

**Technology and Innovation focused IT Services for the
Public Health Sector, Financial and National Security Industries**



Ahmad Abuzaakouk
CEO

“As long as we focus on our strategy and our game plan, we have the capability to compete with anyone. I do not know who my competitors are, or will be, so I am not going to worry about trying to find out and scout them out. I am going to focus on performing and executing at the highest level so that when we face competition and adversity, we are prepared, and can persevere, especially because we adhere to processes and practices that mitigate risk and sustain the company.”- Ahmad Abuzaakouk

CEOCFO: Mr. Abuzaakouk, your website indicates Concept Plus is “transforming concepts into solutions”. How so?

Mr. Abuzaakouk: We are a small IT services company with a focus on technology and innovation. The tagline of “transforming concepts into solutions” is a philosophy that we adhere to within the firm. Our approach is to evaluate and understand our customers’ business requirements, irrespective of technology. Many times, technology is at the forefront of business discussions even though the technical staff is not present. We really focus on understanding the business requirements of our customers. We then apply technology based on our software methodology to facilitate rapid implementation that results in successful and scalable solutions. This is what “transforming concepts into solutions” means.

CEOCFO: What is the key to understanding what a company really needs?

Mr. Abuzaakouk: I believe the key is to really put yourself in their shoes, try to understand their mission and how we can support them and make them successful in achieving their goals. One of the areas that we have been successful in, is that we focus on specific industries whereby we have domain knowledge or “street credit”. It is really hard to understand what our customers’ needs are if we have not been in their shoes, and I think that is the key. We really try to strive to understand their needs and

Concept Plus
For more information visit:
www.conceptplusllc.com

Contact:
Ahmad Abuzaakouk
Phone: 877.678.4660
Email:
aabuzaakouk@conceptplusllc.com

map to our know-how and talent and help them to understand the domain so that we are not pitching a product but rather we are taking them from A to Z, building their and our capacity, making them sustainable and successful for the future.

CEOCFO: *What industries are of focus for Concept?*

Mr. Abuzaakouk: Our primary focus is in the public healthcare sector, and financial and national security industries.

CEOCFO: *With so much regulation and so many changes that might happen, how do you keep ahead? How are you able to incorporate potential change into helping a company when there are so many iffy things going on, particularly these days?*

Mr. Abuzaakouk: How do I manage the unknowns? First and foremost, I work with smart people. From my compliance to my contract staff, they are experienced professionals within their respective industry and participate in many industry day sessions and government meetings; helping them solve their problems and things of that nature. From a company's perspective, you do not know what you do not know, and I realize that. As I try to forecast, project and run an organization there are certain variables we do not control, such as the changes in the economy, the changes in regulation, and what goes on in D.C. The best thing I can do as a company is try to mitigate that risk of the unknown. The way we mitigate risk is to prepare ourselves internally so we have the right staff, adequate or sufficient knowledge of the potential changes, and we can prepare to handle a change when it comes. I use an analogy with my staff that I treat the company and my executives like the assistant coaches of a basketball team. As long as we focus on our strategy and our game plan, we have the capability to compete with anyone. I do not know who my competitors are, or will be, so I am not going to worry about trying to find out and scout them out. I am going to focus on performing and executing at the highest level so that when we face competition and adversity, we are prepared, and can persevere, especially because we adhere to processes and practices that mitigate risk and sustain the company.

CEOCFO: *When you are speaking with a prospective client, is there an aha moment when they understand the depth and breadth of what you offer and the difference in your approach?*

Mr. Abuzaakouk: When I speak with prospective customers and clients, I really try to listen to their needs. I rarely try to pitch anything initially because I think the most important thing is actively listening, understanding and collecting all the information they identify as risks, and discussing their plans for growth, and ways of supporting their mission. We do not propose solutions immediately, because we are really not doing them any favors. After several discussions with them, we will start to propose innovative ways of addressing their needs, which ultimately transforms into our proposed solutions. At the end of the day, once we propose solutions, they really come from them. That is our approach in positioning ourselves, growing our capabilities and meeting new agencies, by complimenting their needs with our expertise.

