

Service Consolidation Solutions for Platforms across Canada



Charles G. Hanna
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CEOCFO: Mr. Hanna, what is the focus at Brains II today?

Mr. Hanna: The focus for Brains II today is service consolidation. What we do is support a wide range of products across a wide range of platforms in Canada. We provide technical expertise and very strong technical support, as well as a complete logistics assistance for parts availability across Canada. All of that is supported with a very strong IT reporting system, which allows customers to track the cause in real-time basis. However, more importantly, they can find out after the fact about what were the causes of failures, the costs of the failures, as well as the resolutions. They are then able to manage and make corrections and enhancements from that point forward.

CEOCFO: Are you representing manufacturers or working with companies to help them facilitate a solution to their problem?

Mr. Hanna: We have a hybrid model, which has to be in this kind of environment. The lead is from the customer perspective, as we are more focused towards the end user. We do not really care what technology they use or what manufacturer they use. We provide one location where they can send their break/fix calls, make their moves, adds, as well as help desk and have that consolidated regardless of what manufacturer they are using. In the process of doing so there are some items that are going to be on a manufacturer's warranty, so we do a great deal of backend work with the manufacturer to be able to supply the customer with parts based on their warranty and that is actually provided by the manufacturer. Therefore, we facilitate that warranty reimbursement for the customer; sometimes on behalf of the customer and sometimes we do it on behalf of some manufacturers.

CEOCFO: What types of businesses tend to use your services?

Mr. Hanna: It is quite varied. We do business with banks, insurance companies, distributors, manufacturers, law firms, educational institutions, municipalities and government bodies. Typically we provide our services to companies with 100 employees or more. We are not in the very high end, where they tend to turn to outsourcing, with very large corporations like the IBMs of the world, or they may do it in house themselves.

CEOCFO: How are you able to resolve something quickly, particularly if it involves the manufacturer?

Mr. Hanna: In some cases the manufacturer has to take the service call. Some customers have a myriad of arrangements for their equipment and because they want to consolidate all of the services requirements through one service company and managed through one contract like Brains II, they will need us to interface with the manufacturer in some cases. In those cases we are acting with the manufacturer on behalf of the customer. It is no different than the customer dealing with the manufacturer directly, except that we manage the process closely and report on it. It then becomes part of the overall IT service reporting structure.

CEOCFO: Does your relationship with the manufacturer ever make a difference?

Mr. Hanna: In some cases, such as with a high-end processor if it is new and is becoming a critical shutdown situation, then yes we help escalate it because of our unique understanding of the problem, the manufacturer and the customer. We are probably better equipped than the customer in that situation, but that is a rare occasion.

CEOCFO: Are there types of services that you would like to cover with your customers that you are not handling today?

Mr. Hanna: We are very focused in our approach. We do not for example sell technology, we do not take a position as to what manufacturer or what technology they should go with. We come in after the fact as a one source solution for Break/Fix and making sure that it is supported properly, even if it is not ourselves that is providing the end support. We still manage that process, and we are well equipped to do that. We have been around in the business for about 36 years

now, having started in 1979. Therefore, we are very good in terms of our resources and understanding where to get expertise on a virtual basis and apply it anywhere in the country where it needs to be delivered.

CEOCFO: *Is there much competition? Are there many companies that have the depth of Brains II?*

Mr. Hanna: There are a few organizations that are quite reputable and certainly are capable of providing good service. From my experience, I have been involved in making acquisition of several organizations during my tenure in the business and our greatest expertise and skill is in terms of the reporting structure on the backend. We also happen to be across more platforms than most other organizations. Many of them tend to be focused either on point-of-sale or focused on desktop, where we tend to also cover the high-end platforms and legacy systems that most other organizations do not offer.

CEOCFO: *How do companies find you? How do you do outreach?*

Mr. Hanna: I have always said that we are probably one of the best kept secrets in the market, because we have not done advertising on a regular basis. We have relied a great deal on word of mouth and that has kept us pretty busy by itself. However, we are now considering awareness advertising to focus on one particular end of the market, which is on the high-end servers and disk arrays. This is simply because they requires really strong response and very high-level parts availability across the country, which we do excel at and we intend to beef that up even more.

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CEOCFO: *Are there geographic areas where you have more customers or where there is more room for attention?*

Mr. Hanna: I do not think so. We have been national since back in the mid-1980's, so our distribution of business and customers is almost in line with population distribution in Canada. We cover most areas, but in extreme remote areas we deal with local service organizations and support them with our technical expertise, parts logistics and reporting structure. They appear seamless to the customer and it allows us to cover 100% of the country, even though our own employees directly service about 90% of that base.

CEOCFO: *What is the key to staying on top of all of the products, services and new technologies?*

Mr. Hanna: The most important thing to maintain expertise is being in the field and actually working with technologies. As new products come out, they are not completely different animals. They are generally about 80% similar to what was there before. We learn the differences by taking courses from the manufacturers, but more importantly by working with them. We have a very strong central tech support that provides that education and training and technical newsletters to our field. They are always in contact with the manufacturers, as well as other third party organizations that specialize in providing very specialized support in some areas. That delivers the expertise to us in the field.

CEOCFO: *How do you keep up with the demand for your services?*

Mr. Hanna: Sometimes there is a requirement to beef up our labor force in some areas and our support in other areas. These are challenges that any organization faces and we have been doing that for quite a long time. The bottom line is that we have not really had any difficulty beefing up to very large contracts very quickly. We have had contracts that required us to basically hire one hundred people for that one customer within sixty days and we have done that quite successfully. Therefore, there is a tremendous amount of elasticity that we can provide.

CEOCFO: *What have you learned over the years and what has changed in your approach that makes Brains II better than it was five or ten years ago?*

Mr. Hanna: Good question. It is probably my management of people. That would include how you would treat them with respect, value them and give them the ability to be responsible. I have also learned to have the service monitored on a very close basis, so that we know when things go out of line, such as if parts usage is unnatural or the call volume is unnatural. There are environment factors that can cause that, and we need to be able to communicate back to our customers and to our field support how to do it better. Having a good internal reporting structure is very critical in this case. The other aspect is to never try to be all things to all people, as you will never be successful with that.

CEOCFO: *Put it all together for our readers. Why choose Brains II?*

Mr. Hanna: Brains II is a very reliable, cost effective solution that has been around for 36 years and it is a proven solution.