Managed IT Services for Small Businesses

Jason Etheridge
President & CEO

CEOCFO: *Mr. Etheridge, what is Logic Speak?*
Mr. Etheridge: Logic Speak is a managed IT services provider dedicated to small businesses that are headquartered or located in and around the metro Atlanta, Georgia area.

CEOCFO: *What is your approach? What do you understand on fundamental level about managed services others may not?*
Mr. Etheridge: That is what separates us from our competitors - we focus on our client's as people. Our mission is to use our abilities and technology to have a positive impact on the lives of our clients and our employees. We want to have an impact on peoples' lives using what we know about technology and the technology that we provide. We use this mission as a measuring stick for everything we do. If it does not measure up, we just don't do it.

CEOCFO: *How does that play out day-to-day?*
Mr. Etheridge: The best example of this day-to-day is a concept I have coined "Technology Humility". Technology Humility is the idea that what we know and can do with technology does not make us somehow better or more important than our clients. They are good at being financial planners, engineers or attorneys-all things we aren't (and don't want to be) particularly good at. Some of the ways that this gets modeled in our client interactions are calling our clients instead of asking them to call us back, acknowledging that their time is just as valuable as ours by being on time for meetings, creating a culture that discourages talking negatively about our clients with fellow employees, and avoiding three letter acronyms and complicated techno-jargon.

CEOCFO: *When you are adding to your team, can you tell right away if someone will embrace your philosophy and culture?*
Mr. Etheridge: We used to think so. Over the years, we have found that to be one of the most difficult aspects of hiring and consequently one that we focus on as much or more than technical ability. We have developed our own hiring process that assesses our four most important characteristics – culture, character, chemistry and competence and it is important to note that technical proficiency (competence) is only a fourth of the equation. It is much easier to find a skilled technician than to find someone whose desire is to serve clients with technology.

CEOCFO: *Is there a common thread among your clients; who tends to turn to you for services?*
Mr. Etheridge: We focus primarily on business-to-business professional services companies like financial planning and accounting firms, engineering and law firms, because they share common technology needs and over the past 11 years solving their business problems with technology has become our core competency.

CEOCFO: *At what point might a company turn to you to be their trusted partner?*
Mr. Etheridge: To be honest, we get a fair amount of calls that start with "Help!" – as in "Help! Our server died and we have no idea how to fix it (and neither does our current IT guy) and Jim at ACME Financial Planners told us to call you." Because we focus so much on long-term, personal relationships with our clients and partners, they don't hesitate to recommend us when they hear of a company that needs our services. When that happens, we go in, save the day and have customer for life.

CEOCFO: *Do your customers take advantage of the full range of your services and recommendations?*
Mr. Etheridge: Actually, they do. We have designed our Logical Choice support package to not only provide support for our client's network, services and employees but also with our Cloud Services (backup, antispam, antivirus and

monitoring) at no additional cost. That way they know that with our support, their data is backed up and they are as protected from malicious emails and malware as much as physically possible. All under one roof!

CEOCFO: *Are people still lacking in knowledge in this area?*
Mr. Etheridge: In many ways, clients are much more knowledgeable about what they need to be able to succeed for their business and they don't have the time, patience or resources for technology that doesn't solve a business problem or need. Technology must provide value to their company-helping them to go home and see their kids soccer game, help them to be able to work from anywhere, making sure that a catastrophe doesn't wipe out their mission critical data that they have spent years building. Conversely, there is still a tremendous lack of maturity and knowledge regarding this "cloud" thing. There is still a great deal of confusion and misinformation about what the cloud actually is and whether they need it. Our industry unfortunately has not helped because in our haste to take advantage of this latest wave of trends, we've slapped the title "cloud" on everything that used to just be called the Internet. Most business owners just want to run their businesses and don't have the resources or desire to become cloud experts. What we are focusing on are being cloud experts, so that no matter the cloud vendor, service or solution, we can educate our customers on what they need to know and the right combination of cloud services for and that they can trust that we are making the right recommendations to solve the business problem. It is not just the cloud.

