Chesapeake IT Consultants

Chesapeake IT Consultants (CIC) is a successful Information Technology consulting services firm that utilizes proven IT and management methodologies to achieve measurable results for its customers. Its customer base includes small to mid-tier businesses, non-profit organizations and governmental agencies at the local, state and federal levels. CIC feels strongly that its success is dependent on the combination of the talent of its IT consultants, the best practices CIC employs, and a dedication to delivering truly beneficial IT solutions to their clients.

Corporate Profile

Corporate Name: Chesapeake IT Consultants, Inc.

Founded: May 2004

Headquarters: Baltimore, Maryland

Satellite Locations: Herndon, Virginia; Bethesda, Maryland

Number of Employees: 400

Total Annual Gross Revenue: $80,000,000

President and

Chief Executive Officer (CEO): Alvin Morrison

Business Areas

CIC provides consulting services in the following areas:
- Business Process Consulting - Business process redesign, process improvement
- IT Consulting - IT strategy, analysis, planning, system development, implementation, and network support
- IT Outsourcing Consulting – Requirements analysis; vendor evaluation, due diligence, selection and performance management; Service Level Agreements

Business Strategy

CIC's business strategy is to provide extraordinary consulting services and recommendations to its customers by employing highly skilled consultants and staying abreast of new business concepts and technology and/or developing new business concepts and best practices of its own.

Excerpt from the CIC Strategic Business Plan

While the complete strategic plan touches on many areas, below is an excerpt from CIC's latest Strategic Business Plan that identifies a few of CIC's Goals.

Goal 1: Increase CIC Business Development by winning new contracts in the areas of IT consulting.

Goal 2: Build a cadre of consultants internationally to provide remote research and analysis support to CIC's onsite teams in the U. S.

Goal 3: Continue to increase CIC's ability to quickly provide high quality consultants to awarded contracts to best serve the clients' needs.

Goal 4: Increase CIC's competitive advantage in the IT consulting marketplace by increasing its reputation for having IT consultants who are highly skilled in leading edge technologies and innovative solutions for its clients.

Current Business Environment

CIC provides consultants on-site to work with its clients, delivering a wide variety of IT-related services. CIC obtains most of its business through competitively bidding on Requests for Proposals issued by business, government and non-profit organizations. A small but growing portion of its business is through referrals and follow-on contracts from satisfied clients. CIC anticipates it will win two large contracts in the near future and is preparing proposals for several other large projects.

CIC, as a consulting company, relies on the quality and expertise of its employees to provide the services needed by the clients. When it is awarded a contract, the customer expects CIC to quickly provide the consultants and begin work on the project. CIC, like other consulting companies, cannot afford to carry a large number of employees that are not assigned to contracts. Therefore, they need to determine the likelihood of winning a new contract and ensure the appropriately skilled consultants are ready to go to work when needed. CIC relies on its HR Department to find and hire the personnel that the line managers need for upcoming contracts. It is very much a "just in time" hiring situation.

The Headquarters in Baltimore, Maryland, houses approximately 300 employees. Satellite offices have been opened in the last two years in both Herndon, Virginia and Bethesda, Maryland to provide close proximity to existing clients. It is anticipated that new pending contracts would add staff to all locations. The management team believes there is capacity at all locations, as much of the consultants' work is done on-site at the customers' locations.

Strategic Direction

As a small to mid-size business (SMB), CIC recognizes that it needs to carefully plan its future strategy. Considering the competitive environment that contains many very large IT consulting firms, such as Hewlett-Packard (HP), Booz Allen Hamilton (BAH), and Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC), as well as numerous smaller companies with various skill sets, market niches, and established customer bases, CIC will be evaluating how best to position

itself for the future and recognizes that its ability to identify its core competencies, move with agility and flexibility, and deliver consistent high quality service to its clients is critical for continued success.

One area that is critical to a consulting company is the ability to have employees who possess the necessary knowledge and skills to fulfill current and future contracts. Given the intense competition in the IT consulting sector, CIC is planning to incorporate a few consultants in other countries to provide remote research and analysis support to the on-site U. S. teams. Since CIC has no experience in the global marketplace, the Director of HR has begun examining international labor laws to determine where CIC should recruit and hire employees.

