CEOCFO Magazine

Q&A with Puneet Gangal, Founder and CEO of Aciron Consulting, Inc. developing Custom Technology Solutions for Businesses providing Management and Strategy, Business Process Automation, Custom Web Application and Web Portal Development

Puneet Gangal
Founder & Chief Executive Officer

Aciron Consulting, Inc.
www.aciron.com

Contact:
Puneet Gangal
617-245-0497
info@aciron.com

Interview conducted by:
Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor
CEOCFO Magazine

CEOCFO: *Mr. Gangal, what is the idea behind Aciron Consulting?*
Mr. Gangal: The idea is helping clients navigate through the complex web of challenges that they face on a day-to-day basis, as far as running their businesses or growing their businesses, sustaining that growth, or creating a competitive advantage in the marketplace. In short, all of our services at Aciron are geared towards solving unique business problems. Clients will talk to us and tell what their pain points and challenges are. Then we help them solve those challenges.

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CEOCFO: *Would you give us a couple of examples of what a company's problem was or what they thought it was, then how you worked with them? What did you develop and what was the end result?*
Mr. Gangal: An example that I can talk about is a law firm. The marketing department at the law firm was looking at how they market their services to their potential clients. They had questions like "How do I know what I have done before? What kind of skills do I have? What kind of talent do I have in my company?" Especially as a large law firm with lawyers spread all over the world, these were difficult questions to answer. This client came to us and talked about this problem and said, "We just do not know what we envision. Right now, we are tracking all of this in an Excel file. We track all our past cases, and we have different Excel files where we have all the people and their skills sets."

Now, we do not claim to be the experts in our clients' businesses because they know their businesses best; however, the value we add is: "Let us understand what your problems are. Let us understand your business, and then let us ask you those questions about how you can solve these problems." Therefore, over the next few months we started to capture some of the things that they do to track cases, categorize them or put them in different buckets, and map them with the talent the firm had. In the end, we gave them recommendations around technology, and in this case the system had to be built, because their requirements were so unique that there was not a product out there that would meet their needs. We defined the requirements for the application, and in the end we had a beautiful product. Now when the client goes to the application, they are able to see all the cases that the firm has represented their clients on, the resources that have

worked on those cases, the attorneys that have worked on those cases, and what has happened throughout the case. It is sort of like a log from start to finish for each case.

CEOCFO: *Does that become your property or does that become the company's property?*
Mr. Gangal: It becomes the company's property. Because the systems that we build are custom, home-grown applications where the clients are defining systems for their own unique processes, the product is really theirs and the system will not work for somebody else.

CEOCFO: *Would you give us one more example perhaps of a different type of project?*
Mr. Gangal: I am going to give you an example of a biotech firm. It is a commercial research organization that runs hundreds of studies on any given day for their own clients. How do they manage all of these studies? There are so many people working on those studies, and each study is at a different stage. There is a very large amount of data that is being input into those studies, as well as a large amount of data that is being generated out of them. The problem happens when some of the interdependencies between studies come into play. Like the client said to us, "We do realize we are our own enemy. Unless we define how these interdependencies work, we are not going to be able to get a product or develop a system that will help us. We are so unique, and we understand that the biggest challenge is being able to define our requirements," and that is where we came in. We were able to help them think through their process, and over the next few months of the project, we were able to help them define all the intricate details about how the interdependencies between different studies work and how to collect all that data and then report on it so that different levels of individuals will get different types of reports. In the end, the system allowed the organization to run different studies at the same time, commingled, in a web-based, database-driven application.

CEOCFO: *How do you reach out to potential clients? How do people find you? How do you jump off a page if someone is starting with even a basic search?*
Mr. Gangal: We focus our efforts on inbound marketing. We make sure that our website, www.aciron.com, content is accurate and up-to-date. We keep it fresh. We publish a lot of content on our website and our blog. We run many social media campaigns, and because of what we are constantly writing on our website, people are able to find us on Google searches. When someone goes to our website they can very easily find examples of projects, and they will know clearly how we can help them. We have been very lucky in having people reach out to us.

