



Q&A with Shueyb Ali, President of World Services focused on Modernizing Legacy Environments for Federal Government Agencies providing IT Design, Technology Evaluation, Data Migration Support, Digitization and Scanning Services



Shueyb Ali
President

World Services
www.world-servicesllc.com

Contact:
Shueyb Ali
(240)535-9811
Sali@world-servicesllc.com

Interview conducted by:
Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor
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CEOCFO: *Mr. Ali, the first thing I see on the World Services, LLC site is “Path To Real Transformation.” How do you do that?*

Mr. Ali: As of today, most of our clients are federal government agencies. The fundamental challenges facing our clients have to do with modernizing legacy environments, such as cloud technologies. The idea of IT Transformation resonates with agencies we work with now more than in the past years. It is apparent that the IT senior executives view transformation as a crucial part of their strategic planning. World Services understands the struggles strategically, technically, and culturally that come with change. Being in such a dynamic industry, we believe in driving and adapting to constant change. Therefore, our term "Path to Real Transformation" encompasses all aspects of change. We have innovative technologists with strong expertise in various areas of IT transformation, and we bring those capabilities and experiences to our federal government to help them get from point A to point B in a more expedited, efficient and creative way.

CEOCFO: *Are most agencies ready to make the leap or do you find they are looking for something a little more incremental?*

Mr. Ali: Most of our clients are looking for incremental change to their environments. The reason for the incremental approach is usually related to funding and culture change. Most agencies must prepare and educate their staff, as well as analyze which systems make the most logical sense to transform based on time, cost and risk. In theory, this assessment may seem straightforward; however, it requires in-depth evaluation, and preparation of a legacy system prior to modernization. Therefore, we recommend an incremental approach, which is what most of our clients select.

CEOCFO: *What are some of the challenges in working with legacy systems and particularly finding people that understand them well enough or are comfortable and do not want to only work on the latest and greatest?*

Mr. Ali: When working with legacy systems, such as mainframes, older programming languages like COBOL may be utilized. In some cases, the systems are well-documented and are reasonably easy to follow the coding logic. However, in others, reverse engineering the code may be required due to outdated or non-existence documentation. In these cases, finding professionals that have experience in languages such as COBOL is becoming more challenging each passing year. The generation of professionals that that specialized in these languages are either retiring or no longer doing that type of work. However, if our clients have documented their systems well, that circumvents the challenge, because we can analyze their documentation.

One of our core values is about creating and capturing value with competency for our customers. We believe that we can make incremental improvements only when we equip our team members with the highest quality of resources, competencies, and knowledge. Therefore, if we find individuals that understand legacy languages but have a desire for the latest and greatest technology, we offer them the opportunity to get trained and/or certified in modern technologies.

CEOCFO: Was it a deliberate strategy to work on upgrading or updating legacy systems, or did it develop more opportunistically for you?

Mr. Ali: Our start in modernizing infrastructures was both opportunistic and strategic. Early in my career, I had full-lifecycle exposure to include analysis, programming, testing, project, and program management. As I began to advance in my career, I noticed one of the most significant issues our clients faced was attempting to stay current with technology.

At a point, our clients wanted us to evaluate modern technologies to determine solutions that would best fit their existing environment. We conducted an in-depth Alternative of Analysis for products and then down-selected the most feasible solution. This opportunity enabled us to build and strengthen our capabilities further in evaluating and implementing innovative technological solutions.

“As a company that has a focus on modernization and transformation, and with technology proliferation in this innovation-driven era we are constantly thinking a few years ahead. We cannot predict which new solutions will be successful or a right fit for our clients, so we pay close attention to what other forward-thinking organizations are doing. We thoroughly analyze their success and failures and test new technologies at our Innovation Lab to determine if it’s something we can use with our existing or future clients.” - Shueyb Ali

CEOCFO: Are there many companies in your space today? What is the competitive landscape?

Mr. Ali: There are many companies in our space. Mainly larger companies are best known for our type of services; however, other small companies exist in the space as well. I think what makes World Services competitive is our employee and customer centric-focus. We recognize that our employees are the closest to our customers; therefore, we trust their intuition and judgment when it comes to identifying and meeting the diverse needs of our customers. We spend more time listening to our staff and clients versus attempting to push solutions and technology that may not be a fit. Other differentiators for us are our company certifications such as Capability Maturity Model Integration (CMMI) Level 3 in both services and development. We are also certified by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) in Quality Management, Information Technology, and Information Security Management. By aligning and integrating our organization's entire system including individual processes, operational activities and team members at various levels to deliver expected outputs have helped us earn credibility and trust of our clients. Therefore, these certifications give us a competitive edge and show our clients that we take quality management and standardization of processes seriously. Our approach gives our clients confidence in our ability to deliver.

