AN INTERVIEW WITH VAI'S CFO: REMOTE WORK, CLOUD ADOPTION. ERP TRENDS. AND MORE

Please tell us about your role and the team / technology you handle at VAI. How did you reach here?

As CFO and CMO at VAI, I oversee the company's financial strategies including budgeting and financial planning, as well as marketing initiatives and marketing programs, content creation, conference events, and more. The accounting position was my first passion and what I was originally drawn too when I joined the family business.

My role has morphed over the years to include both executive positions that I engage with today. The twin roles keep me very busy but allow me to focus on the financially driven aspects of my background, while also enabling me to get creative together with our marketing team to drive campaigns and new concepts.

How did your role evolve through the pandemic months? How did your previous experiences with technology management help you scale your efforts and meet unprecedented challenges?

To meet our financial and marketing goals during the unprecedented challenges the COVID-19 pandemic has presented, the leadership team and I adapted quickly to real-time events as they unfolded, both for VAI and for our clients. Keeping our employees safe was paramount as we closed our offices and shifted to our wide-scale, work-from-home model. We have had for decades the ability to work remotely, so the transition went very smoothly.

We then restructured our marketing campaigns as onsite shows and meetings were either cancelled or went virtual and we shifted our focus to all digital expenditures. This includes our own customer conference that was set to originally take place at Disney World in November 2020. We worked with our internal teams to select a platform that met our needs, and quickly shifted our resources to the development, planning, and execution of our first virtual customer conference, which proved to be a highly successful event.

We have always strived to be the best partner for our clients, and we continue to do so no matter what arises. Throughout the pandemic and today, we support our customers by helping them to leverage technology to successfully operate, compete, grow, and not just survive, but thrive.

Many of our clients were well-positioned before the pandemic with remote work capabilities and utilized software applications throughout such as mobile to deliver goods with no touch processes, and technology in cloud environments that free up onsite IT resources.

Other clients needed assistance in how to incorporate those

tools available through our ERP providing the capabilities needed to successfully weather unforeseen events.

Tell us more about your remote working technology stack and how has it evolved in the last 2-3 years?

VAI has had a disaster recovery (DR) plan in place for decades that led us through events related to utility and previous disease outbreaks.

As part of our ongoing DR planning, we have always tested our ability to do work from home and had used it and activated it in situations where we had snow or other weather-related instances, so we knew our model was going to work.

During the pandemic was where we had a huge interest in cloud computing. We continue to evolve VAI Cloud in response to the overwhelming adoption of cloud services and interest in our cloud-based ERP applications from prospects and customers. While the trend towards the cloud was apparent prior to the pandemic, the transition to remote work solidified the need for a cloud-based environment that can handle employees working from home. In tandem with these

needs, customers relied on our cloud-based ERP solution and applications including analytics, and mobile applications, marketing automation, and other integrations.

What is VAI and how does it fit into the modern ERP technology landscape? Which markets and industries are you currently serving?

VAI is a leading independent enterprise resource planning (ERP) software developer offering integrated and automated software suites for industries servicing distributors, manufacturers, and retailers across many markets with specific products for food and pharmaceutical. The software is equipped to automate critical business functions and address client needs that best match their goals. The software includes all standard business functionality such as accounting, manufacturing, distribution, and retail capabilities along with business intelligence, analytics, mobility, purchasing, warehouse, and cloud technology.

How have ERP vendors come together during the pandemic to influence the remote workplace collaboration and digital transformation journeys across the industry?

ERP vendors have not by design

collaborated, but all of them knew that their mission was to help their customers during the pandemic and assist them to enable remote work capabilities and help them with their digital transformation. For customers who were essential services providers, the assistance provided from ERP vendors helped them to thrive beyond pre-pandemic capabilities. For companies who were not essential services, many ERP vendors assisted them to maintain operations during the pandemic.

What are the unique ways Financial Planning teams could improve their B2B game-plan, especially in the SaaS /ERP / Cloud industry? Any specific campaign that you would like to share with our readers?

With the increase of cloud adoption across all industries and with the huge reliance on B2B during the pandemic with face-to-face operations shut down, companies had to shift their financial planning to the cloud to handle this increased demand. Financial leaders are becoming closer with the technology side of the business to ensure technologies investments such as ERP and cloud are paying off. At VAI, we offer analytics applications such as predictive analytics within our S2K Enterprise

ERP solution to track budgeting and forecasting, ensuring financial leaders have constant visibility into their operations and to intelligently utilize the capital they have on hand during trying times.

What are your predictions on the future of ERP for companies that are sustaining on WFH and Working-from-anywhere models?

For companies that are sustaining working-from-anywhere models, security, cloud, and mobile, will be the key aspects of the future of ERP and will remain a critical tool in allowing workers the ability to solve issues from anywhere. The future of ERP requires an increase in flexibility through mobile services that can be implemented both in the workplace and outside, allowing those working from home to stay updated on warehouse inventory, assembly lines, and disruptions. Working-from-anywhere is likely here to stay for many in some format, and the ERP industry will continue to develop in ways that allow remote workers to securely analyze in-depth insights and implement solutions regardless of distance.

Tell us more about the hiring trends in the tech industry. What kind of talent / skills do you hire for in your company to lead Product and Marketing goals?

Expertise in data and cloud services is necessary and many companies are hiring for these technical skills. At VAI, we are always looking for creative, inquisitive, self-starting individuals who are eager to learn and grow with the company. It is required to have the right technical skills to advance product development, but it is also as important to have the soft skills – such as an ability to collaborate and communicate with others. VAI cultivates a close-knit culture, and we value that in our hiring decisions.