

Professional Services and Consulting for Government and Commercial Clients



Luis Riesco
President & CEO
Lumark Technologies, Inc.

CEOCFO: *Mr. Riesco, what is the focus at Lumark Technologies today?*

Mr. Riesco: The primary focus is on providing professional services to Federal Government clients. We also have a commercial practice providing process improvement support to Federal contractors to achieve formal quality recognition such as ISO certifications and CMMI ratings.

CEOCFO: *Would you give us an example of a typical engagement and something a little more outside the box?*

Mr. Riesco: We differentiate ourselves from Industry by providing standards-driven Advisory, Program and Project Management, Systems Engineering, Computer and other technical support services with a strong focus on helping our clients meet day-to-day operations and mission delivery goals. For example, we have Subject Matter Experts providing consulting-type support to assist a Federal client in meeting their Department, Agency and Government-wide governance (e.g. GAO, OMB) requirements and helping them perform at high productivity levels by leveraging Industry best practices and tools.

CEOCFO: *When might an agency turn to you?*

Mr. Riesco: One of the things we do by design is to leverage our expertise in quality standards as part of our standard delivery performance. After 16 years in business, our staff are trained to take advantage of these best practices and maintain a focus on efficiency and effectiveness. One of the realized benefits of this approach is high transparency and clear visibility in our work status and reporting. This really does give added value to our clients as opposed to our competitors who, at times, may be too heavy standard-centric and expend too much time on process. Lumark's balanced approach has many other advantages with the common goal to maximize our time spent on providing high-quality support services and assisting our clients with support to their end-user communities.

CEOCFO: *When a company is coming to you to potentially work for them or with them, do they understand the difference in your approach or is it something they realize after you have started to work with them?*

Mr. Riesco: At first, I am sure any new company would be skeptical about our quality standards approach and how best to apply this to project delivery. I think they are tickled afterwards. One of the critical success factors of our approach is how our staff at all levels leverage collaborative tools such as SharePoint. This is possible by Lumark's cutting edge IT infrastructure and private cloud implementation of a virtual workspace environment that enables our staff to work as a team from any location worldwide. Every Lumark project, including Corporate, has a SharePoint site to manage all aspects of service delivery, including client and subcontractor participation. Once they have been introduced to our methodology they (client, teammate) start seeing how some of these standard practices are integral to performing at a high capacity in our day-to-day work. Consequently, we are often asked to assist organizations with implementation of this approach, which was the motivator several years ago to provide this as a Commercial practice.

CEOCFO: *Give us an example of where it comes into play, how it comes into play and what you may or may not do?*

Mr. Riesco: One of the classic steps for any task at hand is to take the time to plan before performing the task. Most companies develop staffing plans and cost proposals aligned to top-level Statement of Work (SOW) or Performance Work Statement (PWS) task areas provided by a prospective client. We take a step further and this is where our best practices come into play. Our staff are trained to create a detailed Work Breakdown Structure (WBS) beyond what the client SOW/PWS provides to better understand what it takes to actually perform the work. This insight is so crucial to developing

strong technical and cost proposals or at times saying 'No Bid'. The added benefit of a WBS is also realized during project startup where both Lumark and Client can better manage delivery expectations with no surprises. In the Federal market place, past performance is so key to winning new work and continuing repeat business. Coincidentally, we are migrating this year to a Deltek accounting system where we put the WBS into the accounting system and track staff time against the WBS at any breakdown level during project startup, execution and closeout. This improvement gives our managers better insight to staff performance and, when necessary, the basis for making course corrections with the goal of optimizing their project delivery performance.

CEOCFO: How do you assess people who you are adding to the company so that they will really understand the philosophy?

Mr. Riesco: That is a great question. We go through a pretty detailed screening process because we are looking for people who, respectfully, not only understand that we are very standards driven, but at the same time know how to appropriately apply those standards and not spend too much time on process. Typically, we begin with a telephone interview to get an initial assessment of the applicant and their background and interest in the position. Based on this assessment, we may bring them in for a face-to-face interview to include testing them in work scenarios they may encounter and fluency in automation tools. At all times, we are very respectful and courteous. For example, with a potential project manager hire, we typically present a very high-level SOW and ask them on the spot to develop a WBS in Microsoft Project. That immediately tells us if they have a good understanding of what a WBS is and their fluency in MS Project. The things that they put into the WBS also convey their knowledge of management best practices and how they handle themselves on the fly, which is key for successfully supporting our clients in today's fast-moving pace.

