Taking On The Big Guns

Integrator InSight Knowledge Management Systems, LLC has the attention of the U.S. military with its contribution to the biggest government IT contract ever. And the 12-person operation isn't even concerned that integration giant EDS is part of the landscape.

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Imagine connecting the entire population of Miami to a single, secure intranet which manages all of its digital and paper records - not just the politicians and business leaders, but every man, woman, and child. Picture how much more complicated it would be if the approximately 360,000 people were spread across the 300 sites in the United States, Puerto Rico, Iceland, and Cuba. With a core staff of a dozen people, integrator InSight Knowledge Management Systems (IKMS) (Valley Forge, PA), partnering with Tower Software US (Reston, VA), has secured a records management contract of that proportion.

IKMS is one of many companies contributing to the construction of the Navy Marine Corps Intranet (NMCI) under a contract negotiated with EDS, a $19.2 billion integration giant based in Plano, TX. EDS holds the nearly $7 billion contract to head up an Information Strike Force team and implement the federal government's largest IT contract in history. The goal of the project is to integrate more than 200 disparate networks. It will provide secure, universal access to voice, video, and data communications through pier-side connectivity for Naval vessels and 360,000 desktops. Though units that are at sea or overseas are not included in the installation, a provision allows for the purchase of additional services, software, and hardware under the agreement. EDS is contractually obligated to outsource 40% of the project to small and minority-owned businesses.

IKMS is one of the companies across the nation to benefit from that particular clause in the contract. For its part, IKMS will provide TRIM Captura, Tower Software's integrated records management product, as part of the deal. Ted Hoobler, IKMS president and CEO, credits retired Rear Admiral Robert Ellis, IKMS' senior VP, with successfully leading the effort to secure what would be a showcase installation for any integrator. Hoobler admits that giving Ellis the green light to pitch the NMCI deal was one of the biggest business decisions he ever made. "The sheer scale of the project was intimidating," says Hoobler. "But our strategy has always been to target large installations. After all, it doesn't really take any more resources to pursue a large

opportunity than it does to pursue a small one. Given the experience of our staff, I have every confidence we are going to make a significant contribution to this important project. If I didn't have absolute trust in the product and our people, I wouldn't have given Bob the go-ahead."

Admirable Salesmanship
"Victory belongs to the most persevering," Napoleon said, and Ellis is a prime example. "The main thing I did was go to the Department of Defense (DoD) and walk the halls and talk to people," says Ellis. While he was there, he learned about what records management solutions had been tried in the past and the resulting successes and failures. "The government has done comprehensive studies on document and record management and has drawn up detailed blueprints of requirements. The problem was that no large, single organization within the government signed on to a specific solution, and the money was never there for a project of this scale. The net result was small fragmented systems throughout the DoD."

The EDS contract was signed in October 2000, but Ellis says serious negotiations began a year earlier and casual conversation a year before that. "When the more than 900-page contract came out last fall, I went through it and found this small portion that deals with records management. Only a few people picked up on that aspect, and I was one of the first. That's when I started an education process in earnest." That process monopolized the majority of his working hours for the next six months and often involved enlisting the help of other IKMS employees. He made the rounds of everyone affected by the proposed implementation from the records managers of the Navy and the Marine Corps to the office of the Navy's chief information officer. As he learned about their pain points - meeting government regulations, coping with document overload, and dealing with complicated or ineffective software - Ellis explained what was possible with integrated records management. This planted the seeds of expectation for solutions that would be evaluated later.

Beginning in January 2001, Ellis also made his pitch to EDS. He says that his message to the integrator varied little from that he gave the military. He emphasized TRIM's ability to fulfill specific needs EDS had as required by the contract and its suitability for the Web-based Microsoft architecture that would support the entire project. When the scope of the project became clear, all vendors were "cut off" and a board was formed to make specific inquiries.

Ellis admits that networking and staying involved with former DoD contacts was a slight advantage. However, he insists that "There is no inner circle. I just gained a little more time to do my homework. Anyone could have found the same opportunity in *Commerce Business Daily*."

The "final exam" for TRIM and IKMS came earlier this year, when the field had been narrowed from 29 government-approved products to 4. Representatives for each of these products was asked to undergo a four-hour evaluation. More than half of that time was allotted to a rigorous demo designed to prove the product's ability to meet the contract specifications and be interoperable with the other components chosen. A two-hour question and answer session from a panel of DoD and EDS officials followed.

Since the product itself was already certified under the DoD 5015.2 standard, much of the presentation focused on the strength of the management team and the value of the product. IKMS only represents TRIM and has three years' experience in large installations, many of them in government, factors which Hoobler feels set it apart. Jim Thorstad, IKMS' senior program manager, worked for Tower Software on what had previously been that vendor's biggest installation, a rollout for the FDIC.

360,000 ÷ 12 = Implementation Nightmare

Even an integrator's best employees may find it challenging to deal with a situation where the ratio is 30,000 end users for every one employee. Obviously, as a smaller VAR, IKMS will have to rely on EDS and some very creative solutions in order to implement the project. At press time, IKMS was hesitant to talk about the specifics, but, obviously, it would like to be directly involved as much as possible. Many of the details are likely to be worked out this fall as EDS begins the preliminary rollout of the first 42,000 seats.

"One possibility is to work with some trusted VARs to assist with some of the software installation," says Hoobler. "The records management market in general is so huge that my strategy has always been that it's to our advantage to work together." As a result, he may call on some of the experienced partners he has dealt with in the past.

The other major challenge is training, the method for which must still be determined. "We don't intend to train every individual personally," says Hoobler. "We will train cadres of people who will in turn train other cadres." IKMS also has resources for alternative kinds of training such as text-based tutorials, videos, CDs, and Web training. Both Hoobler and IKMS Director Patrick Crowley have experience in interactive technologies that will serve them well in this capacity. EDS will be responsible for supplying a help desk, and Tower Software's tech support has signed on to handle trouble calls if necessary.