CEOCFO: *How do you help implement a solution? How do you ease the fear of change in the process of a new implementation? How do you continue to support your clients as they may be going through some challenges with what you have created for them?*
Mr. Gangal: Education. We place so much emphasis on educating the client, not just at the end of the project, but right from the first meeting. We call it a kick-off meeting. We tell them what our understanding of their problem is and the different options that are available in the marketplace. There is not just one single solution for a client's problem; instead, there are a variety of ways their problems can be solved. Therefore, right from the very first day, we get in the mode of teaching, training, and educating the client. This allows us to better understand what their concerns are, not just from the key stakeholders, but also from their user base. Once the application has been launched, there is a training session to educate users on how to use the system and address any concerns users still might have. Moving forward, we are always there for our clients. We have clients that started working with us back in 2007. Today, they call on us to either make enhancements to the application or just for support and we continue to provide that support.

CEOCFO: *Do clients tend to come back once they see what you can do? Perhaps they recognize some other problems that they might want you to work on as well?*
Mr. Gangal: Absolutely! Most of our business comes from either current clients or new clients that have been referred to us by one of our existing clients. There are many clients of ours that have done multiple projects with us. They start with a first project and then they will give us additional work and expand our involvement with them. One of the basic things we have always heard from our clients is, "You know our business so well now, it is a no brainer that we should just talk to you about this as well."

CEOCFO: *As far as how you approach a project and how you work with your clients, what have you learned over time?*
Mr. Gangal: Yes, it has evolved. There are new tools out there. One of the biggest things that we have changed is that earlier, we used to do a lot of talking as consultants. We already believed in educating the client by talking to them and explaining things to them. Over time, we have really become the master of "a picture speaks a thousand words." We have started to show clients mockups of screens that they can relate to, and that helps us because then the client can say,

"Yes, you can do this, now that I see what you were saying." They are able to answer more clearly. We have also learned about new industries and new businesses as our client base has diversified.

CEOCFO: *What surprised you about the state of technology today? What are you surprised that we can do and what are you surprised that has not been mastered yet?*
Mr. Gangal: What never ceases to amaze me is that there are so many clients out there that are still stuck in the old ways of technology. Even though there are so many cheaper, more efficient, better ways of doing things, they are still stuck in the old ways. People are still using old systems, old servers for example, getting physical servers in their offices, not realizing that they can not only cut the cost to 10% of the original cost by moving to the cloud, but also make their servers faster, better, and more reliable. While we do not provide that service, we constantly look at our clients and see the kinds of technology infrastructure that they have and we think, "Why has an infrastructure company not been able to tap into this market and bring them to this new world of cloud-based systems or servers?"

CEOCFO: *Would you tell us about your Minority Certification that you recently announced?*
Mr. Gangal: We have a company that we worked with for their client which is a state agency. We said, "Of course we are a minority-owned enterprise. Why not go through the process of getting certified?" To be certified, it is a very long complex process. We had to start with going through required training, and then we had a lot of paperwork to go through to prove that yes, we are a real business with real services and that yes, we are minority owned. We are excited to finally be certified because we know that the Commonwealth provides opportunities for minority-owned business. We do know that government contractors have quotas that they have to meet to give a certain percentage of business to minority-owned businesses, so we are excited about that growth opportunity.

CEOCFO: *There are many companies to choose from, so why Aciron Consulting?*
Mr. Gangal: The biggest reason is because we approach all of our projects in a pretty unique way. We are innovative. We are creative. We say that because every client and every industry is unique and every situation is different, the solution that has to come out of each project has to be unique. We do not claim to be the experts in our clients' businesses, but what we do claim is that once we collaborate with our clients, together we can build beautiful, wonderful solutions that will help them today and in the future.