the company in 2003 with two other gentlemen. We started out in a basement and had left where we were working before because we figured we could do a better job of this network support as it was called at the time. We did ok and kept growing the business but I was very young and naïve with nothing to lose at that point, so we just kept doing our thing. I really did not have any respect for the business, which is something I have learned over the past 4-5 years. Fast forward, I have since bought out both business partners with the most recent buy out in the beginning of 2015. This has been a really neat year and a half or more for us because now there is clearer vision and a single head for leadership. My team really understands who is leading them, where we are going and there is much better accountability. Because of

that, we are more agile and we have been growing quite rapidly. We did about 20% growth last year and this year we are forecasted to do almost 30% growth. We are increasing profitability at the same time, which is amazing too. I think one of the biggest contributing factors is our high standard for the people that we bring on. We have a really unique hiring process where we bring 8-10 candidates in at once for the initial interview, which is the most efficient way to identify whether they would be a culture personality fit for Scout, only then moving on to the technical side of things. Instead of having to do this one on one, 15-20 minutes for each candidate, we spend an hour with 8-10 candidates and make it fun, really getting to know them, making sure they understand what makes us tick, what our culture is about, our “whys” and our values, and then see out of that group, which ones of them stand out and gel. Then we move forward from there. For us, that culture and value fit is top priority and I have been steadfast on holding true to that and it has built an incredible team that is very accountable and motivated. I attribute that as a primary factor in the growth and being able to handle it.

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