

System and Software Engineering Consulting Services



David M. Doggette
President & Co-founder

David M. Doggette and Reginald T. Hay founded 2HB Software Designs, Inc. in 1994. The company incorporated in 1995, providing Java Programming, Software Engineering, Web Based Development, and Telecommunications Systems & Services as its core competencies. Over the years, 2HB built on these offerings to include quintessential services in the areas of Systems Engineering, Management Consulting, and Information Security.

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

CEOCFO: Mr. Doggette, what is the focus at 2HB Incorporated today?

Mr. Doggette: The focus is surviving the government uncertainties. Being a contractor for the intelligence community, there are a lot of questions on spending and on budgets. I know that budgets are being passed, but people are still not quite ready to pull the trigger and get back to the spending that was common a couple of years ago. Right now, we have lost many employees due to budget cuts and funding cuts and we are just trying to get back to a solid state.

CEOCFO: What are the services that you offer that allow you to do so?

Mr. Doggette: We are completely a consulting firm providing services in the arenas of systems engineering, software engineering and what I like to call management consulting. Essentially, that covers acquisition professionals, financial type people, program managers, project managers and the like.

CEOCFO: Are there particular types of companies, industries and geographic range? Who would typically be coming to you for services?

Mr. Doggette: Right now, we provide to the intelligence community. Being a small business, we typically are subcontracted to large primes that provide the same type of services to the intelligence community. Therefore, for us it is about relationships. We have to make relationships with companies like L-3, Northrop Grumman, Boeing, SAIC, General Dynamics, BAE; all of these large companies that have a sizeable presence in the intelligence community are the kinds of companies that would look to us to support what they are already doing.

CEOCFO: Clearly these companies have repeated needs? What is the key to developing short and long term relationships?

Mr. Doggette: One of the keys is to do great work when you have an opportunity to provide a service for one of these companies. However, when the government starts cutting things at the prime level, those cuts get passed down. Everyone has gone into survive mode and because of that it is difficult, even if you have a good relationship. However, the relationship starts with getting out and talking to people and convincing them that you are capable of doing what needs to be done and that you can help fill whatever gaps that they might currently have, which are usually the hard to fill positions. Sometimes, it is just a matter of there being a small business goal as a requirement that these larger companies have to meet for their contract. Being a small business, 2HB helps with those numbers.

CEOCFO: 2HB has been in existence since 1994. Does the longevity and history help or is that not as important today as it once might have been?

Mr. Doggette: I think it gives someone a warm and fuzzy feeling that this company is not a startup that does not know anything about this industry. However, other than that it really comes down to, "what have you done for me lately." Therefore, you have to continually show your value.

CEOCFO: As price is becoming more important, how do you get potential clients to understand the quality as opposed to just looking at the cost?

Mr. Doggette: That is a very good question. Companies that we have worked with for a while, that we have longer term relationships with; they understand the quality that we bring and respect it and desire it. However, when you are told,

across the board, that you have got to cut your cost by twenty percent or thirty percent, it does not matter what the quality is. It comes down to what is the final dollar amount. Therefore, it is a Catch 22. There is not a whole lot you can do when the whole industry is getting pushed down on price.

CEOCFO: *What is the plan to weather the storm? Have you seen similar situations over the years? Is this the first major downturn that has had an effect or has it been more cyclical than people might think?*

Mr. Doggette: It is definitely cyclical, but I would also say that this cycle has been the worst by far. There were times around 1999 / 2000, where government spending went way down and budgets looked like they were two or three years prior. Many people lost their jobs and you tried to weather that storm. We were so small then – it was just me and my partner – that we shut the company down for a couple of years. This time we are a little bit larger. I think that we will survive and thrive, but it is only because we have more relationships and opportunities. The other thing is the business model completely changes. It goes into survivability mode where you are cutting costs everywhere. It is a team problem. You cannot solve it from just one aspect. You have to look at everything that you are doing; your fringe, your overhead, your G&A, your direct labor costs; everything across the board is fair game for consideration.

CEOCFO: *What would be a likely engagement for you? What would you be called upon to fix or develop?*

Mr. Doggette: Generally, if you know anything about the fields of systems engineering and software engineering, everything is fair game under those categories. Therefore, as software engineers we might be called on to write programs, we might be called to test programs, we might be called on to manage the oversight of large scale development systems engineering. You have cradle to grave, system of systems; you have anything from requirement management to design to laying out how things are going to work together with each other to testing the systems before they go to the field from deployment to maintenance. There is just a lot of everything that has to be done. Our job is finding people with the appropriate clearances who also have the skills necessary to come in and do what needs to be done to further the community mission.

