



Inside Outsourcing™

INTERVIEWED BY LARRY JANIS

Rich Iler, Chief Operating Officer, NorthPoint, LLC

NorthPoint was founded in 1992 with the mission to develop a new and better concept of assessing how well organizations are really performing and identifying current and future risks and opportunities that could impact performance. The idea was to use software-based tools for speed and a database for analytics.

Utilizing the software-based tools, NorthPoint and its business partners have performed over 1,400 assessments in the U. S., Europe, Middle East, and Asia for over 500 enterprises. These enterprises included commercial, as well as not-for-profit, local, state, and national governments. The results have all been incorporated into the vast NorthPoint databases.

In addition to going directly to Enterprise customers, we also go to market through business partners (global consulting companies, outsourcing service providers, boutique advisory firms, individual contributors) who use our tools to support their customers.



LJ: *Many of our readers may not be aware of NorthPoint, please share with us an overview of the services and what makes them unique?*

RI: NorthPoint provides software-based assessment & performance measurement tools that are driven by analytics to be predictive and prescriptive to enable customers to optimize and sustain peak performance. The first tool required 2.5 years to complete based on collaborative research with MIT, Vanderbilt, Stanford and the original assessment of 800+ enterprises. We now have 26 tools. The ongoing research enables NorthPoint to refresh the databases and to create new solutions that address technological advances such as Cloud Computing.

Since the initial research the software-based tools have been used to assess the performance of over 500 organizations with most of these entities performing multiple measurements of their progress relative to their baseline assessment. In addition to identifying performance and risk issues, the software also provides insights into business opportunities the organization could leverage to grow the business. We call these unmet and unidentified needs. The ability to assess and measure the performance of an organization, an offering or a project is not new, but the ability to perform these assessments in one day with analytics that are 90%+ accurate is unparalleled.

FROM THE EDITOR

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Inside Outsourcing's goal is to provide you with articles of interest and with a forum for the exchange of information in this rapidly evolving industry.

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Inside with:

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LJ: What is your role and responsibilities as Chief Operating Officer?

RI: I am responsible for the overall performance of NorthPoint and making our brand known for assisting our customers in gaining prescriptive and predictive insights on their most important issues. To do this requires creating innovative business and marketing plans; developing new software-based assessment and performance measurement tools and adding to the NorthPoint data bases; growing and mentoring our senior team, and managing the financial performance of the organization.

Fortunately, I have a number of very talented people to share these responsibilities with.

LJ: How have you seen consulting change over the years and what additional opportunities exist for improving the consulting model?

RI: The major consultancies have implemented knowledge bases to enable their consultants to leverage previous proposals and client deliverables as well as industry process models and benchmarked metrics. These capabilities with standardized methodologies have enabled the consulting teams to deliver implementation projects faster and with greater consistency.

However, the pre-implementation work (assessments of what needs to be fixed and why) still appears to be a “best practices” driven process based on paper templates that require 6-8 weeks of effort supported by a significant consulting team. In addition, the client resources are required to provide significant input via detailed interviews. This process can be painful for the client and costly for the consulting organization (in many instances the consulting organization consciously loses money to obtain the more significant implementation work).

At the conclusion of the data gathering exercise, the consulting team then scrambles to decipher the different viewpoints from the different constituencies. Days and or weeks later the consulting team then individually meets with project sponsors and key constituents to vet the results of the assessment prior to delivery of the findings to the entire stakeholder group. Too many times the entire stakeholder group hasn't bought into the findings and recommendations because the assessment was performed on the client instead of facilitated by the consultant.

“On-going research enables NorthPoint to refresh the databases and to create new solutions that address technological advances such as Cloud Computing.”



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There are software-based tools and processes that can significantly shorten this assessment process for the client and consultant, produce analytics that prescribe required changes with predictive cost, time and ROI impact and are facilitated by the consultant thereby enabling the client resources to own the findings and recommendations.

