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Digital Sales Processing Platform for B2B Companies Giving them a Competitive Edge in the Marketplace

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Interview conducted by:
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 CEOCFO Magazine

CEOCFO: *Ms. Swanson, would you tell us about eXalt Solutions?*

Ms. Swanson: eXalt helps leading B2B companies - make their B2B sales processes digital and without human touch. That lets them gain unlimited scale and it gives them a massive competitive advantage against their competitors in the marketplace.

“Many people have indicated that as many as 40% of companies may not be viable or alive in five years unless they change the way they do business. The bottom line is if you are doing business the way you have been doing it, even a few years from now you might find that you are no longer viable. Customers want to interact with you very differently, not on the phone. They want to interact with you with a digital presence and they expect a whole different level of speed in the back office. If you do not address those two variables, you may not be viable because you will be too slow and top heavy to address the requirements of your customers.” - Leslie Swanson

CEOCFO: *What are the characteristics of your solution that allow it to be better, faster and a definite advantage?*

Ms. Swanson: There are several differences. We have been in this industry for fifteen years and we understand the B2B sales better than anyone I think, in this space. What we are seeing is that the industry is undergoing a massive digital transformation. We see that there are -several things that you have to address if you are really going to help companies make it through this new era. The first is we see that our customers do not want technology, what they really want is a digital worker that they can employ. We designed our platform so that you can add a digital worker to augment your team of human sales reps or human sales administrators or analysts. By providing a digital worker and not yet another technology project, you really cut out the delays and the risk and the expense that is typically associated with the tech projects. People want workers not technology and they very much want a turnkey service. What we do is we meet with our customers and have found that the executives inside these companies have so much on their plate, they just want to specify what these workers should be doing and what the business policies are and have somebody else do the work of customizing them and employing them.

The second point is that we are a fully turnkey service. The other thing I think is critical is you can get started anywhere in the front to back sales process with us; you can get started in the front office or the back office and expand and branch out from there. The ability to see the whole customer experience as a front to back thread inside of these companies is key and it is not just inside of the company, what we have absolutely understood better than anyone is the fact that it is very much the ability to do what we call conducting business without borders. No company is an island anymore, they have an entire cadre of partners. What our digital workers do is reach across the borders of the company and help them make it agile.

CEOCFO: *Would you give us an example of a typical engagement?*

Ms. Swanson: If you take a vendor in the IT B2B solutions base, they have to sell through channel partners and typically they have thousands or even tens of thousands of products on their line card, undergoing change almost monthly. What we do is let them deploy digital advisors -at their channel partners so that the channel partners and the channel partners customers can self-serve and be able to understand what the right solution is for them based on their requirements. Typically in B2B the only solution before that was that you would either use a simple catalog website which would not solve a problem for you so you would have to reach out to a human being that would have to take several hours or days

to assemble a solution that met the customer and buyers requirement. We let people self-serve and get these answers very quickly, without the delays associated with doing it with human labor.

CEOCFO: *Over all, is the B2B world ready and are they actively looking or is it more that they would be happy to find out that eXalt can help them?*

Ms. Swanson: I think that what we are seeing is that right now, change is happening at a pace that is faster than we have ever seen, so I think that rate of change is happening faster than anyone can digest. I think companies are realizing they have to change because their customers are no longer contacting them as a trusted advisor they want self-service. They are no longer contacting a rep until they are perhaps two-thirds of the way through the sales process. This social change is making people wake up and realize that they are going to have to offer something different to the buyer. There is economic change where the margins in the business are no longer what they used to be so you no longer have the luxury of doing things with a lot of human labor that might be slower than the buyer wants or more expensive for the company so they cannot meet their profitability targets. We are seeing people now at the early stages realizing that they have to get on-board with us and make a change.

CEOCFO: *What about your solution that has different modules and parts as opposed to an overall solution?*

Ms. Swanson: Many -IT consultants try to inject expensive technology projects into companies. It does not quite work like that with eXalt, what we are doing is the exact opposite. We say look, you have all these people in this chain and there is all this knowledge in their minds and they are probably operating spread sheets today and it is just an ugly cumbersome process. Let us augment your sales teams so that they have digital advisors right at their fingertips so they can be smarter, better, faster. So they can make it accessible to their buyers, so they can interact and be smart. We purposefully package this as a digital worker so that you are not caught up in this massive IT boondoggle. The bottom line is that we found that 50-70% of the work inside of these companies is rules based and repetitive, being done by people that literally have four times more work to do than they can possibly get done. People are overworked not underworked. Give them all their own digital assistant and digital advisor. Let us see digital workers augment your teams so that they can do the work that they want to do and not this repetitive stuff that quite frankly technology is better at than humans today, particularly when you are talking about large rule sets. This has been demonstrated time and again. I would say that it is exactly the opposite of what you have seen with Salesforce or these large CRM or IT undertakings.

