IT Dependability at a Predictable Cost

Bryley Systems provides dependable results from your technology investment at a predictable cost. Our mission:

- Manage the IT needs and infrastructure of our clients.
- Optimize the performance and reliability of this technology.
- Secure systems data from internal and external threats.

We are a full-service partner, fulfilling the information-technology needs of our clients throughout New England and the continental United States since 1987.

Our certified engineers and account executives, guided by seasoned management, approach each client's requirements individually, combining brand-name equipment and software with flexible service options and custom-fit support agreements.

Interview conducted by: Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor, CEOCFO Magazine

Gavin Livingstone
President & CEO

CEOCFO: *Mr. Livingstone, what is the concept at Bryley?*
Mr. Livingstone: At Bryley Systems we provide IT dependability at a predictable cost. We have been an organization in the IT industry since 1987. We provide our clients with a full-service solution that includes the entire package of consulting, hardware and software components, deployment, and ongoing, proactive maintenance.

CEOCFO: *What has changed in your concept over the years?*
Mr. Livingstone: The hardware and software sales have shrunk as a percentage of the total overall sales while managed IT services have risen dramatically.

CEOCFO: *Who is your typical customer?*
Mr. Livingstone: We target organizations in the 25 to 85 technology user range. They can be from manufacturing, financial services, regional government, and other industries. We are typically in the New England region but we are also national in some of our services.

CEOCFO: *Why do you like that range?*
Mr. Livingstone: Organizations with 25 to 85 users must decide whether to invest in IT staff or to bring in outside support. They might hire a high-end technical person who has to change the paper in a printer or an entry-level person that does not have the depth of experience to be able to craft an appropriate solution. Because we have a diverse group of technical folks from high-end consultants and engineers to mid-range technicians, we can provide the full range of IT services from developing the high-end strategic plan to supporting the needs of the end users.

CEOCFO: *Do you do much onsite work these days?*
Mr. Livingstone: That has changed dramatically as well. It was kind of a mainstay in the eighties and nineties. I think it has gone from 80% visit rate down to under 10%.

CEOCFO: *Do you like that?*
Mr. Livingstone: I know it allows our technical staff to be much more effective; they can address an issue remotely and oftentimes fix it right then.

CEOCFO: *How do you maintain the personal relationship you want with your clients when there is less face-to-face contact?*
Mr. Livingstone: We visit with our premiere clients to maintain constant contact through a business review, which is typically quarterly or annually. We are constantly reaching out to them to get in front of them at their interest and their convenience.

CEOCFO: *Do your customers tend to go with your recommendations and are there areas where in general they do not see the needs quite the way that you do?*
Mr. Livingstone: Flexibility is a key area; for some clients, for example the Worcester Regional Transit Authority, we are their IT department and we provide them with soup-to-nuts service. Other organizations that have internal IT staff, we supplement this staff, typically on the high-end issues (virtualization, Cloud initiatives, etc.). At the WRTA, we do everything and yes, they go with our solutions since we present the business advantages based on the solution and its investment. When we are supplementing an IT staff, we typically profile a couple of options because we are dealing with folk that have the technology background to dig into the technical options and analyze their costs versus benefits.

CEOCFO: *Is government a big segment for you?*
Mr. Livingstone: It is probably about 10% of our business at this point and growing.

CEOCFO: *There are usually some challenges working with government agencies on any level. What do you understand about the process which makes it easier?*
Mr. Livingstone: We understand the constraints of government agencies and what they are trying to accomplish in the bid process since price is a huge consideration. We define the solution, but specify areas where the client can go out and acquire the pieces where they need to do so on a lowest-price basis.

CEOCTFO: *How do you reach out to potential clients and what is the geographic range for you?*
Mr. Livingstone: We are primarily New England, although we have a number of clients across the nation using our Managed IT Services. We typically reach out to potential clients through networking events, but more so now through social media. Since 1998, we have been sending an online newsletter each month to our clients and prospects, which forms the basis of our blog and social-media posts.

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CEOCFO: *How do you address the New England Psyche?*
Mr. Livingstone: We find the folks that we work with are hard working. They are typically on a tight schedule and want things done right, reasonably and quickly. They also tend to form long-term relationships and this is one of our key focal areas. I think with these people and particularly with the break of winter into spring they are charging forward and trying to make things happen.

CEOCFO: *Are there several areas that you would like to venture into or services you would like to offer?*
Mr. Livingstone: We are focusing on the regional transit authorities throughout New England. We have been reaching out to these organizations and have been very successful. For example, the WRTA has over 25 unique software systems from bus maintenance through kiosks, but also needs the basic software to manage the operations and to manage employees with many human resource issues. What we found in the past was that every vendor had a box, which they would dump it into the datacenter, salute, and then walk out the door. We were able to bring that entire infrastructure together and virtualize it. We then built a highly available infrastructure and secured it. We also maintain relationships with the different software vendors and help them build their environments, but we keep a close eye on the structure and its management.

CEOCFO: *Is it because of the more advanced technology that now is the time to look at more of the regional transit people?*
Mr. Livingstone: Nationally, transportation has gained a ton of interest. There is a lot of discussion and it looks like more money will be flowing into this area. The answer is yes in terms of your suggestion with the technology, virtualization and storage areas networks because they are videotaping on each bus every day and all that video has to be retained for a period of time with the capabilities that exists today, both on premise and in the Cloud.

CEOCFO: *Do you find that the potential customers understand this and are ready to move out of what they have or is it still an education process?*
Mr. Livingstone: We are constantly educating our clients and prospects. There is a great deal of discussion about the Cloud, mobile devices, and security and there are many different perspectives on what people should do and why and how.
CEOCFO: *When you are speaking with potential clients, what is the key to understanding what they need as opposed to what they think or say they need?*

Mr. Livingstone: Listening is always the first step, but we have a three-part fundamental. There is management of the infrastructure, it should also be optimized in terms of reliability and performance, and the infrastructure has to be secure; we always bring these three components – manage, optimize, and secure – into every conversation. We also listen to hear what they define as their strong points.

CEOCFO: Does your history matter to people or is it all about what you are able to do for them now?
Mr. Livingstone: Longevity does bring a level of interest, but it is our business and technical knowledge and capabilities that make the difference.

CEOCFO: *What do you look for in your people?*
Mr. Livingstone: This is a technology-dominated area and the folks that are attracted to IT tend to love the technology; they know what it can do and they are fascinated by all its different aspects. It is difficult to bring that out into the real world because it is a different conversation and language. We look for people with personality, intelligence, and a willingness to work hard. Their technical background is not as important to us as their match to our key values.

CEOCFO: *How is business these days?*
Mr. Livingstone: We hit our stride over the last few years and are looking for significant growth this year as well.

CEOCFO: *Why pay attention to Bryley?*
Mr. Livingstone: I would say longevity of not only the company but within our employee structure. We have a third of the folks that have been with us for over fifteen years and over one-half have been with us at least five years. Our clients are also typically long-term relationships.

BIO: With over 30 years of experience in Information Technology, Mr. Livingstone has extensive knowledge of leading-edge technologies and business-productivity tools.

In 1987, he founded Bryley Systems Inc., a Managed IT Services firm, and has successfully steered Bryley to continuous, profitable growth with over 200 clients throughout central New England and the continental United States.

Mr. Livingstone holds an MBA from Boston College and is a Novell Master Certified Netware Engineer and a Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer.

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