

CRM Application Solutions for Small and Medium Businesses



John Silvani - CEO

CEOCFO: *Mr. Silvani, your website indicates at Alta Vista Technology you have a passion to help businesses grow. How so?*

Mr. Silvani: Our goal is to provide leading technology solutions to help small and medium businesses (SMBs). The business applications or CRM applications that we provide can actually enhance SMBs processes and to find new areas of business to help them grow.

CEOCFO: *Would you give us an example of a fairly basic interaction with a client and something a little more outside the box?*

Mr. Silvani: One of our clients manufactures a popular energy drink sold all over the United States. We provided them with their accounting and distribution software approximately seven years ago. At that time they were just building their product. Since then, they have grown several thousand percent and have gone international. Not that we were the only reason for their growth, obviously they did many things right, but we provided a technology foundation for them to run their operations.

CEOCFO: *When might a company come to you and say, "help" and you would need to have a more comprehensive approach with them?*

Mr. Silvani: When a company gets to a point when their accounting system is not providing the information they need to make real time decisions. In today's environment everything is moving quicker in the internet economy that we have. If a company is not getting the information quickly to be able to understand how they are doing, where their market is going, how their products are selling and so on, that is usually a point in time when they need to raise their hand and look for someone like us to come in. Alta Vista Technology will help them understand their problems, help architect and provide a solution, then implement and train.

CEOCFO: *How do you understand what a company really needs, not what they think they need or what they say they need?*

Mr. Silvani: I personally was a CPA in a former life. Our people have worked in and around business similar to me before becoming part of Alta Vista Technology. We have real world experience on how companies work. I actually worked in public accounting for eight years and was able to learn how companies actually tick from the inside out, so to speak. Therefore, our people have real-world experience in the industry which allows them to quickly understand our customer's needs and ask the right questions to identify their pain points. We have personally lived these problems.

CEOCFO: *How do you help a company with their CRM?*

Mr. Silvani: It is multifaceted. It is not possible for a developer of a CRM system to have features for every industry. What they have tried to provide is very generic solution that may not exactly fit a company's specific needs. That's where we come into play; we take that application utilizing the programs embedded tools, and mold that application to make it work for their business model. For example, we have a customer that manages aircrafts. They market the aircrafts owners and need to track information about each plane. Of course, there is no CRM out there written for an aircraft management company. Therefore, we took that generic CRM product and we actually built into it the ability to have aircraft information tied to the owners of the aircraft. Now when they are running a special on doing maintenance on a Cessna airplane they can go in to their CRM, pull out a list of everyone that they know that has a Cessna airplane and market to that list. The key to any CRM is making it personal and that is what we do.

CEOCFO: *Is there a common thread among your clients, other than small and medium sized businesses?*

Mr. Silvani: We primarily deal with SMBs, mostly in the service and distribution arenas. The most common thread is that our customers see technology as a competitive advantage. They embrace it, and use it to leverage their business growth.

CEOCFO: Are you surprised that many companies are not more advanced in what they are doing? Where do you see the state of technology in small and medium businesses today?

Mr. Silvani: A small business owner wears too many hats, and they often don't wear the technology hat well. Every once in a while we run into a business owner who is kind of a closet geek; and of course they will be up on technology, but that is rare. In most cases they are very invested in their products, and their services while growing their business; but they are not very invested in the technology. Technology has a leveraging effect on a business. It works both ways. It can be positive; or if the technology is bad or the information around the technology is bad, it may have negative results.

CEOCFO: How do you help companies with security?

Mr. Silvani: That is obviously a critical concern today. We strive to make it easy to get information, but by that nature we are opening it up to abuse. Our goal is to always try to work with very standardized and proven technologies. One of our major providers is Microsoft; they hold their applications to very high standards from a security standpoint. We insure that our clients are on strong and secure platforms. We ourselves do not manage those types of products, but we will make sure that they have someone in place that will. Also important is a disaster recovery plan, it's like insurance, when you need it it's often too late to develop it. Having a disaster recovery policy for any business today is just crucial, because things do happen. I have a friend in a twenty person company, they had a flood and because of that flood they were out of business for five days. The cost of even a small disaster can be outrageous in the way of, not only lost revenue, but may also damage customer satisfaction.

