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BizAnalytica – helping Corporations Modernize their Data Environment and take advantage of Newer Data and Cloud Technologies



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"It's funny: the overused term right now in the market is 'everything is data driven,' but in truth, most businesses can't get to the data to actually BE data-driven." Mark Shirman

CEOCFO: Mr. Shirman, what is BizAnalytica, and what attracted you to take on the role of CEO?

Mr. Shirman: BizAnalytica is a consulting company, helping corporations modernize their data environment. As people are moving to the cloud more and more for their own infrastructure needs and for flexibility, we are helping them through that journey. We solve the technology problems that arise when transforming your data infrastructure, and we do so with world class technology partners. We help customers get results.

BizAnalytica has been around for almost four years. It was growing very well under the direction of the three founding partners, but they were looking for ways to scale and grow the business. I did a little consulting with them early on and got to know them well. My background is building and scaling services companies, so while the technologies might be different, a lot of the fundamentals are the same.

The company has great bones and big customers, particularly in the Northeast. We work with brand-names like Staples and Fidelity. Now, we need to make sure all things necessary to scale in terms of people and process are put in place. I spent time getting to know and respect this team, and that is why I came onboard.

CEOCFO: *When you actually took on the role, and I understand you worked with them before and did your due-diligence, what did you find that surprised you about the day-to-day operation?*

Mr. Shirman: You have three really smart guys who built a great lifestyle business but had never grown a company or built a company before. Some of the basic fundamentals - like back-office processes, management of legal transactions - were handled on an ad hoc basis. It was a little bit like when you rehab a house and you pull a wall down, you go "oh really, I did not expect to find that behind it." It is nothing major but all things that needed to be addressed. We have taken on that challenge.

CEOCFO: *When might an organization turn to BizAnalytica; what might they ask you do and how do you help them?*

Mr. Shirman: People will turn to us because they decided to leave some of the legacy technologies behind and hold on to old databases. There used to be data warehouses in Teradata or Oracle, and they want to move to Amazon or Microsoft Azure or some other cloud. Our customers want to take advantage of all the benefits of newer data and cloud technologies but they are not sure how to get there. They have a lot of data and embedded knowledge in their teams, and they need a "sherpa" to guide them through the journey of transforming their data environment. That's when they call us.

We start by asking a bunch of questions, gathering as much data as we can early in the conversations. A first in-depth meeting, virtually or in-person, is typically a whiteboard session. We talk about how they want to get from point A to point B, and decide the technology hurdles and the business objectives they want to achieve in terms of getting there.

If we're all comfortable moving forward, we start with a small engagement. Usually, it's defining the strategy and building a draft of a detailed work plan so they understand how long and how much money it is going to take to get from point A to point B. Once the roadmap is agreed to, we work closely with their in-house team to make it happen.

CEOCFO: *How do you help a company understand what they want to achieve, how are you able to encourage them and help them recognize what they should know already but probably do not?*

Mr. Shirman: It's funny: the overused term right now in the market is 'everything is data driven,' but in truth, most businesses can't get to the data to actually BE data-driven. And understandably so, because there is so much data out there and it resides in so many different areas. More often than not, business units already ask for certain kinds of data so they can analyze trends and stats for growth, profit or market segmentation, but they do not know where they can get it from.

There are so many different data silos in an organization - ERP, CRM, specialized software - and we help customers pull that together. The business side has this need, and we help them design the vision, then collaborate with the IT guys to deliver to the business.

CEOCFO: *What might you look at about an organization to figure out the best solution for them that less experienced people do not recognize is important?*

Mr. Shirman: I often talk about our differentiation: if your water heater is broken, you can bring in a general contractor and hope that they know enough about fixing water heaters and you are ok, or you can bring in a specialist, an HVAC guy, because that is all they do. That is us - not for HVAC, of course, but we are your data sherpa. We understand data and cloud technologies because we have been working with them for a long time.

We have gone through this journey multiple times, and we have seen the mistakes businesses make. Our people have been part of this process before, so they intimately understand the common pitfalls - pitfalls that are both technical and organizational. This makes us uniquely qualified to lead teams through the transformation process from the business side of the house through to the technology end.

CEOCFO: *When you are crafting a solution for a client, how do you know when a company that you might want to use for the solution, is starting to change from being really up-to-date to slipping?*

Mr. Shirman: Turnover is common in tech companies, and technology is always changing, so effectively you can always find a better solution in some way, shape or form, but continually switching is an expensive approach. We recommend customers go with the tools that are well-established and reliable, as well as investing in their R&D. The top companies continue to evolve and you get to evolve with them. Strong tech solutions usually support companies for several business cycles.

CEOCFO: *How do you help your clients get over some of the trepidation of making a change?*

Mr. Shirman: There is understandably some trepidation and we take a "train the trainer" approach. More often than not, and especially with larger customers, we are working hand-in-hand with their own IT staff. Part of the process is to make sure that they are up-to-speed on the solution we're implementing and that they can manage it on their own. We schedule constant check-ins, such as quality business reviews and quarterly business reviews. We use these as opportunities to provide program updates as well as to hear what their challenges are and note successes. Based on what we learn in these conversations, we offer them advice and guidance. Sometimes this is not a paid forum because our role is to be a trusted advisor and we cannot always have our hand out to do it. We have long-term trusted relationships with our customers even if there is no economics involved.

CEOCFO: *Are there particular industries that tend to look at BizAnalytical more?*

Mr. Shirman: It was not a deliberate initial strategy, but it worked out for us there is more in financial services and healthcare. This makes a lot of sense since these are the businesses where the most amount of data is being collected and can be very highly distributed in many different forms and platforms.

CEOCFO: *How do world events affect what you are doing?*

Mr. Shirman: The biggest thing that affects us and our customers is what happens in the labor market. The skills we have are in high-demand, so the ability to attract quality talent to accommodate working remotely affects us more than inflation or gas prices. I do not trivialize that but the value we are creating is way above that noise, so it is really about people and how we can attract and retain the best talent. We put a lot of effort and focus there.

CEOCFO: *Why do people want to work at BizAnalytica?*

Mr. Shirman: We attract a lot of people from large consulting places where they are just one cog in a very big machine. In our business, every employee gets to make a difference. We are a nimble and growing team who enjoys collaborating. Technical people love learning from other technical people. You want to create that environment where people feed off of one another.

You have to treat them well and pay them well. That is important, but really, you want to create a work environment that inspires people to learn and gives them the opportunity to make a difference. That is why they come here.

CEOCFO: *Do you find that when business is tough, companies may turn to you more because they need to make changes to keep up, or do tight money times prevent companies from looking at change?*

Mr. Shirman: It goes both ways. We have situations where they bring in a CIO who is a visionary and all the people on his or her staff have been there for twenty years, and they just do not want to change. In some situations, and more often these days, you have CEOs who might not even be IT folks, but they are driving change both from a flexibility as well as a cost standpoint. It is a conglomeration of things that are very customer specific.

CEOCFO: *What is next for BizAnalytica?*

Mr. Shirman: We are continuing to execute and grow. We are doubling down on our people; we are doubling down on attracting great people because that is how a business like ours grows while delivering top quality services. We are building intellectual property so that we can support our customers in a secure, efficient and automated way.

We spend time and effort with our key technology partners. For example, I am answering these questions from the Snowflake Conference. We add value to them and they add value to us.

So growing our people, expanding our IP to drive smarter services, and driving tight partnerships is where we will be for the next two years.