"Lumark's 16 years of experience in providing professional services to C-level and Program/Project offices gives us a unique understanding of how to successfully deliver high-quality services and assist our clients in meeting regulatory and governance mandates, providing a value add that often separates us from our competitors." - Luis Riesco

CEOCFO: One of the areas that you cover is cyber security and risk mitigation, which is clearly front and center in many people's thoughts. How are you able to help companies in that arena?

Mr. Riesco: Cyber is very interesting especially with today's threats continually evolving. I have had the fortunate luck of bringing on board Doug DePeppe whom I have known throughout my childhood—funny how paths cross throughout life. Doug's experience includes providing advisory and risk management support to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and White House. His depth of experience is very long, but what is neat is that he has served in a Cyber counsel capacity. He brings this legal aspect to help clients better understand Cyber challenges and we have been leveraging this as a Lumark capability. This specialization is where we are very different from your traditional cyber security-type support contractor.

CEOCFO: What have you learned over time through working with the government?

Mr. Riesco: There are a couple things. For one, communication is key. The government, as any client, wants to know what is going on and wants to be appraised of the good and the bad, candidly, with no surprises, which I repeat quite often. Part of my job is to really assess customer satisfaction, and I accomplish this through regular client visits, attending meetings as well as to pop in and say hello. I also take this opportunity to ask our staff how things are going and ensure operations are running smoothly with a happy client. Sometimes they know they have a need for support, but often, they are not sure as to what extent. This is where I come in to help and offer advice with a sincere drive to support them.

Another success factor is to have the right staff in the right role. Everyone has strengths and weaknesses. The challenge is how to best balance those strengths and weakness. Our approach is simple, continually assess staff work performance, make changes when needed and mentor staff, including skills training for career growth. The result is kick-ass performance, continuous improvement and motivated staff, which translates into a very productive and rewarding work environment enabling us to win new and repeat work.

After 25 years of working as a contractor, I can say with confidence that Federal and Defense clients are always under scrutiny, which is not surprising as a taxpayer. They are always under the gun, figuratively, on what happens with respect to what they are doing, how much they are expending and many other mandates. Lumark's 16 years of experience in providing professional services to C-level and Program/Project offices gives us a unique understanding of how to successfully deliver and assist our clients in meeting regulatory and governance mandates, providing a value add that often separates us from our competitors.

CEOCFO: Do you see the commercial arena as a growing area for you?

Mr. Riesco: It is not a primary focus, but it happens to be an area where we have sustained growth for a long time. Since 1999 when Lumark was founded, process improvement was one of the first core capabilities and today an area where we have a global reputation. Lumark is a licensed CMMI Institute Partner authorized to provide training and appraisal services for CMMI formal ratings often used in Federal Government bidding requirements. We do not really market it too much but through repeat business and referrals, we continue to provide that service to clients within or entering the Federal market place. It also helps us remain current on best practices and share this across the company.

CEOCFO: Your Company has been recognized in the Inc. 5000, so we know business is good. How do you continue the trajectory and what might be different a year from now?

Mr. Riesco: As any business owner will note, getting good people aboard is one of the most important keys to success, but you also have to have some revenue growth. Without that growth, you don't have the funds to hire additional staff, a classic catch 22. I have been fortunate in the last couple of years to bring on board two VPs, who are very well experienced and who I can trust. One of them has a very strong technical background serving in a Chief Technology Officer role. The other has a very strong client and programmatic background serving in a Chief Operating Officer role. With continued growth, future goals include marketing to new client agencies, increasing our project support staff size, expanding career development opportunities and introducing new technologies for all staff to leverage. These are some of the steps forward and keys to success for any business at any size.

CEOCFO: Put it all together for our readers. Why choose Lumark Technologies?

Mr. Riesco: Lumark has been in business for 16 years and prides itself on being a mature and fiscally sound business. We are Better Business Bureau (BBB) accredited and have a bank line of credit, which is hard to get in today's economy. Lumark has amassed a great team of highly certified and educated staff with many skills and qualifications, including Federal Civilian and Defense security clearances. Many of our seasoned managers hold Project Management Professional (PMP) certifications among other specialized credentials. Our company-wide collaboration via SharePoint built on a cutting-edge private cloud infrastructure fosters a highly integrated and transparent work force able to work at any location. Put this all together and the result brings high-quality work performance to our clients with no surprises, who remain at all times the center of our driving focus.

Interview conducted by: Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor, CEOCFO Magazine



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Lumark Technologies, Inc.

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