CEOCFO: *What might be a typical engagement?*

Mr. Abuzaakouk: From an IT standpoint, we are engaged in several integration service efforts, for instance with electronic health records, we are trying to link the DOD's electronic health records with some of the

ancillary systems at the DOD hospitals. Integration Services, particularly Healthcare Integration, is our core service, and we have deep expertise in health care interoperability. This niche area is one reason we get calls from other large system integrators or even the government to bring us in to begin discussions on how we can add value or how we can help solve their problems. We are also a company composed of former Oracle employees. I started the company with the core service of offering advanced engineering around Oracle implementations, so we have a reputation with specific industries and specific agencies, all around the beltway, as the Oracle guys. We provide cost effective Oracle solutions, based on our development methodologies, to our customer base. Recently in the last year or so, we have branched out into mobile development using Oracle and mobile technology for the public sector. We are building extensions of enterprise mission critical applications, that offer services to the public, using mobile technology that is secure, reliable and scalable.

CEOCFO: *In many of the agencies, is mobile a big push or are they still a little late to the game?*

Mr. Abuzaakouk: I think mobile is currently a big push with many of the agencies we speak to. To say it is late in the game, I guess really depends because as we see mobile grow exponentially in the last five years or so in the private sector, the public sector really needed to look and see where it applied. After they have answered the basics of security, can I control a device, can I clean a device, how do I assure that lost information is not going to compromise my mission? Many of these initial concerns are addressable by understanding the technology's capability and its application within their business settings.

CEOCFO: *What has surprised you as the company has grown and developed?*

Mr. Abuzaakouk: I think there are two things that surprised me. What personally surprised me when I started the company six years ago was that I sought to offer advanced engineering services around Oracle technology for cheaper, better and faster, but I totally underestimated the complexity of operational factors needed to sustain a company. What surprises me is how lucky I am to have such talented staff. Everyone we bring into are the right people. They all prescribe to the same core values, including precision execution and superior client satisfaction. With time to market on applications, we do not pitch products, but enhance our customers' capabilities. I was pleasantly surprised to see such momentum within the company, and I am not the one that is pitching this philosophy. I see the philosophy espoused within the people, within the culture of this company. This surprises me immensely. We are a young small business. Yet, we have grown and fostered a culture that we consistently espouse, value and believe in, are proud of, and practice with precision and excellence.

CEOCFO: *How is business?*

Mr. Abuzaakouk: Business is good. This year, we are fortunate to have been recognized by Washington Technology Fast 50 and the 2014 Inc. 5000 list. We ranked number 20 in the Washington area, which is a testament of my team's capabilities and the caliber of service we provide our customers and partners. These recognitions have given us more fuel for our fire, and are supporting our momentum, to grow into new areas, and expand our customer footprint. You have your ups and downs, but truly mitigating risk is what we try to do best. One can forecast for

business plans and future growth, but when budgets get cut we have to be creative in how we can continue to support our customers in troubled economic times by being flexible and innovative in our solutions and efficient and effective in our delivery.

CEOCFO: *What might be different a year from now?*

Mr. Abuzaakouk: I will have more grey hair than I do now. That is the obvious. We are in a situation now with the company where we are starting to see areas of discipline forming. I had a vision that I wanted to offer Oracle services at a cost effective price, but in the last couple of years, we are seeing that we are establishing growth and integration services, particularly within health care. Health care integration and health care interoperability is a main issue and a driver right now for our revenue stream. We still have our core services around Oracle technology, but we are seeing a growth in mobile, and we are seeing a growth in security. Each one of these growth areas is not isolated on an island by itself. They all stem from their counterparts, if you will. Security stems from mobile, and mobile stems from enterprise applications, which started with Oracle. I think given the way the company is maturing, we are getting to a point where we are structuring our portfolios around individual industry lanes such as health IT, financial services and security. Within each discipline, we have various accounts and agencies that we support for those specific services, but they all complement each other. Some have actually grown organically from the previous ones. Next year, what I hope to see is more defined service offerings. We will have more focused account strategies, and better account management.

CEOCFO: *Put it all together for our readers. Why Concept Plus?*

Mr. Abuzaakouk: At Concept Plus, we do things differently. The reason I say we do things differently is because we are an IT services firm and we are a government contractor, but we do not go around chasing every opportunity nor do we present the lowest dollar type opportunities. The cliché is that we really believe in our culture. We train all of our staff on our agile development methodologies, software development, and new and emerging technologies so that we as a company can go after and pursue the areas of emerging technology growth across the DC metropolitan area. We are a small engineering company that deals with cloud mobile security and Oracle. We are not trying to be everything to everyone, and we walk away from opportunities where we can't make a difference.

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

