

AtWork Systems is providing a Virtual Enterprise Workforce Platform using Machine Learning, Blockchain and IoT with a Suite of Productivity Enhancements that ties Employees, Consultants, Contractors and Suppliers together and allows them to Work from Anywhere



Ron Lewis
CEO & Founder

AtWork Systems
<http://www.atworksys.com/>

Contact:
Ron Lewis
571.230.3454
ron.lewis@atworksys.com

Interview conducted by:
Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor
CEOCFO Magazine

“We have developed a core set of technologies that support this notion of the virtual workforce for the gig economy built on an enterprise workflow platform, so that you now can allow people to work together, both inside the organization and outside. It ties together your supplier community so you can have employees, consultants, contractors all engaged in one organization. Then we have completely digitized the back office.”

- Ron Lewis

CEOCFO: Mr. Lewis, what is AtWork Systems™?

Mr. Lewis: AtWork Systems is really building a platform that allows companies to work better together. We have re-imagined and re-engineered the traditional ERP system to be more conducive to the way the millennials and the workforce is going to be engaged for the next decade. If you read the statistics and you look at what is going on with the younger workforce, they are going to have more jobs; they are going to be more independent in terms of hanging out their shingles. The platforms that are out there today have more of a monolithic view where every employee was inside of the organization. Therefore, we have said, “No, that is not the way folks are going to work.” We want to be able to handle a virtual workforce and then we want to be able to engage that workforce in such a way that we can give them a suite of tools and a suite of productivity enhancements that will allow them to work anywhere, that will allow them to be engaged in a way that they can also find opportunities to practice their trade, and that we can do it in a way that allows us to be able to get businesses onto our platform that are in their early stages and then be able to grow to be fairly big businesses.

CEOCFO: What have you developed?

Mr. Lewis: We have developed a core set of technologies that support this notion of the virtual workforce for the gig economy built on an enterprise workflow platform, so that you now can allow people to work together, both inside the organization and outside. It ties together your supplier community so you can have employees, consultants, contractors all engaged in one organization. Then we have completely digitized the back office. We looked at the seven or eight core transactions that drive a business from contracts to projects to time and attendance to expense management to purchasing and invoicing. We now have a whole series of digital applications that will allow people to be able to go online and operate their business in a way that they now

have a lot more insights, because we also have, through the workflow component that we have built a worklist that can be addressed from anywhere. Think about how in the old days you may have a paper based inbox. We now give you an electronic inbox that you can take anywhere. You can be on a plane looking at what is going on inside of your business and reviewing and approving transactions. The other thing that we have done is that we have integrated a very powerful set of business intelligence tools into our platform. Therefore, you now have the power of very strong analytics engines, so you can now begin to ask a whole set of "what if" kinds of questions and we have both the data and the analytics to be able to help you answer those questions.

CEOCFO: *Have there not been some companies and some systems today that claim to be able to pull everything together? What is the competitive landscape, other than older people and inertia, that you are facing?*

Mr. Lewis: If you look at the landscape, certainly when you go to enterprise class software that our software is, you have a whole series of suppliers, from the standpoint of the SAPs and Oracles of the world. Think about their software as being more the older model, but also built in a way that they were for companies that may have had a global footprint. With that capability came lots of features and lots of functions, but a very high price tag. I have been involved personally in doing five or six SAP implementations. The cheapest one was one hundred and two million. However, we have figured out a way to miniaturize that technology to give you some of the same features and functions, but to bring it to a cost point that is now affordable for the smaller business. I was in the BPO (Business Process Outsourcing) space for a long time and what we have found is that many businesses still need the same functionality to be able to operate their business. They typically want it integrated, but they are the ones that have to do all the integrations. Therefore, early on in their evolution they now have to hire IT people. They have to stand up some kind of a data center. What we can do is make that a whole lot easier for them, so that they do not have to go through that cycle and we can do it in a way that we can make it much more affordable. At the higher end of the market there are solutions that we are eventually going to compete with, but that is a long way off for us. What we are doing is really focusing on the middle market.

CEOCFO: *Is OneLynk™ available today? Are you still in development?*

Mr. Lewis: We have been developing for about two and a half years. We did a soft launch of the product last week in Orlando, Florida. Therefore, the product is available today and we are currently actively signing up beta customers. We want to be able to do, between now and the end of the year, a series of betas, to kind of harden the product and also to give us the chance to really get hands on feedback from the initial set of customers. Then what we want to be able to do is in January really have a full on general availability of the product.

