

## Offsite, Onshore Software Testing by Fulltime Certified US Workers



**Lann Stewart**  
President

**CEOCFO:** *Mr. Stewart, your site indicates DeRisk IT provides software testing solutions. Would you tell us the concept behind the company?*

**Mr. Stewart:** The concept is to provide the same (or more) cost effective measures that a lot of software companies are going to in India and other countries, but to keep that in America. We provide offsite, onshore software testing by W-2 full-time US workers that are certified testers.

**CEOCFO:** *Are people looking more proactively for US companies today, than some years back or is it still a struggle to get attention?*

**Mr. Stewart:** I think the majority of the people are looking. We have noticed many of the long term contracts with overseas companies entered into by desperate companies have held back being able to break away. When we talk to these people and the companies and why they are doing the business where they are overseas, it is not an issue of quality but of price. What we have realized over time is that the overseas companies are billing monthly. When you break down the actual dates and hours that they worked, they actually cost more than what we charge.

**CEOCFO:** *How are you able to do it cost effectively?*

**Mr. Stewart:** I think it is due to our business model. Our philosophy since day-one is we do not want to go into a client with a bulls-eye on our head that states we are a high-end consultant, our margins are through the ceiling and you are going to get us out of here as soon as you can. We come in and become part of the team. We look at long-term contracts with fewer margins than trying to make all the money upfront. A lot of that is focused on the fact that we do not have an office that is a skyscraper overlooking the Atlanta skyline. Our management team is paid at a lower cost than what you would see in most areas because our management team has stock in the company. We want it to succeed. We realize that driving a new Land Rover around is not the way to go, it is about moderation and we live by that.

**CEOCFO:** *What types of companies are coming to you and what types of companies do seek out?*

**Mr. Stewart:** It is a cornucopia of companies. We have companies such as Technicolor, Macy's and JP Morgan come to us. Here in the last couple of years we have made a huge push in the healthcare industry and we have a large amount of healthcare companies come to us. We worked with McKesson and some other companies to provide them with a service instead of our competitors which are any company overseas. With the healthcare industry, it is hard to expect foreign companies with no formalized healthcare policies to write the code and test the software for American healthcare companies. We took the liberty a while back to have every one of our testers certified and all HIPAA compliance and regulations which helps greatly.

**CEOCFO:** *How do you reach these companies and get their business?*

**Mr. Stewart:** We sat down and even hired a marketing company to come in and see how we could get to the next step and they are amazed at what we can do and how people reach out to us. We have a small sales team and that team is making calls. We have not done a lot of marketing. Two years ago we changed our website. We went on to Instagram and Twitter. We have been very fortunate to do a good quality of work. In this industry people know each other. It may not be one client talking to another client, it may be one of our partners that runs into someone and says, "Hey have you thought about DeRisk IT?" It has been good for us because we do not want to go so fast that we lose our core competencies and models. We are not a company that wants to say that by the end of the year we want 300 employees. We want to grow at a rate that will allow us to keep in perspective what we are doing and what is important. We have seen competitors of ours that have tried to grow so quickly that they have thrown themselves out of a job. We do not want that.

**CEOCFO:** *What do you look for in your people?*

**Mr. Stewart:** There is one thing that is important to me, that is work ethic. One of the reasons we stayed small is because we look for different types of people to fit our model. We want the young sharp, energetic individual, and at the same time,

we want the veteran tester that can come in and adjust to our processes and methodologies in respectful times. I would like for that to be the core and if they can add around that, then that is fantastic. I am never going to hire someone that says hey come in and revamp my company. Come in and learn the core of what we do and then you can add your twist on it.