Challenges

The two contracts that CIC expects to win very soon will require the hiring of an additional 75 consultants very quickly. The Director of Human Resources (HR) is concerned that the current manual process of recruiting and hiring employees will not allow his department to be responsive to these needs. He is looking for a near-term solution that will automate many of the manual hiring process steps and reduce the time it takes to hire new staff. He is also looking for a solution that will allow CIC to hire employees located in other countries around the world.

Management Direction

The management team has been discussing how to ramp up to fill the requirements of the two new contracts, and prepare the company to continue growing as additional contracts are awarded in the future. The company has been steadily growing and thus far hiring of new employees has been handled through a process that is largely manual. The HR Director reported that his staff will be unable to accommodate the hiring of the 75 new employees in the timeframe required. The Chief Information Officer (CIO) then recommended that the company look for a commercial off-the-shelf software product that can dramatically improve the hiring process and shorten the time it takes to hire new employees. The Chief Financial Officer (CFO) wants to ensure that all investments are in line with the corporate mission and will achieve the desired return on investment. She will be looking for clear information that proposals have been well researched, provide a needed capability for the organization, and can be cost-effectively implemented in a relatively short period of time to reap the benefits. The CEO has asked the CIO to work with HR to recommend a solution.

Your Task

As a business analyst in the CIO's department, you have been assigned to conduct an analysis, develop a set of system requirements, and propose an IT solution. The CIO has set up a series of interviews for you to collect information about the current hiring process and the requirements for a system. He has asked you to produce a Business Analysis and System Recommendation Report (BA&SR) as your final deliverable.

Interviews

In the interviews you conduct with the organizational leaders, you hear the comments recorded below.

CEO: Alvin Morrison

"While I trust my HR staff to address the nuts and bolts of the staffing processes, what is critically important to me is that the right people can be in place to fulfill our current contracts and additional talented staff can be quickly hired to address needs of future contracts we win. I can't be out in the market soliciting new business if we can't deliver on what we're selling. Our reputation is largely dependent on having knowledgeable and capable staff to deliver the services our clients are paying for and expect from CIC."

CFO: Marianne Cho

"So glad we're talking about this initiative. As CFO, obviously I'm focused on the bottom line. I also recognize it's necessary to invest in certain areas to ensure our viability moving forward. Having cost effective technology solutions that improve current processes and enable future functionality is very important to CIC's success. We must consider the total cost of ownership of any technology we adopt. CIC is run as a lean-and-mean organization and support processes must be effective but not overbuilt. We do want to think towards the future as well and don't want to invest in technology with a short shelf-life. Along those lines, we currently have a timekeeping and payroll system; and to help support our bottom line financially, any new solution should effectively integrate with those systems.

CIO: Fadil Abadi

"As a member of the IT Department, you have a good understanding of our overall architecture and strategy; however, let me emphasize a few things I want to be sure we keep in mind for this project. Any solution needs to be compatible with our existing architecture and systems as appropriate. Obviously, we have chosen not to maintain a large software development staff so building a solution from the ground up does not fit our IT strategic plan. Our current strategy has been to adopt Software as a Service (SaaS) solutions that can be deployed relatively quickly and leverage industry best practices. In addition, our distributed workforce means we are very dependent on mobile computing – this brings some challenges in term of portability, maintenance, and solutions that present well on mobile devices. We've been expanding at a rapid rate and are seeking to expand internationally so any solution will need to be viable globally. And last, but certainly not least, CIC's success is largely dependent on our ability to satisfy the requirements of our clients and maintain a reputation of high credibility, reliability and security. Any security breach of our clients' data would have a devastating effect to our ability to compete for new business as well as maintain current clients."

Director of HR: William Bradley

"Thanks for talking with me today. I see this effort as very important to the success of CIC. The rapid growth to date and future plans for expansion have pushed our recruiting staff, and we recognize we can no longer meet the hiring and staffing demands with manual processes. I'm also interested in solutions that are easy-to-use and can interface with our existing systems and enhance processes. I'm willing to consider a basic system that can grow as CIC grows and provide more capabilities in the future. I'm sure Suzanne, our Manager of Recruiting, can provide more specifics."

