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# **CEOCFO Magazine**

Helix TCS Inc is providing a Seed-to-Sale Critical Infrastructure Platform with Technology, Compliance and Security built in for the Global Legal Cannabis Industry from Retailers, Manufacturers and Growers to Government Contracts

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Interview conducted by: Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor CEOCFO Magazine

# CEOCFO: Mr. Ogur, would you tell us the concept behind Helix TCS?

Mr. Ogur: The concept is to provide critical infrastructure services to the global legal cannabis industry, so the TCS in our name stands for Technology Compliance Security. Today we offer a seed-to-sale software under the BioTrackTHC ® name. We have a security offering which is both guarding, monitoring, as well as the installation of security equipment. We have a wholesale marketplace, so the ability to transact between licensees and the wholesale market. We also, having tracked \$18 billion worth of transactions globally in the BioTrackTHC system, we have a large amount of data at our disposal, so that is something that will be used in the industry as well.

## CEOCFO: What is the competitive landscape?

**Mr. Ogur:** Because we compete in a number of verticals, we have a wide swath of competitors. The seed-to-sale space is clearly the most competitive. Within seed-to-sale three verticals, there are the government contracts, the retail or dispensary point-of-sale solution, and then there is the software for the backend, such as growers and manufacturers. We compete in all three of those markets and we believe we are either number one or number two, in each one.

On the government side, there are really three competitors which are us, Metrc and MJ Freeway. On the backend, the grower solution there are a couple of providers, and then the point-of-sale market tends to be far more populated, so us and MJ Freeway are probably the two big ones in terms of national exposure but there are dozens of either state specific or regional players as well.

# CEOCFO: How do you keep up with the challenge of new states, new regulations, and new tweaks that seem to be happening all the time in the cannabis arena?

**Mr. Ogur:** With respect to the states, one of the flip sides of governments, which tend not to be the fastest moving client bases, are that you do have time to see what regulatory regimes they are going to put in place, so we typically have time to adapt to them. We also certainly have our lobbying efforts to try to both educate as well as get regulators to put what we believe are the best client regimes in place. Just having been there and done that for over eight years on the BioTrack side, I suppose it is possible for states to come up with something we have not seen yet, but it is probably a low likelihood.

## CEOCFO: Would you tell us about the security part of what you offer and the recent acquisition?

Mr. Ogur: We started our security business in the Colorado about four years ago. We started one company and we bought another small company, so we have a couple of different security licenses. We focused initially on guarding. We

almost exclusively hire former military and former police officers. We also drug test our security personnel. I know that sounds a little counterintuitive given our client base, but the fact of the matter is that it is important for everyone to be clear-headed when they are responsible for protecting other people and businesses. After about a year and a half, we also acquired a small company that focused on the installation and monitoring of security equipment, alarms, cameras, security doors, etc. We are now able to offer a full suite of security services.

In Colorado, we went from non-existent to the leading provider of cannabis security services and drove one or two of our competitors out of business in the process. We recently, on April 1<sup>st</sup>, made an acquisition in California. The thesis there was that after a couple of years, the regulations in the state of California were finally getting promulgated and the local authorities were also starting to enforce those regulations and laws. There was an opportunity finally to get involved. It was a build-or-buy decision and given the length of time it takes to get a security license in the state of California, we made the decision to just buy a small company and use that as our growth platform in the state.

# CEOCFO: Would you give us an example of what is different about your solutions?

**Mr. Ogur:** On the security side, I think it is very clearly who we are hiring as well as our training. Where many of our competitors provide eight or ten hours of training, we provide forty hours of training to our employees before we put them in the field. Also, our Director of Security Operations, Grant Whitus, was a leading SWAT commander in the state of Colorado and was one of the first men in the door in Columbine, many years ago. I think from that perspective our clients are clearly getting some of the highest caliber security services around, which is necessary for a highly targeted product like cannabis.

"We have hit on the right strategic vision at the company level, which is providing the critical infrastructure platform to the licensees in this industry, to allow them to focus on their core competencies, so if they are growers they can focus on growing and they know that Helix will take care of all the other critical infrastructure aspects of their business and they can be comfortable knowing that several critical boxes are checked."- Scott Ogur

On the seed-to-sale side, with BioTrackTHC, clients are getting an incredibly robust system, very strong back end reporting capabilities, a secure system that has a history, from the governments especially, of delivering on-time and on-budget. We are actively at work on a second generation of the software which will maintain those same qualities while also improving the user interface and the front end and ease-of-use, for the budtender at the dispensary or the pro who is physically using the software day-to-day.

# CEOCFO: Are many of your clients taking advantage of a range of your services?

**Mr. Ogur:** A number are. The security services are fairly localized at this point, to Colorado and California. Within those markets, we have clients that are both security clients as well as using the BioTrackTHC software. As we look forward, we expect to be able to cross-sell some of our other services, especially in the wholesale marketplace.

We have an agreement signed to acquire Amercanex International Exchange and we are hoping to close that pending a few prerequisites being met this month. However, the ability to integrate the BioTrackTHC and Amercanex platforms is already underway. When that is complete, clients will be able to seamlessly manage their business and manage their inventory in one place.