CEOCFO: *Are you getting more attention as more millennials are in the workforce?*

Ms. Swanson: Absolutely! Digital natives are a reality and everything is accelerating. The companies in B2B sales still expect their customers to call. If you are talking about a millennial or a digital native or even people who are not, expecting people to call is going to be an impediment to sales. We make sure you can let somebody start with a digital interaction with your company. Your website is the first point of contact and customer experience is paramount now. Your digital presence should answer your customers' questions, solve their problems and respond to their questions in the way they want to interact with you which is not over the telephone today.

CEOCFO: *How do you help your clients not only implement but present it to their employees in a way that is not threatening, that extols the easiness to use and the productivity?*

Ms. Swanson: All change is difficult. With eXalt every single experience is customized. It can be customized not only for the workers but it can be customized for all of your buyers. Every single one of our digital workers can be customized in the way they appear, and the way they interact. All of that can be customized so that they have a unique presentation. I think that increases the adoption and acceptance and I think it is a necessary part of the offering so we built that in on day one.

xCEOCFO: *Are there some solutions for particular parts of the B2B process that have gained more traction?*

Ms. Swanson: I think what we are seeing now is that the buyer really drives the company. The customer experience with the buyer is the best starting point because the buyers have real tangible problems that need to be solved. To expect people to call and get started with that process over the phone is increasingly irritating for the customer base. I think that is an ideal selling point because it really helps people understand what you can do to increase the loyalty and stickiness through the customer experience. Much has been written about customer experience being the battleground for competitive advantage these days. Can we start in the back office? Absolutely! Have we? Yes we have. I would say that if you start with the customer experience and a way to get a leg up, it is very easy to implement and you could be rewarded with some loyal customer relationships.

CEOCFO: *Is KWaaS (Knowledge Work as a Service) a term that you coined?*

Ms. Swanson: We did coin it. We coined KWaaS (Knowledge Work as a Service) as the name of our platform so it is not in -a formal analyst category. We like it because we felt it described the mission of the platform, which -is to -digitize the

knowledge work that is unprotected inside a company. Sometimes critical knowledge is in the hands of just a few people and this is even at a Fortune 500 company. If they get sick or take a vacation, the entire sales process can come to a halt. We thought of a term that helped people understand that what we were doing is protecting that knowledge and giving you the ability to scale it out so that you will never be vulnerable as a company. This is new and that is exactly what we are bringing to the market with our efforts with the press, is to make sure that people can hear it and understand it.

CEOCFO: Are there particular B2B types of companies or industries that tend to look at eXalt?

Ms. Swanson: We got started in the IT, telephony and software cloud segment but our platform is generic. If we were asked to apply it to literally any type of vertical such as automotive, financial, you name it, we would not need to change any code in our platform. We do have a lot of -domain expertise in IT, software, cloud and –unified communications but it can be applied anywhere.

CEOCFO: With such a vast potential market, how do you focus your outreach?

Ms. Swanson: We are starting with the largest of the vendors and the distributors and resellers. We are also working with distributors to help them bring this to their reseller partners. Some of the distributors have as many as fifty thousand resellers that they work with and this would be a great piece of value-add for any distributor with the reseller base. We are starting with the largest in those three segments of vendors, distributors, resellers, and then working with them to expand it into their partner base.

CEOCFO: What has changed in your approach if anything as companies have started to use eXalt?

Ms. Swanson: I think just the need to keep it easy to buy and easy to try. It is all about the ease of introducing this into the work and sales process. One of the things that we did was even for smaller companies where this is a critical issue, we gave people the ability to have different pricing plans so they could try it out on a per-use basis. If they have a low volume operation it might make sense for them to stay on that type of plan. They can drop it into their company in a matter of weeks and not have a lot of financial exposure and as they build up the volume, they can transfer into more unlimited plans or flatter fee plans so that it is not cost prohibitive. I think what we have learned is to make it easy.

CEOCFO: Why pay attention to eXalt today?

Ms. Swanson: Many people have indicated that as many as 40% of companies may not be viable or alive in five years unless they change the way they do business. The bottom line is if you are doing business the way you have been doing it, even a few years from now you might find that you are no longer viable. Customers want to interact with you very differently, not on the phone. They want to interact with you with a digital presence and they expect a whole different level of speed in the back office. If you do not address those two variables, you may not be viable because you will be too slow and top heavy to address the requirements of your customers.



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