NMCI May Signal Tactical Changes

The NMCI contract has been a unique opportunity in many ways, and Ellis feels its success may be an indicator for future projects. The government doesn't often sole source a project as it has done

in this case. According to Ellis, their decision to do so is a chance for EDS to secure a position as a world-class integrator. If everything goes smoothly, the government might opt for more sweeping contracts of this type.

That's not necessarily bad news for small VARs. "Only the biggest companies can go in and handle a contract this size, but there are lots of opportunities to do the pieces," contends Ellis. In the long run, according to Ellis, larger, more comprehensive installations will help the government do away with legacy systems and become standardized. Ellis feels this trend is good for the military and for integrators working on their systems. The Government Paperwork Elimination Act of 1998 will increase the pressure to incorporate more electronic business and legal documentation.

In the meantime, there is still plenty of opportunity to be explored in this installation. There's no reason that people at sea and overseas couldn't have access to the system eventually, says Ellis. The product supports wireless transmission, and bandwidth is a nonissue. The military's Information Technology for the 21st Century initiative (IT-21) resulted in excellent satellite transmission network for video, voice, and data. Ellis also believes that the federal government's quest to build a global information grid will encourage the DoD to integrate the entire military. Since the EDS contract currently covers only a fraction of the nation's almost 1.5 million active military personnel, the admiral may have several more successful military campaigns to lead.

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Integrator Targets Paperless Office

In any large organization, it's important to keep track of who knew what and when they knew it. The controversy surrounding the FBI's handling of documents related to the Oklahoma City bombing and the Ford/Firestone lawsuits are just two recent cases in point.

Last year when professional services provider EDS secured the contract to integrate the 360,000 seat Navy Marine Corps Intranet project, one of the requirements was an electronic records management application. At the time, only 29 records management products were certified in accordance with the Department of Defense 5015.2 standard which is endorsed by the National Archives and Records Administration. EDS narrowed that field to 4 products that could potentially help NMCI reach its goals

After comparing functionality, cost, usability, and interoperability, EDS chose TRIM Captura from Tower Software (Reston, VA). One of the major advantages of TRIM, says Robert Ellis, senior VP of VAR InSight Knowledge Management Systems, LLC, is that the COTS (commercial off the shelf) product is designed to deliver a range of imaging and data management functions with very little need for

customization. One of the goals of NMCI is the paperless office, and TRIM provides document, e-mail, correspondence, workflow, space, and asset management for data of all kinds, in addition to records management. It also accommodates e-signatures, a feature which is necessary to meet the requirements of the Government Paperwork Elimination Act of 1998.

The military sought a COTS product in order to avoid potential software integration and customization headaches. However, because NMCI is intended to create a large network from 200 fragmented networks, there is a volume of legacy data that must be preserved and integrated. TRIM includes an API (application programming interface) and generic import tool to allow the military to incorporate existing records. Database management systems such as Oracle, SQL Server, and IBM DB2 are supported.

EDS is building the vast NMCI on a Microsoft architecture. TRIM is MS BackOffice certified and compatible with a number of other MS applications used by military personnel.

Effective On Many Fronts
In addition to government, TRIM is suited for a variety of industries, especially those that are highly regulated such as pharmaceuticals. For legal purposes, it is becoming increasingly important for customers to have a digital record of all transactions from e-mail to invoices. TRIM is also suitable for much smaller installations. In early 2002, Tower will release the latest version of the TRIM Suite, Context. This release will include enhancements to the digital signature functionality as well as a more graphical representation of workflow.

Lay Siege To Mass Storage Abuse

Enterprises of all sizes must manage storage growth. When an intranet has 360,000 users like the Navy Marine Corps Intranet (NMCI) initiative, optimizing disk space is critical. Let's say each user downloaded just one 10 KB JPEG of his or her kids. That would result in more than 3.6 GB of wasted disk space. To proactively address this potential problem, IT services provider EDS is implementing StorageCentral SRM (storage resource management) from WQuinn, A Precise Software Solutions Company in the NMCI.

StorageCentral SRM allows administrators to get rid of the surplus files that can affect server performance and waste disk space. It can eliminate or even block certain file types, while scanning for legitimate files that are obsolete, duplicated, or orphans (i.e. belong to an employee who is no longer with the company). Administrators can also set limits at the user level which prevent workers from saving certain types of files that aren't part of their job functions. Eliminating the ability to upload image files, for example, freed 3 GB of storage space for a multibillion dollar company that found it was unknowingly maintaining one executive's neatly organized and indexed porn collection. Alternately, more responsible employees could be given a specific amount of disk space and tools to monitor aged or duplicate files themselves.

Steven Toole, WQuinn's VP of marketing, says the $1,295 per server price tag allows VARs to implement this solution at enterprises of all sizes. Providing customers with a better view of their server usage in real time assists VARs in justifying storage recommendations and troubleshooting. For instance, Miami Dade County found that its server crashed every time there was a hurricane warning and suspected a problem with the hardware. The software showed that users were uploading all their files (business and personal) onto the network when bad weather threatened. By eliminating extraneous content, StorageCentral SRM helps preserve uptime and protects against data loss caused by crashes.

With support for most hierarchical storage management software, StorageCentral SRM also helps systems integrators accommodate customers' shrinking backup windows. Toole says that one financial services company required 16 hours to back up to tape. An analysis found problems ranging from an 800-page report that hadn't been accessed in over a year to a mail room worker's 20 GB MP3 collection. Adding more storage space without checking for this kind of abuse is "like adding an addition to your house because the closet is full," comments Toole.

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