



INFOTECH Builds a New Business with Axiant

How to succeed in business—first anticipate a need and identify a market, then build a better product and show it to the world. That's the story so far for INFOTECH Solutions, a Cognos VAR based in Westbrook, Maine.



The company was started just two years ago by six people, all with backgrounds in the telecommunications industry. They were betting on two things—the continued growth of competition in wireless telephony, and the growth in demand for portable phones, fuelled by the introduction of personal communications systems.

Wireless phones aren't just for business executives in big cities. In rural America, portable phones are sometimes the only phones available, and they're becoming increasingly popular. With the breakup of the big phone company monopolies and the proliferation of cellular, many small companies sprang up offering telecommunications services—and that's where INFOTECH comes into the picture.

Their product is a "telecommunications customer care and billing system." Bill Oliver, INFOTECH's Vice President of Operations, says their system not only keeps track of billings, it maintains a profile of every customer. When a customer calls with a problem, the operator can access all the information on that customer instantly for faster service.

Axiant Flexibility

The original system was developed using Axiant, HP UX, and Sybase. "We began developing this system even before the Telecommunications Act was passed because we anticipated this growth," Oliver says. "We knew the industry was going to be highly volatile. That's why we chose Axiant... we needed the flexibility of Axiant to make changes to the system quickly."

The latest version of the system has 168 screens, and it's still growing. Oliver recalls they ran into some issues with Axiant during the early stages of development. But he says "those are behind us now. We got Axiant 4GL in August and that's made a big difference. We're also developing batch processes using PowerHouse 8."

Because the system uses Sybase, INFOTECH is able to bundle Impromptu with their product. That's unusual—most vendors charge phone companies a fee for providing the kind of information that INFOTECH's customers can now obtain for themselves.

"With Impromptu, our customers can do their own reporting," Oliver says. "At first the customers weren't too sure about that, but once they start using Impromptu, they find they can extract from the system whatever they want, and they're really happy with it. And if they want to make it look pretty, we'll give them PowerPlay too."

Market is Unlimited

The market for INFOTECH's system is the small and medium-sized telecommunications carrier. In less than a year they've signed up customers in Maine,

Infotech Solutions, Inc.

West Virginia, and Nebraska. "We saw that smaller companies were being neglected," Oliver explains. "The big billing companies are primarily interested in major carriers serving large markets. There is a real need for this kind of service to help smaller companies compete. PCS is bringing out even more new players. I believe the market is unlimited."

The product has been very well received at national trade shows, such as the recent PCS exhibition in Dallas. Some potential customers were so impressed they wanted to buy the system on the spot. "You can't buy the product on a CD," Oliver says. "We're not at that stage of development yet, but we're moving in that direction. As a company we're constantly looking for new ways of doing things, and the flexibility offered by Axiant 4GL and PowerHouse 8 will help us stay out in front."

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