> **"If you are a company that needs a technology partner, do you want a company that wants your life to be better? If your answer is yes to that question, then you have to give us a look, because ultimately that is the only thing we are here to do." - Jason Etheridge**

CEOCFO: *Are there common areas that you find many of your clients do not pay attention to, such as security and disaster recovery?*
Mr. Etheridge: The top of the list is disaster recovery. Most small businesses are literally just trying to get through every day with fewer resources than they need and backups are just one of those things that are not real until there is a disaster. If you think about five to eight years ago, the pain that small businesses had to go through to make sure that their data was backed up - tapes that someone had to swap out over and over, label, take offsite and remember to bring back. It was maddening. Then we graduated to external hard drives which was an improvement, but it still required humans remembering to be part of the system. With our Cloud Backup solution (and others like it), backups have almost become "set it and forget it" (until you need it). Additionally, security is a double-edged sword. There is an old adage that the safest server is one that is turned off and locked in a closet, because that is the only way to make sure that a server is completely safe. Knowing how secure is secure enough for a small business is a question that is almost impossible for a business owner to answer so the tendency is to ignore it and just assume that everything is OK. That is never the right answer – just ask a few key retail giants how much that costs. Each business must weigh security solutions based on cost vs. risk and each industry is different. For a financial planning company, the impact of someone hacking into their network and stealing credit cards or sensitive personal information for client is huge and the risk is worth enhanced security practices and technology solutions. Companies that do not store sensitive or financial data, however, may have a lower risk (like a lawn service or small engineering company), but still need a base level of security to protect their data and employees. It takes a company like Logic Speak to advise them of what level of security they should be trying to hit and how much it will cost. Everyone knows that they have to have email and phones and cannot let them be down. They also realize that their servers need to be running and have access to their files but backup and security are the silent killers.

CEOCFO: *How do you keep up with technology and know what to keep on the radar screen?*
Mr. Etheridge: First and foremost, you have to love it. Technology changes so quickly that if you don't love it and love to learn you won't be able to keep up and it will quickly pass you buy. I once heard it said that the smartest people in the world don't know everything; they just know where to go to find the answer. That's a skill that we look for in our employees and try to continually develop-knowing when you don't know and who (or where) to ask for help.

CEOCFO: *What has changed for you over the years? How have you improved you process, offering and results?*
Mr. Etheridge: Every year when we have our company kickoff meeting, we have a word for the year. This year the word or the year is "growth". That is not just financial growth; it is actually growth at every level, all the way down to personal growth of each employee. We are designing training opportunities for our employees to learn new technologies, learn how to be a better leader or any other topic that they are interested in that will improve their lives. We are doing a great deal of mentoring and team building. We are laser focused on improving how we do IT service delivery to ensure that every client is taken care of and no one slips through the cracks. Over the years, I have become more and more convinced that as important as the service you provide (and sometimes more) it is critical that you get two things right – communication and

expectations. When you don't communicate with your clients and don't set their expectations correctly, you give them the permission to make them up on their own…which will cause both you and them nothing but frustration.

CEOCFO: *What would you like to be able to do with technology that has not been developed yet?*
Mr. Etheridge: Desktop computing in the cloud. We have VDI (or Virtual Desktop Infrastructure) but it has never lived up to its promise of reliability and maintainability for the small business market and comes with complicated and expensive server software and hardware. Having one desktop environment that looks and feels just like my local PC or laptop that is available anywhere on any platform is still a few years off.

CEOCFO: *Put it all together for our readers. Why choose Logic Speak?*
Mr. Etheridge: I would suggest for any company to ask their IT vendor what their mission is. I have tried this myself at various industry conferences and the most common responses I get are blank stares or "Obviously…to make as much money as possible!" followed by nervous laughter. I would then compare the answer to Logic Speak's mission and I'm confident any day of the week that ours wins any day of the week. We started our company in 2004 and in 2012 I had the opportunity to see our company through fresh eyes by buying out my business partner. It forced me to take a step back and ask the question…why are we here? I read our three paragraph mission statement on our website and it didn't mean anything. It was a check on a business plan task list, some 8 years earlier. I spent a great deal of time deciding what I wanted our new mission to be and making sure it flows through from my personal values and my personal mission. From that point forward, our employees have all had to memorize it; if you meet any one of them on the street, they can tell you why Logic Speak exists, what our mission is and how they fit in.

If you are a company that needs a technology partner, do you want a company that wants your life to be better? If your answer is yes to that question, then you have to give us a look, because ultimately that is the only thing we are here to do.

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