**CEOCFO: *Would you give us an example of what you are evaluating for your clients?***

**Mr. Stewart:** I think it is spread out in how we approach any project and what the client wants from us. Our focus is 100% on software testing. Some clients will come in and say they need someone to execute test cases and we tell them we can do that. We have some companies that will say they do not know where the QA department is and they need an audit of the team members. That is where I will go in and audit the environment. I look at where the testers are and find out if they know what is going on in the industry or do they only know the software they have been working with for the past ten years. We look at whether they have software testing tools like automation tools, and what the skill set is for that. We also go back and do a lot of exploratory testing which is something a lot of companies do not do, where we will come in our spare time and we are constantly creeping the application to find where the issues are. It is a wide range. It can be what we call here with a lot of us being ex military is a grunt on the ground that just executes test cases all the way up to a senior level auditing position where I come in myself and evaluate the entire environment and see how that works with development / design teams and whether they are doing agile or traditional water fall. From there we find out where that CIO or that QA director wants that team to be.

**“DeRisk IT Inc. is an American company that specializes in providing a better solution at a lower cost in the software testing solutions vertical.” - Lann Stewart**

**CEOCFO: *Is being a veteran-owned business important to your potential clients?***

**Mr. Stewart:** I love my country so I feel bad sometimes with it being a veteran-owned company. I did not serve my country to reap any benefits. It bothers me at times and people look at me like I am crazy but I honestly feel that way; should I even put down that I am a veteran or should I put down that I am a veteran and get special treatment. We have it on our website and our marketing team pushes it but is it a big advantage? I love having my clients that I have worked with in the past and that I have gotten close with send me an email saying happy Veterans Day. I do not see it as being a huge advantage especially with the economy and where it is right now and the government, it is a disadvantage to work with the government right now – too many companies are being paid late if at all. It just isn't a good work model at this time.

**CEOCFO: *Giving back is important for you. Why and where are you focusing?***

**Mr. Stewart:** Our focus is on the veterans. I do not think a lot of things that have happened in the last ten years post-trauma, have been handled correctly. We try to help out in any way that we can in that avenue. I am big on St. Jude's because it is nonprofit. We also help out with Miller Home for Girls. That is a home in Lynchburg Virginia. The director there Stacy Garrett, really won me over with her approach and how she is going about helping these girls where I do not know who else would. They are troubled girls and she is a fantastic role model and mentor. We try to donate money for them to be able to go to prom and buy their dresses and things of that nature. We have an affectionate side to breast cancer and we help them out greatly locally. We have been doing that for a while. My mother-in-law had breast cancer and is a survivor. We did that as a tribute to her. When we started seeing everybody out there that is very humble and you may not know, we just engulf that. That has been taken into our UK office as well.

**CEOCFO: *You mentioned a UK office. Would you tell us about that?***

**Mr. Stewart:** The UK office is based differently from this office in the sense that they are the onsite people where we are the offsite. They are at a different level where they are more of an architect. They go in and evaluate the teams over there.

**CEOCFO: *What surprised you as DeRisk IT has grown and evolved?***

**Mr. Stewart:** I think that we have been able to not become such a big head group. We have gotten some great compliments over the years. As you mentioned earlier with some of our clients, we have worked with some big hitters. I think the surprising thing is we have been able to stay humbled and not have strong contracts and lose realm of what we are doing. That goes for the whole company. We survived the last six years obviously. I think that is the biggest thing; we have been able to stick around. I have seen a lot companies that grow and blow their money fast. We are a debt-free company. We are in a rural area so we are able to get better cost but we are also not charging a high amount and that all washes out in the end. It is all relative in the end.

**CEOCFO: *Why choose DeRisk IT?***

**Mr. Stewart:** There are a couple of reasons. I tell any potential client that if you are in America and you are irritated with the economy then why are you sending money overseas when you have a company in the US that is veteran-owned, certified and is able to do the job better than overseas. It is the same time zone, a better rate, the same linguistics. You cannot complain. That is my strongest pitch. You cannot complain about the economy if you are signing an invoice that is sending money overseas, not if it is completely legit. The fact that our people are W2 fulltime employed, they are certified and experts in their field, that in a nutshell says why we are a non smoke and mirrors company. The people that work with us are the people that understand and are serious. The people that haggle with us and try to extend the sales process really do not understand how things work. We have had people before this say it is the easiest transition in what they have done ever. That is why everybody comes back to us. We had a 92% return rate on our clients.

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

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