

Client Profile

Learn how real businesses achieved success in their industries through innovative strategies such as expansion into new markets, new and differentiated product and service offerings, enhancing operations and cash flow management.

Staying focused and flexible is key to success for Alberta technology consultants

Despite being a consulting company that specializes in data management technology for Alberta's oil and gas industry, Calgary-based iSolutions Inc. doesn't own much technology of its own and that's one of the secrets of its success.

"Even though we are a technology company, we went with infrastructure as a service and software as a service," said Dapo Badmus, one of the company's four founding partners. "We leverage a lot of Microsoft cloud services and we use Amazon web services. All of our internal servers are actually in the cloud."

He said not hosting the technology internally saves them from dedicating resources to manage it and gives them the flexibility to scale their business up or down as required, something that's vital in a boom and bust industry like oil and gas.

"It allows for scalability," he said. "We're currently looking at employing the services of some integrators and developers that are fairly remote, in different geographical regions and time zones, to help with some of the work we're doing and we're not really seeing any challenges in being able to do that because of the cloud infrastructure that we adopted in our early stages."

The cloud technology gives iSolutions the added flexibility to allow employees to work remotely and to work hours outside of the traditional nine-to-five, which is an incentive for many, added Badmus.

While the bulk of iSolutions' clients are in Alberta, they also have an office in Houston, where they are looking to expand more into the American market, and one in eastern Canada to service customers extracting offshore oil in Newfoundland.

iSolutions employs about 50 people and specializes in designing, implementing and supporting real-time, historian based, reporting and integration solutions for oil, gas and utility companies.

"What makes us unique from other data management companies is we focus specifically on real-time data management which is basically data that comes from any kind of real-time devices like sensors, field meters, control systems or anything out in the field sending real-time data," said Badmus. "We specialize in being able to connect to those devices and centralize that data into a large data repository so we can do analytics and build some intelligence out of that data and turn it into useful information that we can present to our clients to be able to make informed decisions."



iSolutions founding partners (left to right) Roger Chow, Anil Datto, Dapo Badmus and Stephen Park. Colleen De Neve, Freelance for National Post.



The four partners had earlier worked for another company in a similar space, but when it was acquired by a rival organization they saw a niche opportunity and iSolutions was born in 2007, said Roger Chow, another of the founding partners.

“We noticed a gap in the solutions space now that no one was addressing real-time analytics,” explained Chow. “Our vendor neutrality was a good niche to provide these services to these customers.”

iSolutions doesn’t actually have any off-the-shelf software products, but instead works with major technology suppliers and customizes and supports solutions for its customers.

“Our key differentiator is we are vendor neutral,” said Chow. “We are not tied to any one vendor although we have strategic partnerships with the best of breed in storage, analytics and visualization components. We have the flexibility to partner with the best and implement the best solution for our clients regardless of what vendor or systems they use.”

When the price of oil peaked in 2014, iSolutions was generating about \$10 million in annual revenue. When oil prices fell, so did their revenue, but it has been gradually recovering, partially from their decision to diversify into other industries.

“The oil and gas sector has been pretty stagnant so over the last couple of years we tried to diversify,” said Chow. “We’ve increased our revenue from other industries such as pipelines, power plants, utilities and mining so we’ve tried to become a lot less oil dependent,”

“We are trying to diversify, but we are still trying to contain that somewhat,” added Badmus, explaining that they didn’t want to go too far off the page and we’re focusing on building expertise in related industries like renewable energy.

“Staying focused is very important. It’s one of the things that has always kept us going,” said Badmus. “We’re trying to stay abreast of our vertical and industry so we’re actively listening to potential disruptors and using that to adjust and align our strategic road map of where we want to be in two to five years.”

CIBC Tips – Ensure Your Business is Flexible

Adopt Innovation: A flexible company responds to change and adopts new technology and processes in order to ensure they stay competitive. They are open to new ways of doing things even if the old ways are working just fine. You can do this by staying in touch with client needs, knowing what your competitors are doing or even looking for developments in other industries that can be applied in yours.

Explore New Markets: A flexible company is willing to carefully diversify to help their business grow. Look for new market opportunities for your products / services in other geographic regions or industries and use your core skills to offer complementary business services.

Financial Flexibility: Recognizing that cash flow is the bloodline of all businesses, a flexible company considers options when it comes to managing their finances. Keeping a close on eye on the cash moving in and out of the organization can mean the difference between you and your competitors. Work with a financial advisor to take a forward look at your finances, so you can get in front of cash shortages and take advantage of surpluses.

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