

Evolving Solutions: Deep IT Expertise, Regional Service

Introduction

There are several very good reasons to deal with regional systems integrators as opposed to original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) when deploying integrated systems solutions. These reasons include:

1. ***A local/regional systems integrator may have stronger subject matter expertise*** (some systems integrators, recognizing that expertise can be a huge differentiator, spend significant time and money to recruit the finest technical talent they can find);
2. ***Local/regional systems integrators can respond more nimbly*** (there is no need to clear operational, administrative and pricing decisions through multiple layers of administrators, as can be the case with many large OEMs);
3. ***Local/regional service and support can be better*** (regional systems integrators that are collocated near their clients can often offer better service/support);
4. ***Systems integrators can offer best-in-class solution multi-vendor integrated solutions*** (systems integrators can pick the best offerings from multiple vendors and blend them – OEMs often steer their clients toward home-grown, in-house solutions);
5. ***Reputation*** (local/regional systems integrators are, by their very nature, focused on their immediate geography – and consider it vital to perform well in that geography or risk losing customers and access to new business opportunities. Large OEMs, by virtue of being global have customers located around the globe – if one geography fails another may prosper...); and,
6. ***Cost*** (global vendors have huge overhead, whereas smaller and more nimble systems integrators have comparatively significantly less overhead. The lower overhead costs of systems integrators are usually reflected in the ultimate cost of a given project).

In this *Research Report*, *Clabby Analytics* takes a closer look at one particular systems integrator: *Evolving Solutions*. What we see is a two-decade old systems integration company that has figured out the formula for success in a Midwest regional market. The company invests heavily in subject matter experts that can provide critical strategic planning advice; its service and support record is excellent; it values and works well with best-of-breed partners; it is structured to be nimble and responsive to customer needs – and its corporate culture demands that customers be highly satisfied with their engagements.

Evolving Solutions: The Company

Evolving Solutions was founded in 1996 to provide better integrated solutions to the greater Minneapolis, Minnesota and Omaha, Nebraska areas – cities that are homes to some of America's largest enterprises and a cadre of midrange enterprises.

At present, the company has over seventy employees (its management team credentials can be found [here](#)). Particularly noteworthy regarding the company's employee base is that since its founding, the firm seeks and finds ***deep expertise*** in fields. At present, it has deep expertise in business continuity and disaster recovery, cloud computing, enterprise computing and software-defined systems/storage. It is the personnel that this company has hired, and the deep expertise that

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they bring to their clients, that separates Evolving Solutions from other regional systems integrators as well as from the OEM solution providers within its geography.

Also noteworthy is the company's emphasis on "*client satisfaction*". From the outset of its founding the company adopted client satisfaction a key corporate focal point. It has culturally ingrained its personnel with the message that "client relationships are everything." The company measures its success through satisfied customers – and, as a reward, satisfied customers tend to respond with renewed engagements. Through hundreds of successful engagements over the years, as well as through its "white glove" services, the company has built a reputation as a "trusted partner" in its Midwest geography (a geography that now includes Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Iowa and Wisconsin). The company also offers select customers national and global support as well.

Privately held, the company has financial resources and nimble management systems to allow its employees to offer creative solutions and offerings to its clients.

Market Positioning

With over twenty years of experience, *Evolving Solutions* boasts dozens of different types of systems integration and professional services engagements ranging from transaction systems to the deployment of a complex technology environments. The company likes to state, however, that it is not "all things to all people" – it knows where its expertise lies, it is well aware of its ability to execute various initiatives – turning away business that does not match its skill set. That said, the company positions itself as a strategic partner, capable of helping its customers figure out how to implement a variety of initiatives and how to deploy complex system environments.

When asked what are the company's focus markets, company representatives responded "We really focus across multiple industries. We often focus on larger commercial enterprises – in fields such as healthcare and hospital management, insurance, distribution, retail, etc... We are most successful with clients who see technology as a competitive differentiator – and who need access to our expertise to design and develop complex systems. Many see us as augmenting their internal information technology organizations."