“We hope that someone will look at our company and say, ‘Here is a company that donates ten percent of their profits every year to the community, they are running their business with integrity and they might not be getting ahead as fast as some other companies do, but they are doing it in a way that their families stay intact.’” - David M. Doggette

CEOCFO: *Are there particular types of projects that are of more interest to you personally?*

Mr. Doggette: The funded ones! It is a lot more fun to work on projects that deal directly with a mission; things that support your war fighters, things that you know that with a successful engagement, lives will be saved. It means that you will have a sense of purpose to the work that you produced. Those are always more interesting and more rewarding to work on. However, at the same time, you have to have everything to make the ship move. You have to have gears. You have to have fuel. You have to have everything from the Captain steering the ship to the guys down at the bottom just trying to make sure that the paint does not chip.

CEOCFO: *What is it about the experience, the philosophy, the corporate culture at 2HB that would allow you to provide a service that is superior to what we have been seeing lately and hearing lately in the news such as the problems with the healthcare.gov website?*

Mr. Doggette: First, I would say that there are many good companies out there that are providing great services, of which we are one of them, so I do not want my answer to in any way sound like if you are not affiliated with 2HB you are not affiliated with superior service. Ultimately, however, it is a matter of staying current, staying relevant and understanding the changing times. The intelligence community has always had a mission. They have always had a focus. It is just that now parts of it are coming under a spotlight; for example, with the Snowden thing and due to what is in the news. We still have to do our mission and at 2HB our focus is on service. You asked about culture. Our culture is simply to let our people know that we are doing this, not just to make a profit; although if we do not make a profit it would be difficult to stay in business. However, the “why” that we do it is more of a family related thing. We do it so that we can support our families and our employee’s families. We do it so that we can show that you can have fun doing a very serious mission and still be successful. We do it so that you can show that you can run a company with Christian values and not worry about sleeping well at night with integrity. We are doing it to try to show that it is not just about being a shark out there and stabbing someone in the back, so that you can get further ahead. We hope that someone will look at our company and say, “Here is a company that donates ten percent of their profits every year to the community, they are running their business with integrity and they might not be getting ahead as fast as some other companies do, but they are doing it in a way that their families stay intact.” I have three partners. We are all married. We all have children and we try very hard to balance the fact that we have to be fathers as well as husbands as well as businessmen. You have got to pay attention to all three. I know too many people who, in running a successful business, did not run a successful household. Therefore, we are trying to be satisfied with the fact that we are trying to be successful on three fronts and not just one.

CEOCFO: *When you are talking with a potential employee what are the intangibles that lead you to feel that they will fit in and that they really understand the concept and want to be a part of 2HB?*

Mr. Doggette: It is interesting, because many times due to the nature of our work and how fast things move, we have to talk to people on the phone first or via email first and start to figure if they have the clearance and the skill set to do the job, before you even get them in, in person, to figure out if they have the right cultural fit for the company. However, when you see someone in person and you start talking about the why of what you do, you can immediately tell whether they are going to latch on to that and be a part of it or whether their eyes glaze over and it is like, "yeah, whatever". Ultimately, in selling our culture and what we do and why we do it, we are figuring out whether a person is going to be a good fit for our company. Since we do a lot of subcontracting work we have got people here, there and everywhere. If I bring a person on to the company, it is possible that they will be the only touch point to the client for 2HB at that place. Therefore, I need to know that they can operate effectively and efficiently, independently and know that 2HB's name is still going to be improved as opposed to slandered or dragged through the mud, because of someone who is capable of doing great work, but has a bad attitude or has a bad work ethic. It is not enough just to be able to write the code that needs to be written. You also have to be able to speak to people nicely and pay attention to time and when you should be where you should be and not act like you are God's gift to the world and everyone should bow down whenever you open your mouth.

CEOCFO: *Why is 2HB Incorporated an exceptional company?*

Mr. Doggette: It is because we do what we say we are going to do, when we say we are going to do it. We are currently trying to establish new relationships that can help us through these hard times. If you talk to us you will see that we are genuine; that we are not trying to hoard all of the work for ourselves. We believe that there is plenty of work out there to go around. We just want to have opportunities to do good work and to keep furthering the mission of our customers.

BIO: Mr. Doggette earned his B.S. degree in Computer Science from Stanford University through the Undergraduate Training Program at the Department of Defense. He then received his M.S. degree in Computer Science from the University of Maryland at College Park through the National Physical Science Consortium. Throughout his education and up until June 1996, David worked as a Software Engineer with the Department of Defense.



2HB Incorporated
8894 Stanford Blvd., Suite 301
Columbia, MD 21045-5165
410-872-2800
www.2hb.com