"Our team of people at Alta Vista Technology is very passionate about helping companies grow. We are here to have long term relationships with our clients. We get the most satisfaction seeing our clients grow and knowing that we are part of that solution. We take pride in being part of the solution." - John Silvani

CEOCFO: Do you tend to work with companies and manage the full range of their technology or do they call you in more on a project by project basis?

Mr. Silvani: We are primarily focused around SMBs business applications. Think of it like a hospital. There are many specialists in that hospital. They each have to bring something to the table. The patient would not survive in an operating room without having an anesthesiologist, a surgeon and others. Therefore, we are one of those specialists. The key though, obviously, is that our applications are dependent on so many other pieces of technology that we do have to interface it with all of the other specialists. That is one of the things that we do very well.

CEOCFO: How do you reach potential customers and how do they find you if they are looking?

Mr. Silvani: Like everyone else, hopefully, we do a tremendous amount of marketing. Utilizing social media, webinar and events to not only sell, but to educate our prospects. Quite often, a SMB owner will not know what technology is available. It is amazing when we have them at an event and show them just a simple CRM application; the light bulbs go on and they say, "Wow! I did not know I could do that!"

CEOCFO: What is your geographic range?

Mr. Silvani: We primarily hit the Midwest region. We have two offices in the southern part of Michigan, Detroit and Grand Rapids. However, we reach in to Chicago, and Northern Ohio.

CEOCFO: Do you find that your clients typically want to work with people that they feel close to or that they feel a kinship with through that geography?

Mr. Silvani: Yes. I think that everyone wants to work with trusted advisors as much as possible. Therefore, we try to be one of those trusted advisors. We earn their trust every day by what we do. Our customers want to know that they can reach out and touch us if needed. I think it is also important that you are part of the community where you are working. Even though so much can be done virtually today and we can do a tremendous amount of work remotely; but there is still that comfort level of knowing that you are five miles down the road.

CEOCFO: When you are speaking with a prospective client is there an aha moment when they understand the depth of what you offer?

Mr. Silvani: I have been an entrepreneur for a long time. I have started many businesses and have helped found the local chapter of the Entrepreneurs Organization, which is an international organization of entrepreneurs. When talking to business owners they realize that I am a business owner also and that I have the same challenges as they do. I understand how hard it is to build a business, I think that is when they have that 'aha' moment. I am running a business and I am trying to handle the same challenges that they. That really turns the light bulb on.

CEOCFO: *How is business these days?*

Mr. Silvani: Fantastic! We have had phenomenal success.

CEOCFO: *How are you able to attract the people that have the right mindset? How do you keep you keep up as the business grows?*

Mr. Silvani: One of the most important aspects of any business is having the right people. What I have found is that it is kind of a snowball effect. If you get a base of good people in a company, build a culture around them; they help attract the next good person. I think the key is in placing your people first. That is what we do. We have a set of core values and our top value is our people. We invest heavily in them and their skills. We have a lot of respect for what they have to do every day. When someone walks through our office and they meet our team, they feel good about our organization whether it be a customer or a potential employee. That helps a lot. Additionally, our culture shows how passionate we are in what we do.

CEOCFO: *What surprised you as the business has grown and developed?*

Mr. Silvani: Initially, the thing that probably surprised me the most is how my skills have to change as the business gets larger. When you are in a three person company and everyone is wearing every hat. That is one set of skills. When you get to the thirty person company and you start to build middle management it is a different set of skills. As you get to the larger company it is another set of skills. That is something that I did not expect at all and have had to adapt to as I grow companies.

CEOCFO: *What might be different a year from now at Alta Vista Technology?*

Mr. Silvani: We are moving toward the cloud, which is that generic term that everyone uses to say, "That big thing in the sky". In the past we used to do almost everything on premise for our customers. They would have to invest in many skill sets, internal or external to manage their technology. As we move to the cloud, most of those processes become centralized and delivered as part of the whole solution. Instead of having a rack of computers, a worker now just needs a computing device and an internet connection. A business can now concentrate on what it does best and not worry about technology.

CEOCFO: *Why should people choose Alta Vista Technology?*

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