

**On-Site Consulting Services for the Intelligence Community and other
US Government Agencies providing Technical and Mission Support
In Defense, Cyber Security, Big Data and Systems Engineering**



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Interview conducted by:
Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor
CEOCFO Magazine

CEOCFO: Mr. Scheper, what is Jovian Concepts?

Mr. Scheper: We are small company based in Maryland with about 55 employees. We provide basic technical assistance to the intelligence community.

“We are unique in this business because of the strength of our family company culture. The benefit to the customer is stability and consistency where we can provide superior support and services over the long term.”- Richard Scheper

CEOCFO: Would you give me a couple examples of how you work with your clients?

Mr. Scheper: We basically work on site, supporting government managers in the intelligence community. The support that we provide runs the gamut. We have assistance engineers, software developers. We supply expertise and support to mission compliance and data compliance. We do technical, tactical training amongst other things.

CEOCFO: Is there a deliberate strategy to work with the intelligence community or is it more opportunistic?

Mr. Scheper: The intelligence community is where we started. That is basically where our current area of expertise is and where our contacts are but we are looking to expand the element.

CEOCFO: Why now?

Mr. Scheper: There is a lot of volatility in the environment that we work in, a lot of uncertainty. The sequestration was pretty hard a couple of years ago, so we see it as a way to not have all our eggs in one basket if we can diversify beyond those customers.

CEOCFO: When you are working with an organization, what do you look at to come up with the best solution that less experienced people do not recognize?

Mr. Scheper: We really focus on the quality of our people. It is kind of a cliché to say you are a people oriented product, but in our case, it is very much true. We put a lot of focus on making sure that we get the right kind of person for the job. We are a little less focused on resumes than most companies. Many times in this business, they want to check off labor category requirements and basically put a warm body in a seat. We do not hire that way. We look for the quality of the person and the whole package of that person, if they are a fit for our culture and a fit for our values in a long-term sense. Our idea is that people can learn on the job and they can learn the specifics of a mission in place if they have the right background. We try to make sure that we put those good people in front of the government and that gives us more credibility as the government sees that we always deliver quality people.

CEOCFO: *How do you know when someone is a quote, “quality” person?*

Mr. Scheper: There are a number of different factors. There is no one way. We do a lot of hiring word of mouth. We do not rely heavily on online job sites or recruiters and things like that. Typically when a person is brought to our attention, he or she is a recommendation from someone that we trust. During the interview process, we look to see what the goals of the person are, in terms of short term and long term. If we see a person with a lot of short term goals, that is generally a red flag. We are definitely weary of people that appear to be job hoppers. Those are not the kind of people for us. We look for people who have a really steady work history, who tend to stay in one place for a while but not too long. That works for a more experienced candidate. For people coming out of school with less experience, we are basically looking for a certain level of wisdom in the candidate where it is not just all about the salary number, that quality of life in a company matters, that they look like they are someone who is willing to invest in us the way that we are going to invest in them.

CEOCFO: *Jovian Concepts was recognized by SmartCEO Magazine for outstanding corporate culture in December, You have been recognized as a best place to work. Did you understand from day one, the need to develop this type of corporate culture?*

Mr. Scheper: I started day one with this vision, which I saw as counter to the other companies in our environment. I came from a big company. We recognized that your standard, large company corporate culture has really no understanding of the environment that their people are actually working in, or what the importance of their people to their customers is. To them, it is just about a bunch of seats and basic numbers. I recognized that the customer did not care what company a person worked for, they just wanted to make sure that they had the right people and that the people they trusted and relied on stayed in place. I tried to build a company where that would be attractive to such people, a company that those people would call home, that would be very supportive of the performers so that they were enhanced and supported by their company rather than burdened by it. That model seems to have worked. We have been able to recruit some top-notch people and we have been able to retain those people.

CEOCFO: *How do you break into new markets?*

Mr. Scheper: We are trying to widen our network. In this line of business, blindly responding to RFPs (Request For Proposals) generally does not work. You have to have some kind of inside connection and a deep understanding of what the customer is really looking for. It is about building those networks and getting in touch with the people that really understand what the needs are, and kind of getting yourself ingrained into that customer’s space so that you can understand what that customer needs. It takes a lot of finesse and networking.

CEOCFO: *Are you looking to stay in government or are you looking at commercial opportunities?*

Mr. Scheper: We would love to be able to parlay our experience to a commercial marketplace. We are trying to figure out how to do so. Much of our expertise is focused on inherently government or intelligence community issues and mission, but there are definitely tie-ins to things that commercial companies are trying to do.

CEOCFO: *There are a very wide range of services on your site. How do you stay on top of the changes in technology?*

Mr. Scheper: We have to stay current because our customer does. We work with a really fast paced customer who is always staying on the edge of technology, so we do the same. That is part of the people in our company’s job, staying on top of new technology, getting certified for new technology. That is just a part of the job. We have to stay on top of it.

CEOCFO: *What are you surprised that we are able to do with technology today and what are you surprised we still cannot master?*

Mr. Scheper: Based on past experience, it is hard to imagine ten years ago that we would be here today with the sheer amount of information that we can go through, try to digest, and analyze. It has gotten huge. That is one surprise. In terms of what we cannot do, I do not know that it is that much of a surprise, but I think in general, people have overestimated what artificial intelligence can do. I think it is going to turn out to be much more limited than people realize. The advancements that we have had in things like voice recognition, being able to take text and convert that to audio and things like that is pretty impressive. A great deal of the machine learning is impressive but I think there is an inherent limit to it that is much more limiting that people realize and these problems are much harder than people generally thought at the beginning.

CEOCFO: *What types or projects would you like to work on given a choice?*

Mr. Scheper: We would like to do more development projects. Right now, a lot of what we do is services. We would like to get some projects going to do some different things, mostly in the lines of automating things. For example, we designed a user based testing methodology where we could do live observation of analysts, using tools and being able to rate the

tool based on the analyst's experience in real time. We are working on a tablet application that can help automate some of that, as well as trying to help develop automation for policy compliance and things like that. Those are some of the projects we are working on.

CEOCFO: *Giving back is clearly important at Jovian. Where do you focus your efforts and why?*

Mr. Scheper: Sixty to eighty percent of our employees are US veterans. All four services are represented. We do not have a Coast Guard person yet; then it would be five. The company is for the most part focused on a few things like veteran issues and education because we need a good pipeline of highly technical people that are local in the area. Those two things are kind of what we focus on in our philanthropic mission. Our primary charity is the American Red Cross and Service Armed Forces. They have a mission that generally a lot of people do not know a whole lot about. We really focus our giving on trying to help them.

CEOCFO: *Why pay attention to Jovian Concepts?*

Mr. Scheper: We are unique in this business because of the strength of our family company culture. The benefit to the customer is stability and consistency where we can provide superior support and services over the long term.

