

Q&A with Rob Schenk, CEO and Co-Founder of Intivix a San Francisco based Managed Service Provider for Auto Dealerships, Architecture/Design Firms, Distribution, and Engineering Companies providing IT Consulting, Computer Support and Cloud-based Apps



Rob Schenk
CEO and Co-Founder

Intivix
www.intivix.com

Contact:
Rob Schenk
415-543-1033
salesinfo@intivix.com

Interview conducted by:
Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor
CEOCFO Magazine

“Our focus is to lay a future roadmap of how we see technology evolving and how best our clients can leverage those changes to become more profitable.”
- Rob Schenk

CEOCFO: *Mr. Schenk, would you tell us about Intivix?*

Mr. Schenk: Intivix is a Managed Service Provider (MSP) and IT outsourcing company based out of San Francisco. We are entering our 21st year in business and are focused on serving small and medium businesses in the Bay Area. Our verticals include auto dealerships, architecture/design firms, distribution, and engineering companies.

CEOCFO: *Was it a deliberate strategy to focus on those industries?*

Mr. Schenk: The first few clients when we started were auto dealerships. It was at a point in the mid to late nineties when the Internet was just starting out and a lot of dealerships were working with green screen/mainframe technologies. At the time, corporate auto makers would communicate with dealerships using CD-ROMs. Then the Internet came of age and communication methods migrated to modem and ISDN connections. That is where the Windows Server/PC revolution started with dealerships and we were at the forefront. We started developing expertise in the automotive dealership space and that became one of our verticals. At the same time, my business partner was working heavily with companies in the architecture and design space. We received word-of-mouth referrals and those industries became special niches for us.

CEOCFO: *What are some of the challenges in the niche industries that you are involved with that you understand on a level that most MSPs would not?*

Mr. Schenk: I think it is understanding the inter-connections of the line of business applications, the way they run their businesses and having a deeper appreciation for the challenges they face. What has been interesting in the auto dealership space is that they are considered financial institutions (since they deal with credit, and PII information), yet many of them are under-protected and do not place a large value on technology as much as they could or should. That is starting to change now which opens an opportunity for us to help educate. The advent of the cloud also creates more possibilities and options for these clients to leverage technology in a proactive and efficient manner while controlling costs.

CEOCFO: *How do you work with your clients on a proactive basis?*

Mr. Schenk: For us it is about getting the right clients. Our core customers understand that technology is an asset. They understand the value of partnership and they are likely to be an operationally mature business. When you combine those factors, we become an extension of their business. We pride ourselves on developing those deep relationships where it becomes more family-like---supporting and helping each other achieve great things. The clients we work with value that candor that inevitably surfaces.

CEOCFO: Do you find additional challenges as you are in a tech-centered arena?

Mr. Schenk: In the tech-savvy San Francisco Bay Area, companies can certainly be more in-tune to what is going on technology-wise. In these cases, we match well especially with our focus on ROI and KPI/data visualization. For the folks that may be less operationally mature, there is more of a hand-holding and educational process that unfolds. But it comes back to the realization that technology is an asset and finding great partners helps companies scale. Our focus is to lay a future roadmap of how we see technology evolving and how best our clients can leverage those changes to become more profitable.

CEOCFO: Are there services that you would like to offer?

Mr. Schenk: We are developing several services now as we speak. We are branching into security as we see a need in the small business market for a coordinated, well rounded, well thought-through methodology to help those companies become more secure but do it in affordable, bite-sized chunks. The auto dealership space is also ripe for transformation. Many dealerships are pretty far back in time in their technology infrastructure and have not made the requisite investments over the years to make themselves more productive and secure. With our dealership cloud solution, they will be able to realize significant productivity efficiencies and make a dent in the marketplace.

CEOCFO: Are there industries or opportunities where you see more potential for growth?

Mr. Schenk: A few years back my business partner and I had the genesis for a software application called MyWorkDrive (www.myworkdrive.com), which is a cloud-based file access as a service offering. MyWorkDrive provides enterprise cloud file sharing services for Windows networks with native Office365 integration. Businesses use MyWorkDrive to access, share, and collaborate on work files using a browser, mapped drive client, or mobile device. Many companies have a large infrastructure blueprint and are not able to put all their data up in the cloud just yet for various reasons. The software is targeted to healthcare, financial services, higher education or any firms that have large data sets where it does not make sense to put it all in the cloud yet. We recognized this as an opportunity to transform ourselves from a managed service provider to an ISV cloud service provider. We are branching out and have patented the MyWorkDrive technology.

CEOCFO: What are you surprised we cannot do yet with technology?

Mr. Schenk: One of the promises of modern technology is that it will provide us with more freedom and the ability to work from anywhere. It fulfills that promise, and with that comes the challenge of creating separation between personal and business lives. I think over the next few years there will be exploration on how best to leverage technology but do it in a way where we don't get consumed by it. In my personal observation, after discussions with people of different ages and demographic backgrounds, there seems to be a consensus that life is moving faster and faster. And that it takes a lot more grounded awareness to maintain separation between personal and business, between technology on or off. I'm concerned about society's degradation of communication etiquette/awareness, with people so tied up on the devices that we are forgetting how to talk to each other. We forget or avoid the unpleasant truth that the device usage can be an addiction with significant potential ramifications for society at large. Don't get me wrong, technology is great, but there is a reason Steve Jobs kept iPads away from his kids.

CEOCFO: How do you reach out to new customers?

Mr. Schenk: Many of our initial clients were from word-of-mouth referrals. If you do great work, word gets around. We are doing more digital marketing, outreach in the community, webinars, and speaking engagements to get our name out there. We are actively working to build up the Intivix and MyWorkDrive brands and create some exposure.

CEOCFO: Why choose Intivix?

Mr. Schenk: For me it is about honor, trust and accountability. I have been a long-time student of martial arts, studying Aikido for nearly twenty years now. Aikido is about developing character, cultivating discipline, constant refinement and improvement---doing what you say and saying what you mean. I am instilling these core principles and tenets into the Intivix culture, hiring staff who embrace and embody those same values. By getting the culture right, we create a team that delivers white glove treatment to our clients on a consistent basis. Combined with empathetic listening, responsiveness and skilled engineers, we maintain long-term client relationships. In fact, our name speaks to these goals. The name Intivix is actually broken down into three parts: "Inti" refers to partnership or customer intimacy. "vi" stands for vision, or virtualization. And the "X" is for expert. Our original company name was LanXpert, which was great in the late 1990s, but once the cloud arrived, we knew we needed to make a branding change. And the rest is history.