

IT Support for Government Agencies including Application Development, Systems Integration, Maintenance, and Modernization Solutions



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Interview conducted by:
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“B&A has a strong history of being successful in the government space. We have progressed as a small business into a mid-sized business. We are going to continue to invest in our people; we are going to continue to make this a desirable place to work, and continue to make our customers successful.”- Jonathan Evans

CEOCFO: Mr. Evans, what is the focus at Bart & Associates today?

Mr. Evans: We provide government clients with IT support services ranging from application development to systems integration and operations and maintenance support.

CEOCFO: Any particular agencies or types of projects of focus?

Mr. Evans: We got our start within what is now considered the Department of Homeland Security, so we continue to have a strong focus within DHS. Over the years, we have expanded that footprint to go across the majority of federal civilian agencies in Department of Commerce, Department of Interior, Department of Agriculture as well as the Department of Defense with clients such as Air Force, Navy and Army. Our focus is in four distinct areas: legacy systems modernization, SAP implementations, PeopleSoft HR implementations, and Oracle solutions.

CEOCFO: Are you encouraged that there will be a lot of modernization shortly?

Mr. Evans: We have had a strong history over the last six to eight years of modernization across DHS, and with the legacy modernization bill coming up we should continue to see quite a bit of legacy modernization across many agencies.

CEOCFO: How do you help an agency make the leap?

Mr. Evans: We come in from the beginning and partner with them. We are here to make them successful. Our team will come in and help whether it is at the beginning of defining requirements or picking up those requirements that were defined, laying out a roadmap for work to come and laying out where we need to go from there, and then executing on that roadmap. We have started to see a trend into agile development, which is development in smaller increments so the customer can realize benefits quicker and add more visibility into the development cycle. We certainly encourage customers to pursue that methodology as they embark on a legacy system modernization.

CEOCFO: Do you find that government employees are welcoming the changes or do they show reluctance?

Mr. Evans: I think with any contract, government or commercial, you are always going to have some resistance in folks that have done a certain thing the same way for many years. For the most part, when directive is given from the top down, folks are more open and excited about the change, and willing to work with you because they want their legacy to be part of that change. The approach we take when partnering with our customers, and making their vision our mission, helps support and ease that organizational change.

CEOCFO: *How do you help an organization define what they really need, not necessarily what they think they need?*

Mr. Evans: It starts with building rapport with the customer. Building that trust and credibility with them from day one and working with them to show the benefits of what is really needed and the tradeoffs - paring it back or looking at a smaller piece of work to get those quick wins and incremental deliveries that will gain them success and certainly increase our ability to deliver for them.

CEOCFO: *What might you look for that provides insight that is sometimes overlooked?*

Mr. Evans: I think in the government space, we are a little different in that the majority of work is awarded through the RFP cycle. As an RFP comes out, we are looking at all of the requirements defined in that RFP, making sure we ask the right questions if certain things are not defined. More importantly, it is about gaining that customer intimacy prior to a RFP being released - that we have some understanding of who the customer is, what they are looking for, and the direction they want to go. At the point where the RFP releases, hopefully we are confirming the intelligence we have gathered and then can respond accordingly to make sure we are delivering on what the customer truly is looking for.

CEOCFO: *When you are planning a system that will likely be in place for a fair amount of time, how do you take into account changes that happen in technology rather often?*

Mr. Evans: Over the last two years, we have made a significant investment in R&D. We have a separate group that is charged to continue to look at emerging technologies and technical solutions to try to stay ahead of the curve. At that point where we are coming into engage on a solution, there may be some better ways or more innovative technology to propose upfront. We make the most of our investment in R&D so we can give our customers recommendations that will last so they are not constantly making changes. With technology always evolving, you have to make sure you build and produce solutions that leverage open source and provide the ability to adapt. We want to build solutions that can evolve as needs change.

