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Advantis lets companies tackle IT staffing fast

Fortune 500 clients fuel breakneck growth

BY LIZETTE CHAPMAN
San Francisco Business Times Contributor

Putting people to work is working out well for Advantis Global Services.

Founded in 2007, the IT staffing firm has built a business around providing tech specialists to U.S. Bank, L-3 Communications and a slew of Fortune 500 companies. The San Francisco firm increased revenue 4,121.2 percent to \$10.84 million in 2009 over 2007. It's tracking to hit \$26 million in 2010 revenue.

"Finding and hiring the right people is our biggest challenge," said CEO Bryan Barber. "All our success comes from that."

Timing has also helped the company grow. As the backlog of IT projects reached critical mass in 2007 and 2008, companies relied on contract workers to get the job done instead of bringing on full-time staff. This meant tremendous opportunities for staffing firms. Fifteen of the Bay Area's 25 largest staffing firms list IT as one of their core specialties, according to the San Francisco Business Times list of largest staffing companies for 2010. And, according to that same list, eight of those 25 firms are newcomers, appearing on the list for the first time this year.

"We had the ability to get into compa-

nies that were still growing and say 'don't look at a full-time employee — look at us,'" said Barber. "In a challenging marketplace, we can help them (the clients) move projects along and stay competitive without on-boarding and off-boarding full-time help."

As companies got more aggressive with their IT spending, Advantis built its list of contractors and consultants. Culling a database of 30,000 names which Barber and his co-founder Jeff Taylor built during their previous careers in enterprise sales and staffing, Advantis grew its list from 15 contractors to 250 today. Taylor, who serves as Advantis' COO, expects to expand that contractor list to 400 or 500 within the next year.

He said: "We find people from a variety of sources. We search for very specific skill sets to meet similar-sounding requirements."

Contractors run the gamut, from MBA-toting business analysts and data center architects to programmers specializing in Java and Unix.

U.S. Bank has been a client for nearly six months.

"Advantis Global has quickly emerged as one of the elite staffing firms on both the local and national level," said U.S. Bank President of Northern California Michael

Walker. "They are highly regarded and a valuable strategic business partner."

One of the key differentiators, according to Taylor and Barber, is the quality of the people they can deploy and the speed with which they can do it.

"When a hiring manager says they need someone for a project, we shoot to get them two qualified candidates within 24 to 48 hours," said Barber. "We use our database to track where consultants are at any time in a project. When they come to the end of a project then we start shopping them to our other clients."

The company's long term goal: doing \$500 million in revenue within the next five to 10 years.

Advantis is not without competition, however.

Along with the large multi-disciplinary staffing companies, San Francisco's Technisource and Kforce Professional Staffing focus exclusively on IT staffing and are more than twice as large as Advantis, based on the number of W2s issued from their offices.

But Taylor and Barber say they're not concerned. They say they enjoy their work and are thrilled they were able to build a company from scratch.

Said Taylor: "We just focus on delivering to the customer. We don't worry about the competition."

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No. 1
Advantis Global Services

Growth: 4,121.2%

What it does: IT contingent staffing firm

Co-founders and principals: Bryan Barber and Jeff Taylor.

HQ: San Francisco.

2010 employees: 30 internal; 250 contractors.