A Closer Look at the Company's Product Solutions

Evolving Solutions states that it helps its clients deploy on premise and hybrid cloud solutions; implement Big Data and analytics solutions; offers cognitive computing advice; and it understands how to build software-defined data center solutions. A closer look shows that the company:

- Sells storage, server, converged infrastructure, networking, virtualization solutions;
- Offers highly integrated solutions that it creates in cooperation with several of the industry's best-of-breed solution providers; and,
- Offers, assessments, an integration/innovation lab, data center services (including data center management, deployment and implementation services) managed services, technology lifecycle management (maintenance and asset management services).

The solutions above are either fulfilled or serviced directly through the company or via its network of service partners. To understand the types of product solutions the company tends to focus upon, it is necessary to examine Evolving Solutions' relationship with its key vendors. The company has

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established “top tier” relationships with companies that include IBM, Hewlett-Packard Enterprise (HPE), NetApp, Cisco, Brocade, Nutanix and others. These top-tier relationships suggest that the company has strong experience in IBM systems and storage (including experience with IBM z (mainframe), Power Systems, Storage Systems, software and IBM Cloud).

The company also has deep experience with HPE in the deployment of x86 servers as well as HPE storage and infrastructure offerings. Similarly, the company has a deep focus on NetApp for its line of storage offerings, cloud data services, data storage software, converged systems, infrastructure management, security and data backup and recovery. More recently, the company has partnered with key vendors like Nutanix, NetApp and HPE to provide Hyperconverged solutions in this rapidly growing space. The company’s relationships with Cisco and Brocade provide Evolving Solutions with best-of-breed switches, storage networking, routers, software-defined networking, network automation and network management (visibility and analytics) offerings.

In addition, the company has also forged close relationships with Lenovo (x86 solutions); Microsoft; Riverbed Technologies (SD-WAN, WAN optimization, performance management and cloud-ready branch solutions); Nutanix (platform services, integrated data services and 3rd party services); Tegile Systems (a Western Digital flash storage maker) – and last but not least, with VMware (the market’s leader in systems/storage virtualization offerings).

The mix of partners that *Evolving Solutions* has chosen demonstrates the company’s willingness to work with a wide range of hardware and infrastructure solutions – enabling the company to build a portfolio of best-of-breed integrated solutions. Through multiple engagements, *Evolving Solutions* has developed strong expertise with these technologies – and given the wide range of partnerships the company has established, the company is well situated to compete aggressively with single-vendor solutions from large OEMs or competing systems integrators.

Integration Services

At Evolving Solutions, a typical professional services deployment involves six steps (illustrated in Figure 1).

Figure 1 – Evolving Solutions’ Six Step Approach



Source: Evolving Solutions, February, 2018

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Evolving Solutions has also developed strong skill sets in business continuity and disaster recovery, security services, and software-defined systems/storage/networks – which it offers as specialized services. The company also offers cloud computing, Big Data and analytics and cognitive computing solutions based on its deep skill sets in these areas.

Summary Observations

When evaluating a systems integrator, closely consider the evaluation criteria described on page one of this report (subject matter expertise, response, service and support, multivendor integrated solutions, reputation and cost). These are characteristics that can make a systems integrator different from an OEM – and that can make a big difference in the success of a given engagement – as well as its cost.

When researching *Evolving Solutions*, three differentiators stood out:

1. First is the company's investment in deep subject matter expertise. This expertise is vital in the analysis and planning phase – but it also extends all the way through a systems deployment. *Evolving Solutions* seeks to ensure that a job is well planned and that it is done right – and the company keeps its subject matter experts involved throughout the whole planning and deployment process.
2. Second is the company's emphasis on customer satisfaction. The company commits to the success of its engagements and will bend over backwards to ensure that a given job meets its customer's expectations. Customer satisfaction is a core value at *Evolving Solutions*.
3. Third, the company values its relationships with its vendor suppliers, and has forged strong relationships with its suppliers' technical experts – better enabling the company to build seamless, highly-integrated solutions.

With its technically strong personnel, with its emphasis on customer satisfaction at all costs, and with its strong supplier relationships, Midwest IT executives looking for an alternative to an OEM professional services engagement would be well served to evaluate the people, products and services offered by Evolving Solutions.



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