CEOCFO: *What is involved with implementing OneLynk? How do you help ease the trepidation of moving from one system to another?*

Mr. Lewis: We put a lot of thought into that. I said we have been doing development for two and a half years, but I have been thinking about this problem for probably the last decade. I personally and two or three other members of my staff have been high level consultants and we have been in and out of in and out of all kinds of organizations, trying to help them do technology. What we realized is that the old model was to bring in a bunch of consultants and have those consultants do kind of a business

process re-engineering. Maybe it has nothing to do with implementing the software. It kind of gets you into a new way of thinking about how you are going to do your processes and then you are now able to take features and functions of these enterprise products and go through a customization or an effort and if you are lucky, maybe eighteen months to a year later, you have a solution. Many of those programs derail. They derail because, number one, you have spent too much money, you did not get the requirements right and it just takes too long. We want to be able to take a very different approach. The way we have thought about this is that we have built something called a policy engine. That policy engine allows us to be able to have interviews with our customers and understand how they make decisions, how they run their business, how they do governance and how they do internal controls. Through populating those questions in that policy engine we have our software configure itself to that particular customer. Then it eliminates a lot of the customization and a lot of the re-engineering effort. Obviously, when you are in the middle market you now can get to decision makers who really have a much better handle on how they are operating the business. We have done that. We have built patentable technology in that area that we think is really going to be helpful to be able to onboard a customer very quickly. Then the other thing is the data. Getting the customers data converted into our environment. That is something that we are actively working on now to look at what the top three or four platforms are that we are going to target converting people off of and making sure that we have tools that can help convert that data.

CEO CFO: *How have you reached the point where you can trust that you can translate responses in interviews to actionable information?*

Mr. Lewis: That is a great question. What we have is something that is a little more scoped in the sense that there is certain information that we are looking for. For example, our policy engine actually uses seven policies. We have found that these seven policies are key to how people operate their businesses. One of them is, "How do you approve transactions? Who is involved in approving transactions? If someone is submitting an expense report and it is for five thousand dollars, what is the policy for who has to approve that or if someone is buying a piece of equipment and that piece of equipment is ten thousand dollars how do you make that decision?" The other thing that we might say is, "What are your rules for who has what authority in the organization? If you look at 'I might have a manager, I might have a director, I might have a VP,' and what authority do you give them? How do you decide if you are buying something or if you are hiring someone, what is their authority?" Therefore, we need to be able to get at some of that recorded and codified. If someone is going out for an extended leave what is the policy for who will take over their responsibility while they are gone. Questions like, "How do you segregate duty and what is the company policy for that." Now, some of this is information that is right in the forefront of their minds and some of it is written down in a manual someplace, but we try to get that into our system. Then that information is used to generate something we call a micro kernel, which is a run time environment for how the software is now going to operate.

CEO CFO: *Would you tell us why government agencies are a good candidate for AtWork Systems?*

Mr. Lewis: It is really the customer base that the government agencies have. We just came from this conference in Orlando where we had three hundred medium to small businesses all trying to do business with the government. The government; they are the traffic cops. They are the

ones who are responsible for growing the industrial base in the country. They have a vested interest in making sure that that industrial base has capability. Therefore, we see ourselves ultimately forming a constructed partnership where we can help de-risk some of their programs. That is because they have a vested interest in making sure that they have an industrial base that can help them meet their missions. What we see ourselves doing is really partnering with the government so that we can number one, help many more small businesses grow their capability and really have the ability to be able to deliver on some of the programs that they take on. For example, I was very excited. I did not know very much about this program before I went to Orlando last week and I had a chance to really talk to the director of the program. There is a program called an STIR program, where the government funds innovative research this country. What they are trying to do is really grow the industrial base. The way they do it is that you might have a group of engineers or scientists who have an innovative idea and they write a research paper or respond to a request from the government. Then the government reviews it and decides whether they are going to fund it or not. They are great with giving them seed money. Think of it as seed money for an idea that could become a successful company. To do that, typically the people who might start those kinds of businesses are talented engineers. The government gives them a million dollars in the very first round to do a feasibility study. Then in the second round they underwrite them to do research and development. However, because it is research and development the government has to give them a contract in such a way that it is a cost/loss contract. Therefore, they now need a more sophisticated back office to be able to make sure that they can control the cost and control the scope associated with that particular program. There are many risks. It is not that the technology will fail, but that the companies will not do a very good job of managing the costs. That is because, you are, quite frankly, taking people who may have been talented engineers or talented scientists and now forcing them to be talented in running the business, all while complying with additional government regulations and reporting requirements. That is where a product like mine really, really fits in! There are literally decades of experience and understanding that went into building this software that would be very helpful to a program like that. By the way, the government makes two thousand of these awards every year!

CEOCFO: *What surprised you as AtWork Systems has grown and evolved?*

Mr. Lewis: I think the thing that is the most surprising is the rate at which people will accept change. I had a young startup company come to my office and the company was headed by a guy who is a manager in a hedge fund. He had a couple of his partners come with him, but there were only five of them who came. We started talking about what the software was and they basically are doing their reads. Therefore, they bought a couple of hundred properties and they bought them cheaply and now they have to build a whole back office so they can renovate them. They got it right away. They said, "This will help us tremendously," and they signed on. When I go to some other market, like the government market, for instance, it is difficult to get them to see that what we are offering is kind of the standard function, but it is also a transformative way to think about how you might operate your business. They say, "Build a better mousetrap and they will come." I think that packaging that story in a way that people can really get it and understand it is a challenge ahead of us.

CEOCFO: *Why look at AtWork Systems right now?*

Mr. Lewis: Because we are solving a problem that is real. We are giving you some technology that will help transform the way you can operate and we are allowing you to really be much better at what you do. It could be that you are a construction company or an engineering services company or a government manager with a mission to help the readiness of war fighters; that is really what you want to focus on. You can now partner with us to let us focus on making sure that you run your back office in a way that you can best achieve that mission.

