

Business Technology Strategy, Fully-Managed Technology Services, Custom Web and Application Design, Consulting Company for the Manufacturing Industry providing Cloud-Based Solutions



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Interview conducted by:
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CEOCFO: Mr. Schipper, what is the focus at InsITE Business Solutions, LLC today?

Mr. Schipper: We are really focused on understanding exactly what our clients are trying to do from a business perspective, at a deeper level than a typical technology company. We are actually diving into things like, "What are your processes, what are the challenges in your particular market, what are your products, how do you engage your customers; those types of things that are more and more, in today's technology world, important to understand in order to deliver proper technology solutions. Therefore, our focus largely is to engage our clients on that level verses bringing products without understanding specifically what their needs are.

CEOCFO: When might a company turn to you?

Mr. Schipper: Companies turn to us when they do not know what technologies they might need or if they are having trouble understanding how technology might improve efficiency within their organization, or help them grow, or keep up with current growth. That is where, as previously stated, our approach really helps. That is because we can take a look at specific challenges in their business and actually, not bring the product, but instead say "Here are some areas where certain technologies might be able to help you be more efficient or extend data or services directly to your customers where you could not before".

CEOCFO: Would you give us a couple of concrete examples of what a company might have presented to you, what you were able to pull out of what they said and then what you could offer?

Mr. Schipper: This is a very common example. We often have companies come to us and say, "We are in the midst of a consolidation process due to mergers and acquisitions. We are taking x number of sites with two different companies and we are drawing all of that together, and from a product perspective we are pretty sure that we know how the manufacturing process is going to work, but we do not know how we are going to pull all that data in. We want to make sure that that does not interrupt our service to our customers, delivery of our product, but we want consolidated systems and applications." In these scenarios, we typically perform an assessment of the disparate systems. We take a look at the systems and applications; then we develop a full application and systems catalog to understand where each of the business units are today. Leveraging that information, we begin to build the picture of how we consolidate, how we build that strategy to continue to bring them forward in their technology environment as well as how we can support that ongoing for them. Long-term strategy is important in those scenarios, and we focus on building a solid strategy, then pushing forward from there.

"We are dedicated, not only to providing technology solutions, but truly making a difference in our client's business."

- Mike Schipper

CEOCFO: Are companies ever reluctant to share or to let you look at enough information to make a difference?

Mr. Schipper: Yes. There are times where there are companies that are not ready to share the information that we feel we need in order to build a complete and effective technology strategy for them. Frankly, because that is so important to our process and overall product, we sometimes find there are clients that don't exactly fit our services. We have a great process that is tried and true, we always want our product to stand out, having our stamp of perfection so to speak. So when we encounter companies that are not ready to share the information we need, we are not afraid to discontinue the relationship. To that end, we try to discover whether or not a new client is willing to have the deeper conversations with us very, very early on. We start to ask questions and sort of see what their reaction is and what they are comfortable discussing with us. We find out pretty quickly if potential clients are going to be willing to take the steps necessary in order to really align their technology.

CEOCFO: Are there particular industries, sizes of business, types of business, that turn to you or that you can provide the most benefit for?

Mr. Schipper: We are focused primarily on the manufacturing industry. However, as far as size goes, we really do not limit our size. Essentially, what we look at is we say, to my earlier point, if they are willing to see technology as an enabler and they are willing to dig a little deeper with us up front in order to make them successful through technology, they are a good fit as a client of ours, regardless of size. That could be anywhere from ten employees to five thousand employees. It is a mindset.

CEOCFO: Manufacturing has traditionally lagged behind other industries in embracing technology. Does that make it easier or harder for InsITE?

Mr. Schipper: It depends on what department. If you are talking about the technology that they have sitting next to the machine in the cell that is actually making the products; yes. They do tend to lag behind. Therefore, they are running operating systems that are still fifteen years old and sometimes older in those locations. Most of the time this is driven by specific hardware required by the machine. From a security perspective that is a concern, but we can typically work around those instances where needed through security hardening or isolation, or assist in migrating away from the old systems where possible. But what we really try to focus on - the thing that actually enables them today - is collecting and leveraging the data. As long as we are collecting the data points from those machines that are turning out the widgets we can send that data to a newer back-end system, whether it is cloud based or on premise, and begin to analyze and make decisions based on that data. Those are the things that we try to focus on vs. getting stuck in whether or not the endpoint is the latest operating system. There are ways to handle those endpoints over time, but replacing those systems doesn't exactly translate to business progress or growth, despite their importance to the company. We have found that our manufacturing clients are extremely open to that approach and are glad that we're forward thinking and not stuck on dealing with the endpoint. Today, every company should have data to understand and make decisions on the products that they are developing and manufacturing.

CEOCFO: Do you find companies are looking for the raw data or more for a summary or a solution?

Mr. Schipper: Yes. You know, again it depends on who you talk to. If it is quality they want more data. If it is C level they want a summary, they want bullet points. "Show me sales numbers this year this month verses last year this month." Therefore, we are finding that our analytics services that we are providing are hot! Especially, as it relates to the C levels to be able to summarize that information. However again, if we are speaking to a quality engineer we can use that same tool, but give them tons more back end data for process analysis. Therefore, it definitely is variable, so it is not a single answer.

CEOCFO: There are changes in technology all the time. How do you assess what is right for a company? How can you stay on top of all you need to put together for your clients?