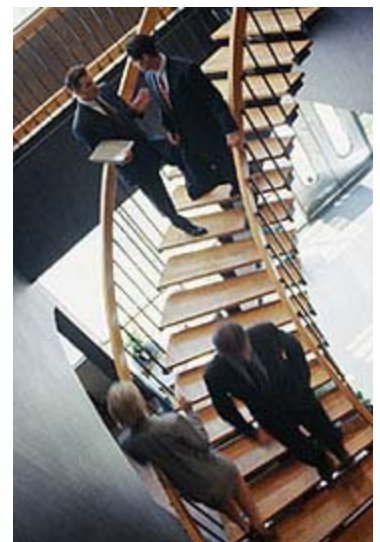
LJ: Who is typically your customer in an organization?

RI: We, NorthPoint and our partners, work at the “C-level” (CEO, COO, CFO, CMO, CIO) in organizations to address issues including efficiency and effectiveness, growth and revenue, risk and capital/investment decisions.

Due to the global recession, many companies focused on cost cutting and risk identification and mitigation, therefore our effectiveness, efficiency and risk suite of tools have been in great demand. The fourteen tools in these suites address business unit and or functional area performance, back office support including shared services and outsourcing of IT and business processes as well as new technologies like cloud computing. The risk suite of solutions address initiative, security and business partner/supplier risks.

Since organizations need to move beyond just cost cutting we have seen a huge uptick in the use of our growth and revenue suite of tools which are used to improve the performance of products and or services. The offerings can be used anywhere along the offering development path from market sizing, direct and indirect channel deployment strategies, market segmentation, pricing, unmet and unidentified needs, value propositions and buying criteria, market messaging, sales cycles and brand performance. The capability includes the precise calculation of realizable revenue for a product or a series of related products that drive supply chain plans.

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Finally, the capital/investment tool suite provides the capability to assess the offerings, the potential buyers unmet and unidentified needs, the sales cycles, the brand, the market messages and the Knowledge, Experience and Performance (KEP) of the management team prior to an acquisition or investment in a company.

I personally spent 18 years with a major consultancy as an account partner and if I would have had these capabilities to share with my clients I could have significantly improved the quality, speed and value of the services we delivered.

LJ: What is the value to customers from using NP software-based tools both short and long term?

RI: Value is always in the eye of the beholder, but our clients have achieved some impressive results: 3-year revenue increases of 20%-60%; improved margins of 12%; customer loyalty and customer care improvements of 22% - 28% and reduced time-to-offering-profitability from 61 to 13 months; reduced the project expenditures by 20% to 31%, improved the implementation value by 17%-43% and increased ROI by 19% to 37% are some typical examples.

We are not a consulting company, our goal for our clients and business partners is to provide them with the tools and support for them to drive and achieve the results. Most organizations want to become self-sufficient and our approach supports that desire.

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LJ: What has made you successful in your career?

RI: Listening, learning and then the courage to try something outside of my comfort zone has enabled me to demonstrate success. For many people communication is speaking, but I have found that communication should be focused on listening and trying to understand what someone is saying and then the rationale for their viewpoint.

We tend to be creatures of habit and therefore very reluctant to change what we do and how we do things. However, listening and understanding the assumptions someone has made to support their viewpoint provides the knowledge to validate their viewpoint or their proposal / recommendation.

This knowledge, along with other sources, can then be leveraged to determine the risks, positive and negative, that enable you to assess your comfort level. Courage to me comes from the knowledge that I have assessed the different drivers of risk.

Success isn't just about the individual leader, but surrounding yourself with talented people, motivating them with the right metrics, allowing them to execute against a strategy and encouraging them to venture outside of their comfort zone.

Integrated Search Solutions Group

Many firms to keep clients at an arm's length; they tell us what to do, we do it, they give us money, everyone is happy. We have had more success and enjoy our work a lot more by moving beyond the "strictly business relationship." For us, it has always been about relationships. We're in it for the long haul, plain and simple. We work hard every day to earn and maintain the highest degree of trust and respect of our clients. We approach talent acquisition (the process of attracting, finding and selecting highly talented individuals those who align with the business strategy possess required competencies, and who will integrate smoothly and productively into the organization and its culture, to meet current and future employment needs) with speed, tenacity, and integrity while maintaining total accountability, quality, and communications with our clients and candidates from inception to completion. This results in:

- ⇒ A search completion rate of (99.2%)
- ⇒ A low interview-to-hire ratio that saves time and money

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