CEOCFO: How do you assess what projects to bid on? Are there particular agencies that you like or particular types of project or is it what is available or all of those?

Mr. Ali: We use a combination of strategies to determine how we bid. We have found most of our success from referrals by our existing clients, who inform other customers within the agency about our services. As a growing small business that is providing excellent service, occasionally opportunities are presented to us. However, we are very selective about the opportunities we pursue. Time has taught us that not every opportunity is a good fit. As we continue to embrace and implement new capabilities, we rigorously evaluate how the next opportunity will fit our capabilities and diversification strategy, and add to our collective long-term goals. If it provides realistic client expectations and the procurement strategy being used by the agency makes sense, we will typically go after these types of opportunities.

CEOCFO: When you are assessing or developing a strategy for a particular project, what might you look at that less knowledgeable people do not realize is important? What might you look at in your realm of expertise that is not always taken into account?

Mr. Ali: When assessing modernization projects, one of the most significant issues we encounter is minimal focus on data governance. Sometimes less experienced professional may be more concerned with technology versus identifying, understanding and utilizing the data, and what the intentions may be for the data. Taking a casual approach to Data Governance when attempting to modernize is equivalent to purchasing a new car that is limited to driving on a pothole-riddled road. The new car may be able to perform at a high-level; however, it will never reach its full potential driving on an

unstable road. Adding modern technology with a minimum focus on data governance will provide clients with the latest technology but the same data issues as the legacy system.

Our clients are dealing with such large amounts of information sometimes trying to get a grasp of data is difficult for them. Therefore, we have added artificial intelligence, more specifically machine learning, as a capability. Our goal is to use this technology, coupled with our understanding of data governance, to provide our clients with an efficient manner to interpret and use massive amounts of unknown and continuously growing data.

CEOCFO: *Would you give us an example of hidden treasures might be in an organization?*

Mr. Ali: The hidden treasures that we have found in our client organizations are the passion of the federal employees. Despite challenges, such as budget cuts, limited resources, or outdated technology, our clients have great attitudes and make the best of their environment. They are resourceful, eager, and motivated to do an excellent job for their organizations and to be great stewards of taxpayer dollars. The hidden treasure is absolutely the clients we work with on a regular basis!

CEOCFO: *When you work on a project is it on an ongoing basis or do you get it in place and then you move on and they are on their own?*

Mr. Ali: Most of our contracts require us to deliver a service, which in some cases are on-going. However, we also have contracts that are primarily deliverable-based, with defined start and end date. Almost every contract is constructed using an option year approach. This means that the government has the choice to determine if they want to continue working with us, in most cases after a 12-month period. Our end game is to leave the government with proper instruments and ability to be self-sufficient.

CEOCFO: *What has changed in your approach over time? What have you learned as you have been working with different agencies around different types of projects?*

Mr. Ali: The biggest lesson for us was to learn how to interact with different customers. Each federal agency has its own culture. Early on, we were not aware of that. As we started to grow and branch into different organizations and agencies, we realized that each of them had their own way of doing business, communicating with contractors, and expectation of how a contractor should interact with them. Our strength originates from our belief and emphasis in a culture of diversity, inclusivity, and authentic communication, which is what enables our team to be more conscious and approachable when working with clients of new and diverse cultural settings. Our approach today requires us to get to know as much as possible about an agency prior to pursuing opportunities in the organization. We have found this to approach to be instrumental in the proposal process as well. Our proposals have improved since we are now able to write proposals using language familiar to the organizations.

CEOCFO: *When you are developing a solution for a client how do you look at what you need now, what you might need later and what is available now and what might come down the road in a year of two?*

Mr. Ali: Our approach to developing a solution and understanding needs depends on the client. Our federal clients usually issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) that supplies a baseline of the client's needs and infrastructure. To be considered for the work, we must write a proposal that includes a technical approach which is our solution to the client. If we win the contract based on our proposal, we initiate our projects on the premise that our technical approach is correct. However, after getting onsite and into the customer environment, we usually adjust our strategy due to access to further detailed information.

As a company that has a focus on modernization and transformation, and with technology proliferation in this innovation-driven era we are constantly thinking a few years ahead. We cannot predict which new solutions will be successful or a right fit for our clients, so we pay close attention to what other forward-thinking organizations are doing. We thoroughly analyze their success and failures and test new technologies at our Innovation Lab to determine if it's something we can use with our existing or future clients.