#### CEOCFO: What do you look at when considering an acquisition?

**Mr. Ogur:** The most important thing is typically the technology, but certainly the business itself is a critical infrastructure, a service to the industry. For instance, we are not necessarily interested in providing commodities like fertilizer or light bulbs, but when Amercanex came along, that was something that we thought was truly critical to the industry to be able to properly manage their inventory and to most efficiently transact on a wholesale basis. Ideally, we also like to find management that we can keep in place, who are receptive to the ideal of being part of a larger organization and willing to grow with the company and truly understand that one plus one equals three if they are part of the Helix platform.

# CEOCFO: What is your international approach?

**Mr. Ogur:** We offer the software globally. BioTrackTHC has clients in six countries today. We have announced that the former president of Mexico Vicente Fox is joining our board of directors. We are just finishing up the paperwork. In terms of where we see this industry going, certainly south is an area that we find is extremely important. We have spent a lot of time in Uruguay, Columbia, Mexico, and we have a development hub for software down in Argentina. We see what is happening down there in terms of the growing but also the manufacturing.

It is pretty clear that South America is looking to be not just a provider of raw material but a provider of oil and processing the plant, so generating higher value for themselves. We are keeping an eye on what is happening over in Europe and the Canadians as well. As we look at especially the Americanex offering, we see a huge opportunity to be able to offer that wholesale marketplace on an international scale.

# CEOCFO: Your company is growing leaps and bounds; how do you stay focused when there are is so much going on at Helix itself, let alone the industry?

**Mr. Ogur:** I think the first foundation of that is who we have on staff. We have an extremely qualified director of operations for our security business, so day-to-day our CEO, Zachary L. Venegas and I, we do not have to worry what is happening. We have weekly calls and we stay up to speed. We look at our KPI (Key Performance Indicator) every month, but day-to-day we know our COO, Grant Whitus, has the security business nailed down. Similarly, on the BioTrackTHC side, Patrick Vo, president of our BioTrackTHC subsidiary, Moe Afaneh the COO of BioTrack, the CTO, David Terrell, they know this business and have been running it for years and we trust them to continue to do so.

We provide the strategic oversight and certainly the decision to bring development of 2.0 down into Argentina, which is an area where I think at the corporate level, we add value to the BioTrackTHC organization. However, by having the right people and the right key performance indicator reporting going on, it allows Zac and I to focus on the more strategic level items, such as capital formation and strategic acquisitions.

# CEOCFO: What challenges are on your radar screen?

**Mr. Ogur:** I think the competitive landscape is always one challenge that we have to constantly be scanning on the horizon. There are obviously a lot of competitors out there and a lot of money chasing deals. As we are looking at strategic acquisitions we have to be careful that we are making the right strategic decisions and not competing in large auction type processes for assets that we are paying the right price, I think that is important in delivering shareholder value, and then just looking forward in terms of how quickly this industry changes.

When we first got into this four to five years ago, Zach and I were thinking of this as the US cannabis industry and it became clear quickly that this was going to be an international global industry. Being able to pivot and address the global landscape in the right time, and it has to be in the foreseeable future that you can act on something. If something is coming three years from now, you have to be aware of it but at the same time you have to execute between now and then on other priorities to make sure you are in the right position. Just keep an eye on the future but also the likelihood and timing of things playing out.

## CEOCFO: When you participate a conference, how does Helix TCS standout?

**Mr. Ogur:** I think that we try to cherry-pick a little bit, which conferences we attend so that we are not in a situation where we are competing for air time with hundreds and hundreds of other businesses because I think that is a bit of a loser's game. When we do go, we certainly want to have an important speaking position and we want to be able to demonstrate our thought leadership in the space and we do our best to set up a couple key meetings around the edges of these conferences. It is often the case that they tend to be like these "Speed Dating" things on the side and so we make sure that we are smart about our time and who we are meeting with.

I think it is important to engage, especially when you are speaking, it is easy to be dry and just sort of spout facts. It is usually Zac who does the speaking and he is far better at it than I am. I think he does a good job of demonstrating his thought leadership and where we are in the industry ecosystem but also delivering it with the right amount of humor and audience engagement, so that we leave them remembering Helix in a positive way.

#### CEOCFO: Why should both the cannabis and investment communities pay attention to Helix TCS?

**Mr. Ogur:** I think we have hit on the right strategic vision at the company level, which is providing the critical infrastructure platform to the licensees in this industry, to allow them to focus on their core competencies, so if they are growers they can focus on growing and they know that Helix will take care of all the other critical infrastructure aspects of their business and they can be comfortable knowing that several critical boxes are checked.

From a leadership perspective you are betting on or investing with a team that has been together. Zac and I have been together for over sixteen years in any number of frontier markets, frankly before I think frontier markets was a term, and we have the ability to scan the strategic horizon, make some good decisions, and be prudent in terms of capital allocation. I think we have demonstrated a strong ability to do those things and focus on growing this business to generate value for all of our shareholders and stakeholders.