Manager of Recruiting: Suzanne Rodriguez

"You don't know how long I've been waiting to begin the process of finding a technology solution to support our recruiting processes. In addition to myself, there are 2-3 full-time recruiters who have been very busy keeping up with the increased hiring at CIC. It goes without saying that a consulting company is dependent on having well-qualified employees to deliver to our customers. We're in a competitive market for IT talent and want to be able to recruit efficiently, process applicants quickly, and move to making a job offer to the best candidate before the competition snaps him/her up. When I talk with my colleagues in other companies, they mention software applications for hiring that have enabled them to reduce their hiring time by 15-20%. I'm so envious of them and look forward to having our new solution in place before the next set of contracts are won and we need to hire 75 (to as many as 150) staff in a 3-month period. I do not think my team can handle such an increase in an efficient and effective manner. It really seems like there would be a rapid return on investment in a technology solution to support and improve the hiring process."

Recruiters: Paul O'Brien (along with Mac Thompson and Juliet Jackson)

"This project should have happened 2 years ago but glad it's finally getting some attention. As a recruiter, I'm sort of the middleperson in this process. On one hand, we have the job applicant who is anxious to know the status of his/her application and fit for the advertised position. It's important that the recruiters represent CIC well, as we want the best applicants to want to come to work for us. Then we have the actual hiring manager in one of our business areas who has issued the job requisition and wants to get the best applicant hired as quickly as possible. Obviously recruiting is not the hiring manager's full-time job so we're always competing for time with other job responsibilities so we can keep things moving as quickly as possible. They look to us to screen resumes and only forward the best qualified applicants to them so they can quickly identify their top candidates. Working with Ted, our administrative assistant, we need interviews to be scheduled to accommodate everyone's calendars. After the hiring managers make their final selections of who they would like to hire, it is our task to get the job offers presented to the candidates - hopefully for their acceptance. Everything is very time sensitive and the current process is not nearly as efficient as it could be. Applications and resumes can get lost in interoffice mail or buried in email; and, when a hiring manager calls us, we often cannot immediately provide the status of where an applicant is in the process. This can be very frustrating all around. Speaking for myself and the other recruiters, I have high

expectations for this solution. We need to really be able to deliver world-class service to CIC in the recruiting and hiring areas to meet the business goals."

Administrative Assistant: Ted Anderson

"I support the recruiters in the hiring process. After the recruiters screen the resumes and select the best candidates for a position, my job is to route those applications and resumes via interoffice mail to the respective functional/hiring manager, receive their feedback on who they would like to interview and who should be involved in the interviews, schedule the interviews based on availability of applicants and the interview team members, collect the feedback from the interview team and inform the assigned recruiter of the status of each candidate who was interviewed. Then, after a job offer has been made, I coordinate the paperwork for the new hire with HR and Payroll to ensure everything is ready to go on the first day. As you can imagine when hiring volume is up, I'm buried in paperwork and trying to keep all the applicants and their resumes straight, track their status in the process, and ensure everyone has what they need is very challenging. Any tool that would help the workflow and enable many steps in the process to be done electronically would be wonderful."

Hiring Manager (in functional area; this person would be the supervisor of the new employee and would likely issue the job requisition to fill a need in his/her department/team):

"While it's a good problem to have – new business means new hires -- the current method for screening applications, scheduling interviews, identifying the best qualified applicants, and getting a job offer to them is not working. My team is evaluated on the level of service we provide our clients, and it is very important that we have well-qualified staff members to fulfill our contracts. Turnover is common in the IT world and that along with new business development, makes the need for hiring new staff critical and time-sensitive.   I confess that sometimes I'm not as responsive to HR as I should be but this is only one of several areas I'm responsible for. I look to the recruiters to stay on top of this for me. In the ideal world, I'd like an electronic dashboard from which I can see the status of any job openings in my area, information on all qualified candidates who have applied and where they are in the pipeline. Electronic scheduling on my calendar of interviews would be a real time saver. It's important that we impress candidates with our technology and efficiency – after all we are an IT consulting company—and using manual processes makes us look bad. And, this system must be easy to use – I don't have time for training or reading a 100-page user's manual. Just need to get my job done.