CEOCFO: *What do you look for in your people? What are the intangibles for someone representing Bart & Associates?*

Mr. Evans: Certainly we want to look for intelligent folks. We want to look for folks that are dedicated to moving customers' missions forward. We want to make sure they have the right technology skills; we want to make sure they have the right attitude. Our philosophy from the beginning has always been to do right by the customer first, and we will figure out the contractual and money later. We want folks that, if a customer asks them to do something, they are going to go off and do it, and we do not need to tell them, "Hold on, I need to get levels of approvals." We want that entrepreneurial thinker that has some vision, some innovation, has a well-rounded education and experiences that add value - not only to us as an organization, but to the clients we support.

CEOCFO: *Are people with that frame of mind easy or hard to find these days?*

Mr. Evans: I think it is becoming increasingly harder to find. There is a lot of opportunity out there, so for good folks, they have a lot of job options, if you will. We have to continue to invest in our people, continue to invest in our retention strategies and training to keep folks here, so when we do find a good candidate or resource, they don't continue to look for other opportunities. With the market today, there are certainly a lot more jobs than qualified individuals.

CEOCFO: *Are you able to ramp up as projects come in? Do you have a stand by staff?*

Mr. Evans: We have a mix. With the investment we have made in our R&D lab, we do have some folks available. As projects spin up, we are able to find resources, and as projects ramp down, our resources are able to come back and study up on new technologies or build proofs of concepts. We do have a small bench, if you will, of staff waiting in-between projects, and then for the most part we have a recruiting organization that has the right contact and network to rapidly staff up. Given the business we are in, and the 28 years we have been doing business with the federal government, we pride ourselves on understanding each one of our customers' ramp up processes, whether it includes a background investigation or a security clearance, we understand those intricacies of each client and make sure we are looking for them in our resources.

CEOCFO: *Do you need to do preparation for change of administration? How does that play out day to day for your organization?*

Mr. Evans: We are going to see some change. I think we may see some change in spending trends or different agencies having more or less money. For the most part though, the work we do and the mission critical systems we support are going to need to be supported regardless of the administration change.

CEOCFO: *Would you tell us about the recent contract with the Department of the Navy?*

Mr. Evans: We were awarded an IT professional services contract, with a focus on SAP, for the Commander, Navy Installations Command, Fleet & Family Readiness (CNIC F&FR) Department. There were five different awardees and we are one of three that was awarded all 15 task areas. We are looking forward to the release of these task orders in the coming year. We met with them recently and understand where their roadmap is going and the initiatives that are hot buttons.

CEOCFO: *Do you find that most agencies really want the best thing and get a bad rap?*

Mr. Evans: Folks want to do the right thing, and they certainly try to do the right thing. There is certainly a couple of bad projects that have given a bad rap for the entire government contracting industry. Overall, I think as individuals and as projects move to adopt Agile development, which has more incremental releases and gives visibility into the entire process on all sides - government, business, and the contractor - these longer duration projects, the ones that have failed, will go away because you are incrementally delivering success, you are incrementally delivering functionality, and everyone has true visibility into what is going on. There is not as much potential for long, drawn out development cycles to not get it right - everything is in time boxed cycles, and everyone should have full visibility into it.

CEOCFO: *Would you tell us about the GovStar Awards recognition?*

Mr. Evans: CEO Magazine and GovStar Awards has been a program that has gone on for many years in this area. A number of colleagues of ours have seen recognition in it. We were thrilled to be part of it. I think it recognizes the investment we have made in our people, the investment we have made in R&D, and certainly the commitment we have made to giving back to the community. It was an honor to be amongst the finalists, and I think everyone in that room and every company represented is doing great things in the government contracting market.

CEOCFO: *How do you spend your time as CEO? What do you focus on personally for the company?*

Mr. Evans: A little bit of everything. The main focus is really strategy and taking the company forward. With that comes some of the operational components, some of the sales and business development components. I want to give my people the right tools and partnerships so they can be successful. If we need to establish a partnership for a cloud provider, I am on the forefront trying to meet with the different companies to establish that relationship for our folks. I am here to support my staff and make sure they have the right tools, process and technology in place to be successful.

CEOCFO: *What is the takeaway for our readers - what should they remember about Bart & Associates, Inc.?*

Mr. Evans: B&A has a strong history of being successful in the government space. We have progressed as a small business into a mid-sized business. We are going to continue to invest in our people; we are going to continue to make this a desirable place to work, and continue to make our customers successful.

