

Skilled Software Engineers offering Custom Application Development for International Organizations



Nick Puntikov
CEO

First Line Software, Inc.

www.firstlinesoftware.com

CEOCFO: *Mr. Puntikov, would you tell us about First Line Software?*

Mr. Puntikov: First Line Software is an international software house. Our engineers are mostly based in Eastern Europe, in Russia and the Czech Republic; however our clients are spread across the globe from Brazil to Australia, with the majority in the United States and Western Europe.

CEOCFO: *Who is turning to you for services? Is there a common thread among the companies?*

Mr. Puntikov: We have different types of clients, including enterprise clients such as Dell Software, who is doing some software product engineering with us, InnerWorkings – a global marketing execution firm, and Bonnier Media Group based in Sweden, for whom we are implementing web content management and e-Commerce systems. We also serve smaller companies like start-ups, small businesses and mid-size companies, who have specific needs in application development. They may have an idea that may bring them into the digital world with the potential of setting them ahead of the crowd in their respective marketplaces, and they cannot buy that off the shelf. If you want true market differentiation from others, then you will need to create something different. Small companies usually do not have specialists who understand the technology, follow all of the trends and can provide decent architectural solutions. For them we are here to help by providing application development and enablement services.

CEOCFO: *On your site it indicates, Unexpected Brilliance. How does that translate to your whole process?*

Mr. Puntikov: The brilliance comes from the fact that this is not the first company for me, as I started my first business in 1991. The people that I have around me are very good engineers, with experience in serving international clientele, and we will maintain this culture of a boutique company with very talented men and women, who can think out of the box in order to solve non-traditional problems of our clients. We call this 'intellectual integration', which addresses the primary challenges of business digitalization through critical thinking, insight, and horizontal engineering expertise across multiple verticals and technologies. Another aspect of the brilliance is our strong adherence to agile methodologies. We started our first projects using eXtreme Programming back in 2002, and since then agility for us is more than a set of practices – it is our philosophy and life style.

CEOCFO: *Do clients come to you because they understand the difference in what you offer, or are they often surprised at what you are able to do for them?*

Mr. Puntikov: We are dealing with clients who have a need for a specific custom application development. Indeed, initially they look for certain professional skills. However, as they start working with us, they are surprised with the variety of our abilities to add value to their business. One of our partner companies, Odysseus Data Services specializes in aggregating healthcare evidence data, such as electronic medical/healthcare records (EMR/EHR), and statistical analysis being built on top of that. The focus of traditional providers of EMR/EHR software solutions is in a different kind of domain. They are serving doctors and automate the processes for hospitals. However, this dataset can provide incredible insights into meaningful use, healthcare improvements and cost reductions when it is properly collected, processed and analyzed. Odysseus first came to us with trivial engineering tasks, such as ETL application development, but now we have formed a true partnership because of our expertise in the Big Data domain.

CEOCFO: *What terms would people key in to find First Line Software from your online presence?*

Mr. Puntikov: There are certain verticals where we have built a considerable knowledge and expertise in the domains such as web content management, Internet of Things, and big data. However, when people search online, if they understand the advantage of the Eastern European School of Software Engineering, which has a very good reputation,

then they would search for application outsourcing out of Eastern Europe. We are definitely one of the leaders in this space. When it comes to verticals and specialized knowledge, First Line Software would not really pop-up on the first page of Google. However, what we are doing is implementing a Hub-and-Spokes marketing strategy, where we have created a network of partners (our 'spokes') around a 'hub' of software engineering from First Line Software. We enter into partnerships with some startups as shareholders or simply find channel partners who sell into the market and we do the engineering for them. It is unlikely that people who are looking for help with ETLs for healthcare data would find First Line Software, but they would definitely find Odysseus, which uses our resources.

CEOCFO: How do you address the security issue when you are developing applications?

Mr. Puntikov: From the Intellectual Property (IP) protection perspective, we have instituted all the appropriate processes in our company in over 20 years of doing this, so the trust we have from Fortune 500 companies to small startups is well earned. Coupled with our incorporation in both the European Union and the United States, our clients have the integrity of those legal systems to further protect their IP. On the software side, there are certain precautions, standards and technologies that need to be embedded into software for the purpose of providing for security concerns, and we excel at that to design and implement software accordingly. Security beyond software engineering is an IT concern First Line would typically not get involved in. In these cases, the implementation of security policies is done on the client side and we are entrusted with following them inasmuch as they apply to our people and processes.

"We are always trying to be pioneers, ahead of the crowd in software technology, project methodology, and client engagement models."- Nick Puntikov

CEOCFO: Are you addressing wearable technology?

Mr. Puntikov: Great question, thanks. Let me give you an example from this field, which illustrates both our 'unexpected brilliance' and the efficiency of the 'hub-and-spokes' marketing strategy. That is an example from one of our partners, iTraq, based in Seattle. They invented a revolutionary global location tracker, the size of a credit card, which determines its position using cellular towers. The market reacted with surprising enthusiasm – iTraq collected nearly half a million dollars in Indiegogo campaigns. iTraq contracted with us to develop their unique server software. We quickly learned that they also needed unique firmware, which is embedded software for the device itself. And finally, we figured out that they also had a problem with hardware design, when they found that their other partner was not reliable. We have built a competence for this particular client where we covered the entire engineering cycle, including hardware design, firmware, and software engineering; and we now sell this expertise in the market. Recently, we decided to invest in iTraq, and now expect new clients in the B2B space, because there are numerous white labeled applications of this technology in different verticals. We are always trying to be pioneers, ahead of the crowd in software technology, project methodology, and client engagement models.

CEOCFO: What has surprised you as First Line Software has grown and evolved as a company?

Mr. Puntikov: I grew up in the Soviet Union, and I was 33 years old when it collapsed back in 1991. I was a scientist. Then came this explosion in the market economy, and all of a sudden I found myself an entrepreneur. In the next 25 years I built an amazing network of friends, colleagues, and partners around the world. Just look at two of the people who advise First Line Software! Richard Soley is the CEO of OMG (Object Management Group), probably the most powerful technology standards consortium in the world; and Jeff Sutherland is the father of SCRUM, probably the most popular Agile methodology of software development today. On a personal level this was one of the gifts that I was given, to be able to go from behind the Iron Curtain, to this whole world of a global economy. From the business point of view, the most surprising thing was the dizzying intensity, with which digitalization has transformed the markets. When I started my career, software engineering was considered a voodoo magic by many. Today, even a child can develop applications for smart phones and desktops using a vast variety of tools and means for rapid application development. This has made for a very dynamic market. However, it still needs professionals to address security, scalability, robustness, performance, and – most important - innovation.

CEOCFO: Put it all together for our readers. Why choose First Line Software?

Mr. Puntikov: First Line Software is a unique combination of an extremely skilled and loyal engineering force, working in an extremely innovative agile environment. We are natural winners. While the world sadly counts failed software projects, we deliver high quality software on time and within budget.

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