Mr. Schipper: I think the biggest thing for us is that we eat our own dog food or we drink our own champagne; however you want to look at it. Therefore, we are very early adopters ourselves of the technology. Still, there is only so much of that you can do, because we are not actually living in our client's shoes. Therefore, we are not going to be able to demo the specific machine software that they are running, but we get that experience through having several manufacturing clients at varying levels of adoption. We have clients that we are always helping leverage the new technology. We absorb the experience through that, through carefully testing the technologies with other clients. Therefore one; we drink our own champagne. That sounds a little more positive. Secondly, we are working on the latest technologies with many of our clients. Therefore, we can speak to it with other new clients and can actually provide them with case-studies and experiences that we have had.

CEOCFO: *The InsTe site features a quote from Aristotle. "Pleasure in the job puts perfection in the work." How does that manifest day-to-day for your company, for your workers and for your culture?*

Mr. Schipper: We have a very, I guess I would say, loose atmosphere, but certainly not to the point of losing focus our clients. We are extremely client focused. Therefore, when we have our team meetings it is, "How is the client winning today." However, we are having fun doing it. It is sort of flexibility and fun within a framework. We try to be open. We try to have open schedules and things like that. I think we have a good time as a company. We are a great team. We all enjoy spending time together and that does truly translate to great work. The other thing is that we focus a lot on client satisfaction. When you focus as much as we do on client satisfaction, from the top down, it provides satisfaction inside our company as well when we share the daily successes. When our clients are happy we are happy. That is also a huge part of the reason we vet our clients very early. That is because we want to make sure each client is a good fit for us too. We have heard from some folks that we have brought in from outside that worked for other companies and they say, "This is just a breath of fresh air, because you do not have clients that hate you!" That is a big part of it for us. Certainly, I know for a fact that these things translate to better results for our clients.

CEOCFO: *Are you surprised that so many companies do not understand that?*

Mr. Schipper: Yes, However, it is complex. It is simple, but it is complex. Culture and service mentality starts from the top. If you do not understand that it can be really hard to recover from building the wrong culture.

CEOCFO: *What is your geographic range today?*

Mr. Schipper: We have clients throughout the US, so I would say that we are certainly a national company. We are not focused here in West Michigan where we are, where we live. We are all over and are willing to go where are clients take us.

CEOCFO: *How do you reach out to prospective new clients? How do clients find you if they are looking? How do you stand out from the crowd?*

Mr. Schipper: Most of our clients are through referrals and I am proud to say that we have grown significantly over the last four years, simply on referrals. However, we are launching marketing campaigns now. I think what set us apart is our approach, our process, and that is what made referrals such a factor for us. Early on we developed a methodology of a specific approach and that makes a big difference, as well as the fact that we vet our clients. Most of clients that have continued with us really appreciate that, because again, happy employees mean better results for our clients. We make sure that who we do work for fits with our philosophy and how we work, and that just helps across the board.

CEOCFO: *How do you work on an ongoing basis with your clients?*

Mr. Schipper: We build long term strategies out of the gate through our assessments. We will build them a one year, two year, three year or even longer strategy. We attach to that complete cost estimates, so they can actually see a whole budget from the get go. Then ongoing, we manage that budget for them so we will get to maybe Q2 of 2017 and say, "Six months ago we thought that this first year that we were going to work on these five projects. We have done these two. Here is the third. Are you ready to go." We just continue to manage that strategy. In addition to project services for infrastructure and applications, we also provide our clients with managed services and ongoing support. We are engaging our client's employees and data on a day to day basis or maintaining their systems, taking the service desk calls and everything that comes with a managed service provider. We then have annual or quarterly reviews of that long term strategy depending on the client size. We will tweak it and change it based on business needs, it really keeps us directly engaged with them. It is a very close relationship. When we onboard our client we send an email that says "Welcome to the family!" and we truly mean that. Our clients are part of our family and all of us feel that way here.

CEOCFO: *As you start marketing are you able to take on as many projects as come your way? Do you need to ramp up? Can you accommodate a growing number of clients?*

Mr. Schipper: We are really trying to grow as quickly as we can with the growth of our client base. However, we do have outside resources as well that we pull from. Our goal is to not leverage off shore resources. Or goal is to try to keep everything on shore; try to keep everything internal if we can. However, certainly that is going to be a challenge as continue forward. Obviously, growing through referrals has been a steady growth as our marketing campaign starts to pick up it is going to grow, so we will grow with it and stay focused on our core values and approach.

CEOCFO: *What surprised you as the company has grown and evolved?*

Mr. Schipper: My background is very technical. I came from a service desk position to a system engineer position to an IT manager position to owning my own business. Now I am CEO of a company. Having been in all of those roles I have learned a ton of things along the way, so I can cover many, many bases; provide input and assistance in all aspects of

what we do. As far as what surprised me, I think the challenge related to fitting our team members in the right spot. There is that old adage; get the right people in the right seat on the bus. That is challenging, it is very challenging. When you have team members who you feel are a good fit and you put them in the seat on the bus and they might not be as strong in an area as you thought they were, at our size it can be very tough to determine what to do. At the same time we have to be careful with that and make sure that we don't hold on to people to hold on to people. However, I think that has been the most challenging thing. It is building a team that I feel is worthy of what we are selling out there.

CEOCFO: *There is a great deal of competition in your space. Why should people choose InsITe Business Solutions?*

Mr. Schipper: It comes down to our processes, our overall method and the fact that we are going to bring long term vision to our clients. We are dedicated, not only to providing technology solutions, but truly making a difference in our client's business. If we are not making a notable difference in their business we have done something completely wrong. I think that is the way that all technology firms should look at it. This is not technology for technology's sake. This is technology for business sake. Let us actually make a difference for our clients. That is the bottom line. That is what we preach here with the team all the time! It is our mantra, our purpose.