CEOCFO: *What do you look for in your people over and above skill?*

Mr. Ali: We embrace creativity, which we believe is tied to innovation. We want people that fit into our core values and our culture of change, creativity, diversity, and inclusivity. We want people who are excited about what they do, unleash their creativity and ingenuity, acquire new knowledge and implement innovative solutions that can really help us get to the next level. We understand that everyone wants to make a living; however, our work environment is more than simply a means to a financial-end. The ideal professional for World Services is open to change, authentic and diverse, creative, humble, passionate, and dedicated. The vision I have for our company means nothing if I don't have the right team working collectively to carry it out with passion and persistence.

CEOCFO: Are you able to ramp up if projects come your way, either unexpectedly or you bid on a number of things and they all come through?

Mr. Ali: We have been very fortunate that we have been able to meet our staffing needs. Our recruiting team has done an excellent job meeting and filling requirements for us to staff up. Occasionally we may run across an obscure position that requires more effort than others. We take a team approach, so our entire executive and management team has supported our recruiting staff when necessary. As of today, we have always been able to find the staff we need without using a staffing firm.

CEOCFO: What did you learn in the Air Force and at Harvard that have helped you in business?

Mr. Ali: The Air Force taught me the essence of discipline, decisiveness, and perseverance. It was the first place where I discovered my leadership abilities. The Air Force has a formal Leadership School which I attended and won the prestigious "John Levitow Award." The award is based on academic performance, presentation skills, ability to lead, and earn votes amongst your peers in the class. The experience and award gave me the motivation to continue strengthening my leadership skills.

Attending graduate school at Harvard University was an extremely demanding environment which required me to stay focused, step out of my comfort zone, and challenge myself beyond the limits I thought possible. Professors encouraged me to think about business, management, and leadership from different perspectives to include philosophy, cultural diversity, innovation, and practical applications of business cases. I attended Harvard while continuing to run World Services and manage time with my family. Therefore, I had to re-invent my approach to time-management, delegating and prioritizing tasks.

Both Harvard and the Air Force expanded my perspective on how World Services approaches business and management. We have redefined our values and mission statement as well as reevaluated our approach on how we innovate for our clients. Both experiences enabled me to strive for a company that thrives off creative mindset, intentional innovations, and dynamic technologies. I learned that as a leader I must continue to acquire knowledge to initiate an organizational culture whereas ideas flow and integrate seamlessly, innovative change is the norm, and trust, transparency and humility are part of every team member's DNA.

Our leadership team has taken on the task of getting company-wide certifications, implementing efficient processes and procedures, and equipping our people with the latest skills, training, and tools. With the creation of our innovation lab, we often test innovative technologies that may be useful to our customers. We realize that although we are confident with who we are, we cannot get comfortable with where we are, and it is imperative to see innovative solutions as a continuous process and offering for our clients and to inspire and engage our employees.

CEOCFO: We came upon World Services from the Inc 5000 list, so we know business is good. How do you continue the trajectory? What is your plan for the next year or two?

Mr. Ali: It was a great honor to be recognized by Inc 5000 list for the second year in a row. We must continue to provide exceptional services to our existing clients. While continuing to satisfy our current client-base, business development is an essential part of our growth strategy. Business development is a true science and ensuring we have the right talent promoting World Services is a key part of our growth.

We understand the importance of teaming with other companies, both large and small, that may need our services, and in some cases, we may need their services.

Although our growth has been consistent, our plan over the next few years is to ensure that we maintain a managed growth. We have witnessed companies growing too fast and saw the unfortunate results of the unplanned growth. Therefore, we believe in establishing and maintaining a solid foundation at every step of our journey. We will continue setting limits for both our minimum and maximum strategy for growth. Also, continuing to find the right clients and employ talented team members is a top priority on our list. We want to discover ways to inspire, motivate, and excite our team members. Our people, authenticity, innovation, and leadership are the key ingredients of what we do every day and how we continue our success story over the next few years.

CEOCFO: Is there anything that people might miss when they first look at World Services?

Mr. Ali: World Services has an amazing, passionate, and innovative staff. We care about our staff and by putting an emphasis on our employee's happiness, our clients are always in great hands. The quality, diligence, passion and intelligence of our staff is remarkable. It is not something that you find everywhere. Our staff enjoys working for the company, and they want to satisfy our client-base.